



Organizational identity within Multinational companies

Submitted by:

Student: Dieuwke Willemien Oudijk

Supervisor: Alexander Hartmann

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Abstract

aim: This study investigates the identification process of employees within multinational companies. It is specifically divided into how employees of foreign subsidiaries identify with the corporate heritage identity, considering the role of shared goals and values within this identification process.

Methodology: This topic was investigated through semi-structured interviews with both upper-management and operational employees of companies within the sports industry.

Findings: To be added

Limitations: Due to the qualitative nature of this research, it lacks a degree of reliable measurements, which should be obtained through a follow-up quantitative study. Moreover, as the study has only been conducted within the sports industry, it could be recommended to extend this research to a cross-industry study. Finally, a limitation is the measurement of strong and weak corporate identity, this remains a complex process

Key words: 'corporate identity' 'organizational identity' 'organizational culture' 'employee identification' 'identity' 'individual identification' 'multinationals' 'heritage corporate identity'

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1. Introduction

Previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of organizational identity. Having a strong organizational identity results in competitive advantages, such as better performance, lower employee turnover, higher employee commitment, motivation and loyalty. The organizational identity provides a strong basis for differentiation and positioning strategies and positively affects change management. The organizational identity is a dynamic and collective process, affecting and being affected by reciprocal and interrelated elements and processes. Within organizational identity, history, heritage, shared goals and shared values are perceived as autonomous components. CITE

In regard to individual identification, it is assumed people have the natural need to put themselves into a social context, they have the desire to connect and identify themselves with a group while at the same time distinguishing themselves. Assuming the multi-identity theory, people have several identification processes, the strength of the organizational identification lies in its position relative to the other identities of the individual. CITE

A focus area is the relationship between strong organizational identity and shared values, goals and beliefs. Sharing goals and values plays a significant role in the identification process of employees. The concept of corporate heritage can be added to this process, recent studies have shown that heritage plays a part in the identification process. (*Maier & Anderson, 2017*)(*Balmer & Burghausen, 2015*). It is important to highlight the interrelation between employees and organizational identity, while organizational identity affects employees identification process, employees also affect the organizational identity construction (*Scott, 1997*)(*Larsson & Pepper, 2003*). Together with the growth of multinational companies, studies arose concerning the effect and role of culture, organizational identity, shared values and heritage within multinational companies. Studies have provided evidence, showing that within multinational companies, the headquarters culture can actually influence how the subsidiaries operate abroad. (*Browaeys & price, 2008*). While the headquarters affect the subsidiaries, other research has shown the employees of foreign subsidiaries seem to interpret corporate culture in a different way. (*Petersen & Ribsen, 2013*)(*Xi & Koch & Othman & Liu, 2020*). This is in line with the country of origin effect, which confirms that the national culture of a company does affect the construction of the corporate culture(*Balmer, 1998*).

Xi Othman & Ping investigated the perception and interpretations of employee identification of expats in China. They highlighted that it should be further explored 'how cultural adaptations in multinational companies are influenced by factors such as leadership, management practices and/or cultural orientation of employees' (*Xi, Jing & Koch Karl & Othman Bestoon & Liu Ping, 2020*). Brenner & ambos conducted a research at geographically dispersed subsidiaries, they however mentioned that investigating 'sharing values and less tangible concepts from headquarters to subsidiaries was more ambiguous,' and that this topic should be further explored. (*Brenner & Ambos, 2013*). Parker & Haridakis have also pointed out that the identification process should be studied with a variety of worker personalities and backgrounds (*Parker & Haridakis, 2008*). Blount recently added the need for a study comparing firms with a weak and strong firm identity, to gain additional insights into the identification process. It was emphasized that current studies fail to qualitatively show the role of identification and acculturation processes for employees (*B. Blount, 2021*).

Finally, it should be stated that most findings concerning corporate heritage are conducted in family companies, therefore there is a need to put this concept into a wider context, such as multinational companies. Concluding previous research concerning organizational identity and multinational companies, it can be assumed that employees of foreign subsidiaries have

a weaker identification with the organizational identity, and that the employees of foreign subsidiaries identify through different elements. These gaps lead to formulating the following research question: 'For what reasons do employees of foreign subsidiaries identify with the organizational identity?' Additionally, the research considers what the role of shared goals, values and corporate heritage is within this identification process. It concerns a cross-country comparison research method.

Academically, this research contributes to the current literature regarding organizational identity, the organizational identification process and shared values and heritage within multinational companies. It aims to close the gap, and provide further insights into the relationships of less tangible concepts, such as shared values & heritage, A better understanding of the identification process among companies and employees with a strong and weak organizational identity. This is the first research to specifically connect the heritage corporate identity and shared values to the multinational identity among subsidiaries. (B. Blount, 2021)

On a more practical level, this research has a high value for managers and organizations, providing further insights into the identification process of employees of foreign subsidiaries. These insights are relevant for managers, as many researches have already shown evidence on the positive relationship between high employee identification, strong corporate identity and high labor productivity, low employee turnover, employees (intrinsic) motivation, ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees, firm reputation, corporate branding and competitive advantage. (Xi, Jing & Koch Karl & Othman Bestoon & Liu Ping, 2020)

This study bases its research approach on several identity concepts, these concepts are further explained in section 2.2. The most important theories are the social identity theory, the multi-identity concept, the role identity theory and lastly the identity paradox (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)(Brunhilde Scheuringer, 2016)(Randel, A.E., Chay-Hoon, L. and Earley, P.C, 2005)(Burke, 1973).

This expose first provides a literature review concerning the concepts of organizational identity, organizational identification, and the role of culture, heritage and shared values. Section 2.2 further discusses the theories and concepts which will be used as a basis for this research. The literature analysis (section 3), provides an overview of the most important references and mentions the process of the literature review. Section 4 delves into the research model, design and research assumptions. The next section further mentions the contributions of this research and finally a chapter overview and work plan is given.

2. Theories & Literature

This chapter provides insights into the existing literature and theories, creating a background and basis for the research design of this study. Section 2.1 provides a literature review, discussing organizational identity, organizational identification and the role of shared values and heritage. Section 2 examines the theoretical framework, clarifying the basis of this research.

2.1 Literature review

The literature review provides you insights into the development, and existing literature around this research topic. Firstly, it dives into the concept of organizational identity, its role and the conceptualisation of organizational identity. Section 2.1.2 Highlights the concept of organizational identification and its connection to identity. Finally, section 2.1.3 provides more detailed insights into the relationships and connections between organizational identity, employee identification and the role of culture, corporate heritage and shared values

2.1.1 Corporate identity

organizational identity is a concept that has been investigated for decades. already in 1970, Jenkins mentioned the visual aspects of organizational Identity, this was the basis for stating that 'organizational identity concerns the changes in visual expressions of an organization' (*Jenkins 1991, Pilditch 1970, Selame & Selame 1975*). It is remarkable how both business studies and social studies have shown interest in the organizational identity and its conceptualization. Initially, most studies focused on the visual aspects of organizational identity, perceiving corporate identity 'as an assembly of visual cues, physical and behavioral by which an audience would recognise the company and distinguish it from others' (*Abratt, 1989*). In 2017, Abratt extended this definition to 'incorporating a set of intrinsic characteristics that give a company coherence (*Abratt, 2017*).

Kennedy added in 1977 that 'members of the organization are the source of organizational identity' (*Kennedy, 1977*). This was the first step to a more component-oriented approach towards organizational identity. Over the years, several studies have been conducted on defining the key-elements. Albert & Whetten published in 1985 that 'organizational culture reflects the core values, behavior and beliefs.' They however got most recognition by identifying 'organizational identity as something that is central, enduring and distinctive' (*Albert & Whetten, 1985*). The characteristics central, enduring and distinctive are still the basis of most organizational identity studies nowadays.

With the component-approach, firstly organizational identity was mostly connected to strategy, mission and vision. Perceiving 'organizational identity as an expression of an integral part of strategy' (*Gray & Smeltzer, 1985*) (*Ind, 1990*) and 'organization's personality is based on corporate philosophy, culture and core values which are reflected in the mission & vision (*Abratt, 1989*). Towards 2000, this approach moved on towards defining that 'organizational identity consists of all the expressions and components of an organization (*Birkight & Stadler, 1986*) (*Balmer & Gray, 1997*). Gray and Balmer followed up on this way of thinking, and although the mission and vision statements are still commonly-used in analyzing a corporate identity, it is put into a context where it is a part of organizational identity, instead of the full reflection of it, so organizational identity consists of unique characteristics and key-components, Gray and Balmer initially defined these

key-components, identifying strategy, philosophy, design and culture' (Gray & Balmer, 1998). It could even be turned around further, instead of perceiving the mission and vision as a reflection of organizational identity, it could be stated that 'organizational identity itself is the reflection of aspects like culture, employees, resources, strategy and objectives' (Cornelissen, Haslam & Balmer, 2007) (Schultz 2005) (Urde 2003) (Kapferer, 2004).

Around 2000, the organizational identity started again going towards a new direction, from a visual-perspective, to a component-perspective to a dynamic & changing perspective. Although the component-approach plays a significant role in the conceptualisation of organizational identity, it is crucial to acknowledge the dynamic, changing and interrelated aspects. Many recent studies have highlighted that organizational identity is a dynamic process that changes over time. (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000) (Chrum, 2003) (Corley, 2004) (Corley & Gioia, 2004) (Hatch & Schultz, 2000) (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

Based on this dynamic-perspective, more focus has been put on collective understanding and collective identity. As a follow-up on Albert & Whetten, organizational identity could be related to a collective understanding of certain aspects which are 'central and relatively permanent' (Gioia, Schultz & Corley 2000). Brown on the other hand connected organizational identity more to a collective identity consisting of, and affected by participants. (Brown, 2006). Therefore new definitions of organizational identity have been added to the literature, in which organizational identity is considered to be more of a process instead of a fixed concept, this is reflected in the stated definition; 'organizational identity reveals the what it is, what it stands for, what it does, how it does it and where it goes' (Bernstein 1984, Melewar & Jenkins 2002).

The figure 2.1.1 below summarizes the main developments of the definition and perception on what organizational identity is. While organizational identity was initially highly connected to visual expressions, it is now perceived as a dynamic and changing process in which components are interrelated.

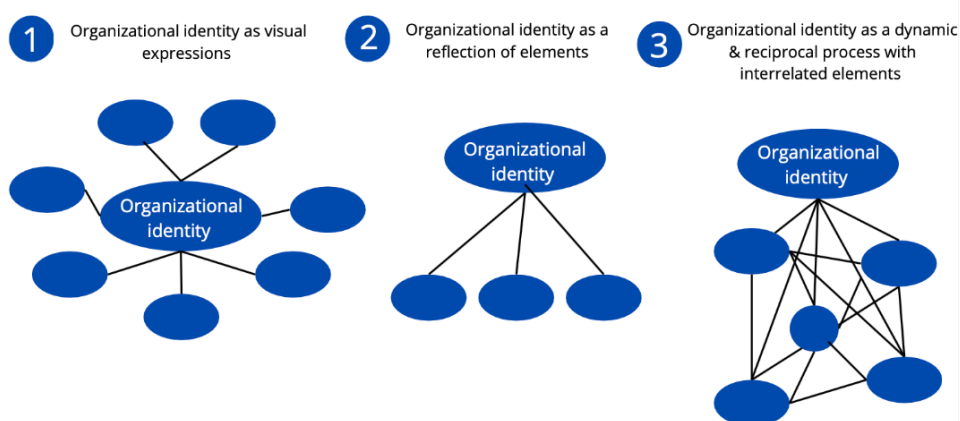


Figure 2.1.1 The development of the definition of organizational identity (oudijk, 2022)

Before diving into the role of organizational identity and its relevance, a variety of perspectives is briefly mentioned. It must be noted that marketing & communications has gotten a specific role within the concept of organizational identity. From the marketing & communication perspective, organizational identity could be approached as 'a set of meanings by which an object allows itself to be known, and through which it allows people to

describe, remember and relate (*Van Rekom, 1997*). In 2014, Schmelzt highlighted the acknowledgement of the roles of communication, behavior and symbolism in organizational identity. Hatch and Schultz contributed to the organizational behavioral perspective, stating that organizational identity relates to 'what members perceive, feel and think, a collective commonly shared understanding of the distinctive values and characteristics (*Hatch & Schultz, 1997*). The multidisciplinary approach conceptualizes organizational identity as a hierarchical construct, referring to organizational identity as a concept that includes all means of communication, culture, missions, goals, strategy, structure, centralization & control, products & services and markets & industries.

Finally, organizational identity can be approached from four different perspectives, the functional, social constructionist, psycho-analytical and postmodern perspective (*He & Brown, 2013*). The functional approach is a wide-known and theoretical basis for many researches, Albert and Whetten's definition can be considered a functional approach, perceiving organizational identity as a 'set of attributes which are central, enduring and distinctive (*Albert and Whetten, 1985*). Corley added that this provides meaning (*Corley, 2006*) and it is the essence of an organization (*Margolis & Hansen, 2002*). The social constructionist perspective approaches the concept with a focus on relationships, Berscheid already described this as a 'phenomena that resides within the relational ties between all individuals within an organization (*Berscheid, 1994*). He and Brown contributed to this perspective formulating corporate identity as 'constructed results of relationships between individual cognitions and collective perspectives within the organization on the who and what' (*He & Brown, 2013*). An important contribution to the psychoanalytic perspective comes from Diamond, mentioning the 'totality of repetitive patterns of individual behaviors and interpersonal relationships that together comprise the unacknowledged meaning' (*Diamond, 1988*). Finally, the postmodern perspective follows the more updated definitions, taking into account that organizational identity is dynamic and changing, organizational identity can be considered 'a phenomena that has not a persistent and distinct core' (*Gioia & Schultz & Corley, 2000*).

What is the role of corporate identity?

A variety of researches have analyzed the role and impact of organizational identity within a business context. The results are clear; a strong organizational identity is beneficial for an organization. In 1983, research was already showing that 'organizational identity results in positive outcomes, such as high labor productivity and low labor turnover' (*Tichy, 1983*). Marken added that organizational identity can be used as 'a tool to extend product life cycles' (*Marken, 1990*). Two main areas of benefits have been identified; creating competitive advantage and strengthening Human Resource Management through organizational identity.

research has shown that strong organizational identity boosts employee motivations (*Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005*), it improves the ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees (*Kiriakidou & millward, 2000*)(*Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005*) and it increases transparency (*Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005*). Therefore organizational identity can be seen as a strategic resource to strengthen motivation and firm reputation (*Melewar & Jenkins, 2002*). It is proven that organizational identity plays a key role in corporate brand identity (*Harris & Chernatony, 2001*)(*Blombäck &*

Ramirez Pasillas, 2012), and it can be considered to be the basis of corporate branding (*Jones, 2010*).

organizational identity affects competitive advantage in several ways. Besides the advantages in employing & retaining high-quality employees and boosting employee motivation, organizational identity also provides a strong basis for differentiation and positioning strategies (*Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005*)(*Abratt, 1989*)(*Gray & Smeltzer, 1987*)(*Riel & Balmer, 1997*)(*Downey, 1986*). It is an effective strategic instrument for competitive advantage (*Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005*)(*Gray & Smeltzer, 1985*)(*Schmidt, 1995*)(*Balmer, 2017*), and a strategic tool for developing strong relationships between corporations and stakeholders (*Downey, 1986*). It moreover provides a strong basis for mergers & acquisitions and has a positive effect in change management (*Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005*).

The benefits of developing a strong organizational identity makes this an important topic for CEOs (*Balmer, 2017*). However, CEOs and executives have little knowledge on how to define and manage corporate identity (*Abratt & Kleyn, 2012*)(*Melewar, 2005*). The identity literature lacks clarity, coherence and consistency (*Albert & Ashforth & Dutton, 2000*)(*Ashmore, 2004*)(*Corley, 2006*)(*Cornelissen & Haslam & Balmer, 2007*)(*Pratt, 2003*)(*Ravasi & Van Rekom, 2003*)(*Whetten, 2006*). And identity theories seem to suffer from identity confusion (*Pratt & Foreman, 2000*), identity seems to mean too little, too much or nothing at all (*Brubaker & cooper, 2000*). The wide variety of different researches, conceptualisations and theories reflects this issue. The next part provides an overview of the most important conceptualisations and theories regarding corporate identity.

Conceptualisation of corporate identity

Throughout the years, there have been several researches trying to conceptualize organizational identity. Initially, most research focused on identifying the key-elements of corporate identity, more recent studies are now shifting the focus on how certain elements are interrelated and how the dynamic of these concepts work. Therefore, most research conducted on this topic is qualitative research, because the focus is primarily in gaining an understanding and insight into these concepts. And even though there are several researches identifying key-elements, there has not been an agreement among researchers which are the most defining ones.

Starting with a behavioral perspective, corporate identity consists of three main behavior types, including; corporate behavior (*Balmer, 1997*), employee behavior (*Kennedy, 1997*)(*Dowling, 1986*)(*Kiriakidou & Millward, 2000*) and management behavior (*Van Riel, 1995*). Before 2000, the most important elements were considered to be corporate philosophy, corporate values, corporate principles, corporate guidelines, corporate history, founder of the company and country of origin (*Abratt, 1989*)(*Balmer, 1998*)(*Balmer & Soenen 1999*). Melewar then defined the key elements as corporate design, corporate communication, corporate culture, corporate behavior, corporate structure, industry identity and corporate strategy (*Melewar, 2003*). Simões discussed corporate and organizational identity and put more focus on the internally controlled perspective, developing a scale consisting of image implementation, mission dissemination and visual identity implementation (*Simões, 2005*). He combined this with theoretical perspectives, considering

graphic design and marketing aspects, using organizational studies and so come to an interdisciplinary corporate identity.

In 2015, Nguyen revised the key-elements and identified new key-elements including name, status, organizational culture, self-expression, network innovation, strategy and visual design (Nguyen, 2015). In 2021, there was a shift in the perception of the elements. Previously, mission, philosophy, founder, country of origin and history were considered to be subdimensions of culture (Melewar, 2003)(Melewar, 2018). Tourky, Foroudi, Gupta and Shaalan however identified mission, founder, history and country of origin as their own separate dimensions, moving away from the perspective that those are all subdimensions of culture. They then formulated six key dimensions of organizational identity; Communication, visual identity, behavior, organizational culture, stakeholder management & founder value-based leadership. Their conceptualisation highlighted the interconnections between these dimensions (Tourky & Foroudi & Gupta & Shaalan, 2021). This research follows this mindset, perceiving history, heritage and shared goals and values as autonomous components, instead of components of culture.

2.1.2 Organizational identification

The previous section has discussed the concept and role of organizational identity. However, to actually benefit from the discussed advantages, it is important to have a strong organizational identity, and organizational identification (employee identification) plays a crucial role within this process. Therefore a look is taken at the literature of employee identification.

Tompkins & Cheney have contributed many insights into the identification process over the years. The study around organizational identification started with a communicative approach: 'communication is the key element of identification' (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983)(Byker & Anderson, 1975). The communicative approach refers to the 'self-definitional process involving the linking of the self to the organization through communicative acts (Bullis & Bach, 1989)(Cheney, 1983)(Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). Tajfel perceived 'the part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge or membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1978). Later he added that 'the individual's knowledge of their group membership is the only necessary requirement for the establishment of a relationship with that group' (Tajfel, 1979). This shows how organizational identity was mostly connected to cognitive awareness of the identity.

Cheney provided further insights into the interrelations between individuals and the group membership and the organization, initially focussing on shared interests. . Firstly, organizational identity was stated as 'a process of internal and external persuasion, in which interests merge, creating a new identity based on those merged interests' (Cheney, 1983). This process was considered to be 'an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in social science' (Cheney, 1983). This is important as the 'identification process helps members understand organizational logic' (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Weick added the term 'sensemaking,' referring to 'employees creating meaning through interaction with each other' (Weick, 1979). An important characteristic of organizational identity is reciprocity, this was first mentioned by Ashforth, stating that 'organizational action reciprocally feeds the identity process' (Ashforth, 1985). Several researchers later on build

on this characteristic, taking into account reciprocal influence: 'Organizational identity has reciprocal influence, creating meaning and guiding behavior.' This became then a basis for considering unobtrusive control, 'the identity process is a perceptual control system' (Burke, 1991)(Powers, 1973). It is a form of unobtrusive control (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985).

The perception of identification as something that 'does not simply develop with organizations, but through its relevant members' (Bullis & Bach, 1991), and as something that 'is created by individuals & organizations, it is not something to possess' (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987), has had a significant impact on the future literature. Following this perception, it was added that 'employees interpretation on how the organization is perceived actually affects the organizational identity' (Christensen & Askegaard, 2001)(Dutton & Dukerich, 1991)(Bernstein, 1984).

Besides the communicative approach, there is the cognitive construct to approach organizational identification, this refers to 'the self-perception of sharing characteristics by defining oneself in terms of the organization's membership' (Glynn, 1998)(van Dick & Wagner & Stellmacher & Christ, 2004). Mael & Ashforth were the first ones to highlight the 'identification as a feeling of oneness with the organization' (Ashforth & Mael, 1996), so it concerns the 'individuals defining themselves in terms of the organization, through internalizing mission, ideology, values, strategy and behavior' (Weick, 1995). Dutton further focused this on the attributes, 'when a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organization,' stating that organizational identification is 'the degree to which members define themselves by the same attributes as they believe in' (Dutton, 1994). Therefore organizational identity is indicated by the self-perception of oneness with the organization' (Mael & Ashforth, 1992)(Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001).

Dutton additionally integrated the multi-identity theory, mentioning that a strong identification process is identified when 'a member is more salient with this identity than with the alternative identities, his self-concept contains many similar characteristics as the group' (Dutton, 1994). An important development was moving towards the perception of organizational identity as a psychological attachment, 'when members adopt organizations defining characteristics as their personal defining characteristics there is psychological attachment' (Dutton, 1994). Psychological attachment can be related to organizational commitment, and it refers to the 'individuals identifying with the organization' (Ryu, 2015). This perception then got combined with the cognitive relationship perception, perceiving organizational identity 'as a cognitive connection between a person and organization' (Dutton, 1994)(Mael & Ashforth, 1992)(Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002).

Dutton & Dukerich furthermore specified employee behavior as a 'process by which employees relate to the organization' (Dutton & Dukkerich, 1991). Through this identification process, organizational identification defines 'norms and customs that function as a guide for behavior' (Kogut & Zander, 1996). The shared goals and interest play are relevant for this process, because organizational identification is 'produced and reproduced by members through the conversation of shared interests, so organizational goals are a part of the identification process' (Bullis & Bach, 1989)(Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). It is important to highlight that the perception of identification moved towards a 'person's self-perception' rather than the person's perception of the organization' (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001). We therefore move to the definition that organizational identification is a 'construct to represent

the relational connection between individuals and organization, which supports them in defining who they are and how they act' (*Hogg & Terry, 2000*)(*Patchen, 1970*). 'This identification helps employees in maintaining a positive self-image' (*Meyer & Allen, 1991*). It is essential to highlight why this identification process is relevant for employees. Naturally, people have a need for affiliation, belonging and/or love and therefore 'they are generally motivated to identify themselves with organizations to meet the need of belonging and being part of a group' (*Ouchi & Jaeger, 1978*). On its turn, Becker added that identification with a group often involves the adoption of attitudes, including commitment towards a group. 'Individuals will actively seek to achieve and maintain identification with that group that are optimally distinctive within a social context' (*Brewer, 2003*), this is again relatable to the need of belonging and the role of organizational identification within the maintenance of a positive self-image (*Meyer & Allen, 1991*).

Brown managed to combine the communicative and cognitive approaches into the following definition: 'communication is the means by which identities are constructed, while it is asserted through personal narratives which makes it salient' (*Brown, 2006*). The self-concept & sensemaking have become key-elements into defining organizational identification, in 2008, organizational identification was defined as a 'form of attachment that involves integration of organizational membership into an individual's self-concept' (*Parker & Haridakis, 2008*). 'Organization identification affects the self-concept and sense-making' (*Blumer, 1969*)(*Cerulo, 1997*)(*Weick, 1995*)(*Wiesenfeld & Raghuram & Garud, 1998*). Therefore, 'organizational identity is the self-definitional process through which individuals rationally link themselves to the organization, coming to understand and influence the organizational logic through discourse, including integration of organizational and personal goals and values' (*Parker & Haridakis, 2008*). Again the reciprocity should be highlighted, 'organizations influence individuals and individuals influence the organization, this results in a guide of behavior and affects the collective identity' (*Parker & Haridakis, 2008*). 'The employees are an important audience because they are expected to represent the company as an ambassador and in this way influence the identity and image of an organization' (*Hatch & Schultz, 2010*). Considering the reciprocity, 'corporate identity is a means to enforce individual identity' (*Blombäck, Ramirez & Pasillas, 2012*). So the organizational identification addresses 'self-concept held by employees, they shape and are shaped by the attachments between individuals and organization' (*Littlejohn & Foss, 2009*). Thus, when the individuals and organizations identity overlaps and are congruent, then organizational identification exists' (*Elsbach & Cable, 2019*). And the 'individuals define who they are by the organization, this makes them the organizational identifiers' (*Elsbach & Pieper, 2019*).

Similar to the literature development of corporate identity, also the organizational identification process moved to a definition in which 'employees identification is an active and complex process that can vary in different situations and contexts' (*Bullis & Bach, 1989*)(*Rousseau, 1998*)(*Larsson & Pepper, 2006*). 'Organizations may need some degree of flexibility in their identities across different physical places or settings to be relevant and effective' (*Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998*)(*Parent, 2008*).

Finally, in 2021, Foreman & Whetten added certain views to the literature around identification, they stated: 'to embrace something is to support it willingly and enthusiastically, to embody something is to represent it in clear and obvious ways' (*Foreman*

& Whetten, 2021). They also mentioned distinguishing organizational actions and the organizational actors, and how history does matter within this concept (Foreman & Whetten, 2021). Finally, focus should be put on 'cross-level functional similarities rather than on cross-level differences', so organizational identity should be considered an 'analogue of individual identity strengthening veracity and legitimacy' (Foreman & Whetten, 2021). In this research, focus is put on the reciprocal nature of organizational identification.

What is the role of organizational identification

The effects of having a high organizational identification is closely connected to the positive effects of having a strong organizational identity, considering that high organizational identifications results in stronger organizational identity. A company with high identification 'enhances support and commitment for the organization' (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Because identification 'increases members long-term commitment and support' (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001). Several studies confirm that organizational identification is positively related to organizational support, job satisfaction, willingness to put in extra effort and lower likelihood of withdrawing from an organization (Bell & Menguc, 2002)(Myers & Kassing, 1998)(Russo, 1998)(van Dick, 2004 & 2006). Finally, employees who identify highly with an organization internalize the collective goals and therefore become intrinsically motivated, this affects the usage of reward & motivation systems managers use (van Dick & Ullrich & Tissington, 2006).

This section discussed the literature background and development of the perception on organizational identification. It must be pointed out that organizational identification plays a crucial role in developing a strong organizational identity. Thus, to benefit from the positive effects of having a strong organizational identity, there must also be strong organizational identification. The next section further discusses how these concepts are related to culture, history and heritage, and what the role of shared values is within this context.

2.1.3 Heritage & shared values

Now the concepts regarding organizational identity and organizational identification are more clear, a further insight is given into the relationships with multinational companies, taking into account culture and analyzing the role of shared values and heritage.

Multinational companies & culture

Firstly, it must be noted that in many multinational companies, the 'organizational culture is more multicultural rather than unicultural.' This is due to the reciprocal nature, in which employees affect culture and culture affects employees (Martin, 1992). This is important to take into account, even though the history and heritage might be affected by a certain national, country-of-origin, culture. Salzer already mentioned early on that 'when markets become homogenized, national identities become more blurred and social networks replace traditional territories'(Salzer, 1994). Therefore, 'national borders do not necessarily limit borders of societal cultures and of social identities, and cultures can move across borders'(Schwartz, 1999). This relates to the concept of supra-identity, which is related to the creation of a new, more dominant identity, consisting of the several already existing identities(Salzer, 1994). This effect can be seen in multicultural corporate identities.

However, there is evidence showing that 'when a company develops a multinational conglomerate, headquarters culture may influence the subsidiaries abroad' (*Browaeys & Price, 2008*). At the same time, research has shown that 'members from different subsidiaries interpret corporate culture differently' (*Petersen & Ribsén, 2013*)(*Xi & Koch & Othman & Liu, 2020*). This is in line with the country of origin effect, stating that 'characteristics of national culture affects company culture' (*Balmer, 1998*). Recent studies have highlighted the importance and role of organizational identity, 'in a time in which the amount of multinational companies continues growing, having a strong organizational identity is crucial in maintaining and managing diversity in the workforce'(*Xi & Koch & Othman & Liu, 2020*). 'Social science supports the benefits of a strong corporate culture: companies with a strong corporate culture have up to 20 to 30% differentials in corporate performance compared to organizations with weaker corporate culture (*Coleman, Gulali & Segovia, 2012*). Studies have highlighted 'the relevance of cultural values in developing corporate social behavior'(*Griffiths, 2010*)(*Schmeltz, 2014*)(*Tourky & Foroudi & Gupta & Shaalan, 2021*), and the 'existence of dominant cultures, sharing assumptions, values & beliefs'(*Lee, 2013*)(*Sorensen, 2002*)(*Tourky & Foroudi & Gupta & Shaalan, 2021*) . 'Culture is considered fundamental and distinctive in relation to organizational character'(*de Roeck, 2013*)(*de Roeck & Maon, 2016*)(*Nguyen, 2015*). Thus, 'every organization has a uniform culture with universal beliefs and values, and this culture can function as a guide for behavior'(*Martin, 2002*)(*Sorensen, 2002*).

Shared values, goals & beliefs

In this research, focus is put on the relationship between identity and shared values, goals and beliefs. As has been discussed in previous sections, 'when individuals' goals merge with the organization, employees provide internal motivation'(*Ouchi & Price, 1993*). Moreover, 'when employees hold values similar to their firm, they experience beneficial outcomes, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, loyalty and lower employee turnover' (*Ryu, 2015*). 'Sharing these values plays a part in gaining competitive advantage in the marketplace'(*Nazarian, 2017*)(*Sinclair & Sinclair, 2009*).

It is essential to highlight the dynamic nature of identities, identities are established over time based on performance, but they are fluid and change as interactions change. Therefore 'organizations must adapt to changing environments while maintaining continuity with the past and congruence with contemporary institutional expectations pertaining to a certain group'. Value congruence is a critical component, and refers to the 'perceived similarity between values held by the individuals and the organization' (*Ryu, 2015*). 'When the employees' values match the organization's values, they are capable of identifying with the organization, which leads to better maintenance of the employment relationship and higher job satisfaction'(*Edwards & Cable, 2009*), a crucial part is the 'internalization of aims and values which on its turn leads to identification'(*Edwards, 1976*). Moreover, salience of the shared values is affected by the amount and quality of social contact, 'increased contact leads to greater salience of the shared values which leads to identification'(*Bhattacharya, 2003*).

History & heritage

History and heritage play a role in organizational identification and organizational identity formation. Already in 1992, it was stated that 'corporate history affects organizational identity,

because organizational identity is developed and shaped by its events' (Ind, 1992). 'These historical elements can have both positive and negative consequences, history is often used in creating a stronger organizational identity' (Zandel & Holt & Popp, 2016). Also recent studies confirmed that 'cues about history and heritage helps guide employees and affects their identification process' (Maier & Anderson, 2017). Within the concept of corporate identity, heritage is often used 'a source of pride.' 'History & heritage is a key-element of identity foundation, it creates a sense of belonging and shared values and therefore affects behavior, commitment and loyalty' (Tourky & Foroudi & Gupta & Shaalan, 2021).

It is important to make a clear distinction between history and heritage, because 'even though many companies have a history, only few have a meaningful and valuable corporate heritage' (Urde, 2007) (Balmer & Burghausen, 2015). The corporate heritage identity refers to specific 'identity traits which have remained meaningful and invariant over time' (Balmer, 2011). The corporate heritage 'still influences a company's needs, even after multiple ownership switches' (Ljungkvist & Boers, 2019). It is essential to disconnect and differentiate the corporate heritage from corporate history and/or founder. The heritage identity can be considered to be 'one target of identification or attachment for employees' (Bartels, 2019). Previous research demonstrated the importance of heritage identity as a source of employee identification (Balmer & Burghausen, 2015), considering the employees as an 'active participant in the construction of organizational identity and in the process of organizational identification' (Scott, 1997) (Larsson & Pepper, 2006). 'The corporate heritage is specifically found in the longevity, core values, track records and symbolism' (Urde, 2007) (Hudson, 2007). Finally, the omni-temporal perspective should be addressed, considering that 'corporate heritage connects the past, present and future in a meaningful way' (Urde, 2007) (Balmer & Burghausen, 2015). This is important as it shows the difference with history or founder-effects, 'corporate heritage is broader than history because it relates to the past, present and prospective future' (Balmer, 2006).

To sum up, the identification process usually starts with sharing certain goals and values, this progresses when an individual internalizes the collective goals and values, and this can result in creating a self-concept of goals and values in terms of the organizational goals and values.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework discusses which theories and concepts will be used within this research, these provide a basis for the further research design, the most important theories of this research include the social identity theory, multi-identity concept, role identity theory and the identity paradox.

Social identity theory

Social identity theory is the basis of many identity concepts. It perceives social identity as 'a perspective of individuals to classify themselves and others into categories to define and locate themselves into an environment' (Florence Stinglhamber, Géraldine Marique, Gaëthane Caesens, Donatienne Desmette, Isabelle Hansez, Dorothée Hanin, Françoise Bertrand, 2015). One of the key-aspects of this theory is that individuals are motivated to 'achieve and maintain positive concepts of themselves'. Individuals firstly categorize, which leads to social categorization within these categories which in turn results in social

comparison (*Tajfel & Turner, 1986*). Tajfel and Turner also mentioned that 'individuals experience collective identity based on their membership in a group'.

From an organizational perspective, this theory implies that organizations can impact individuals behaviors through affecting the self-identity and self-concept of individuals. To develop an emotional relationship with the organization, you must first develop cognitive awareness. Specifically focused on positive characteristics, because 'individuals tend to identify with organizations that are perceived to have positive characteristics because this enhances individuals self-esteem' (*Florence Stinglhamber, Géraldine Marique, Gaëtane Caesens, Donatienne Desmette, Isabelle Hansez, Dorothée Hanin, Françoise Bertrand, 2015*). Moreover, the group engagement model discusses that 'organizational identity is not only based on individuals' evaluation of the status of an organization, but also depends on the individual's evaluation of their own status within the organization' (*Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003*).

Multi identity concept

The multi-identity concept is a widely used term in sociological research and it mentions that 'individuals are not simply defined by one identity (evolved from societal structures), but individuals are defined by the various identities they have' (*Brunhilde Scheuringer, 2016*). The multi-identity theory is the basis of the role identity theory.

Role identity theory

The role identity theory further dives into the relationship between identification and commitment. It indicates that 'the greater the commitment to an identity, the higher that identity is placed within that individual's salience hierarchy. As a result of achieving high placement within the salience hierarchy, an individual relies on an identity more often than less important ones' (*Randel, A.E., Chay-Hoon, L. and Earley, P.C, 2005*).

The identity paradox

The identity paradox concerns the desire to seek belonging versus seeking distinguishing oneself (*Burke, 1973*). Naturally, individuals have these two contradicting desires, on one hand they want to be part of a group and belong, and on the other hand they want to distinguish themselves. This paradox mentioned that due to this paradox, there is a need for shared meaning, and the paradox is the basis of communication. (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Therefore identity is considered to be both 'sameness and difference.'

These theories form an important basis for evaluating the concept of organizational identification and organizational identity. The organizational identity primarily refers to identity as being a dynamic and collective process affecting and being affected by reciprocal and interrelated elements and processes. Within those elements, history, heritage and shared goals and values are perceived as autonomous components of corporate identity. In regard to organizational identity, it is assumed people have the natural need to put themselves into a social context, which results in identification. Assuming the multi-identity theory, people have several identification processes, the strength of the organizational identification lies in its position relative to the other identities of the individual.

3. Literature analysis

The literature review discusses the most important articles regarding organizational identity in multinational companies. Firstly, 13 relevant articles are shortly summarized to understand what insights they have provided into this topic. Finally, figure 3.1 provides an overview of the literature, the relevant insights and other important researchers that have played an important role in the theoretical background and framework.

1. *Elif Karaosmanoglu, T.C. Melewar, Douglas Paterson (2005) Corporate identity: concept, components and contribution, Istanbul Technical University*

This paper analyzed the corporate identity concept, mentioning the various definitions and previously defined concepts and theories. through in-depth interviews they further analyzed how corporate identity is perceived through discussing a variety of components. It highlights the benefits of strong corporate identity and how it contributes to success. The article concludes that strong corporate identity boosts employee motivation, increases the ability to recruit and retain talented employees, it provides a strong base for mergers and acquisitions and so has a positive effect within change management. Moreover, strong corporate identity increases transparency and plays a significant role in competitive advantage and stakeholder management.

2. *Marwa Tourky, Pantea Foroudi, Suraksha Gupta, Ahmed Shaalan (2021) Conceptualizing corporate identity in a dynamic environment, Middlesex University*

This study investigated the concept of corporate identity and aimed to gather further insights into the conceptualisation and dimensions of corporate identity. The research concludes the key-dimensions are communication, visual identity, behavior, organizational culture, stakeholder management and founder value-based leadership. While most studies identified mission, philosophy, founder, country-of-origin and history as subdimensions of culture (Melewar, 2003, 2018), this research identified mission, founder, history and country of origin as separate dimensions of culture. The research also provided further insights into how these dimensions are connected and interrelated to each other.

3. *Jurian van der waal (2022) Constructing a new identity, Radboud University*

This research investigated what requirements should be met when constructing the desired identity. The study highlighted including both managers and members of the organization and therefore integrated the personality profile method in combination with the functionalist perspective. Moreover, they used the elements needs, attitude, distinctive competencies, constitution, goal orientation temperament and origin to create a measurement of organizational identity.

4. *i-Young Ahn, Shilu Huang (2020), Types of employee training, organizational identification, and turnover intention: evidence from Korean employees, University Seoul.*

This research addresses the relationships between employee training, organizational identity and turnover intention, adding the justice perspective. They investigated these relationships through a survey and scale-method. It concludes that training does indeed reduce employee turnover, the justice perception on fair reception of training does not necessarily correlate to organizational identification. On the other hand, organizational identification does have an effect on turnover intention, and it can be considered to be a critical element in the training-turnover process.

5. *Xi, Jing; Koch, Karl; Othman, Bestoon; Liu, Ping (2020) Employees Perspectives of the Determinants of Corporate Culture in Western-based Multinational Corporations Operating in China, Revista Argentina de Clínica Psicológica*

This research analyzed the key determinants of corporate culture in western-based organizations operating in China. They conducted a survey among expats and Chinese employees, evaluating their interpretations and perceptions on corporate culture. Moreover, this research addresses the level of adaptation to Chinese culture. Finally, the five determinants were defined as workplace-related elements, corporate image, strategy, vision and values, development and rewards, community and task development. The research also concluded that Chinese and foreigners have different interpretations of corporate culture.

6. *Florence Stinglhamber, Géraldine Marique, Gaëtane Caesens, Donatienne Desmette, Isabelle Hansez, Dorothée Hanin, Françoise Bertrand (2015) Employees' Organizational Identification and Affective Organizational Commitment: An Integrative Approach, Plos journal*

This research investigates the relationships between employees organizational identification and affective organizational commitment through a cross-legged panel design and scale method. The aim was primarily to gain insights into how these concepts are related and connect to each other. The findings of this research discuss favorable work experiences are operated through organizational identity to increase employees affective communication, and so decreases employee turnover.

7. *Jonna B. Blount (2021) Balancing Focal and Client Firm Employee Identification and Acculturation Tensions: A Case Study Approach at a BPO Firm, Georgia State University*

This study investigates the identification and acculturation process, specifically of a business process outsourcing firm. It dived into this process through in-depth interviews with senior management, middle management and employees. The analysis was structured based on the following elements; firm culture, leader characteristics, leadership actions, employee responses and other identification and acculturation factors.

8. *Mona Agerholm Andersen (2020) Times are changing: the role of heritage identity on employee identification in a Danish family-owned company, Aarhus University*

This article analyzes how the employees of a family-owned Danish company identity with the heritage identity. Through in-depth interviews, the research tries to gain further insights into how the employees interpret and perceive historical events and heritage values, and how this affects their identification process. The employee's identification is a dynamic process, which is affected by a changing social context, this makes it a complex process.

9. *Robyn E. Parker, Paul Haridakis (2008) DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION SCALE: INTEGRATING COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS, journal of communication studies*

This research investigated organization identity, combining the communicative with the cognitive approach. Through focus group interviews and a scale survey, the relationship between organizational identity, job satisfaction, employee characteristics and organizational

support was further analyzed. This study provides a valid scale and framework for the organizational identification process.

10. *Peter Foreman, David A. Whetten (2021) The Identity Conundrum and an Expanded Framework of Organizational Identity, National University of Ireland Maynooth,*

This article discusses in-depth the concepts of organizational identity and addresses the individual identification process. It provides further insights into the relationship between these two concepts, and mentions a distinctive defensible conceptual domain or organizational identity and identification. Moreover, it explains how the identity paradox exists among individuals and organization levels, and proposes a two-dimensional form. Finally, two new elements are added to Albert & Whetten original definition, resulting in how identity should be central, enduring, distinctive and recognizable and adaptable.

11. *Anna Blombäck, Marcela Ramírez Pasillas (2012) Exploring the logics of corporate brand identity formation, Jönköping University*

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding into the role of family business perception within corporate brand identity formation. It is a qualitative research and interviews were conducted with companies identifying as a family business, and integrating these aspects into their brand and marketing strategies. This research created a theoretical model, defining the three main drivers of corporate brand identity as habit logic, organic logic and intended logic. Finally concluding that the arbitrary, emergent and strategic processes result in the corporate brand identity.

12. *Brunhilde Scheuringer (2016) Multiple Identities: A Theoretical and an Empirical Approach, Cambridge University*

This article discusses several sociological theories about identity and its developments. It highlights the importance and role of interaction identity formation, and so the reciprocity. The article also mentions identity as a dynamic process, and defines identity further as 'one's personal awareness of being a distinctive individual with a unique life story and being in constant confrontation with the environment in order to attain a balance between individual claims and the expectations of this environment.'

13. *Rumelili, Bahar; Todd, Jennifer (2017). Paradoxes of identity change: Integrating macro, meso, and micro research on identity in conflict processes, political studies association*

This article discusses identity in the context of conflicts, it highlights the desire of belonging and how this affects including and excluding behaviors. It dives into several sub-disciplinary interests in paradoxes concerning identity change.

Article	Contributed to/key findings
CORPORATE IDENTITY CONCEPT	

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION		
5	<p>Xi, Jing; Koch, Karl; Othman, Bestoon; Liu, Ping (2020) Employees Perspectives of the Determinants of Corporate Culture in Western-based Multinational Corporations Operating in China, Revista Argentina de Clínica Psicológica</p>	<p>Insights into the perception and interpretations of employee identification of expats in China.</p> <p><u>Organizational identification</u></p>
6	<p>Florence Stinglhamber, Géraldine Marique, Gaëtane Caesens, Donatienne Desmette, Isabelle Hansez, Dorothée Hanin, Françoise Bertrand (2015) Employees' Organizational Identification and Affective Organizational Commitment: An Integrative Approach, Plos journal</p>	<p>Insights into the concept and interrelations between employees identification and affective organizational commitment.</p> <p><u>Organizational identification</u></p>
7	<p>Jonna B. Blount (2021) Balancing Focal and Client Firm Employee Identification and Acculturation Tensions: A Case Study Approach at a BPO Firm, Georgia State University</p>	<p>Further insights into the identification and acculturation process.</p> <p><u>Organizational identification</u></p>
	<p>Other important researchers:</p> <p><i>Ashforth (1985), Ashforth & Mael (1989), Bell & Menguc (2002), Bernstein (1984), Bhattacharya & Elsbach (2002), Blombäck & Ramirez & Pasillas (2012), Blumer (1969), Brewer (2003), Brown (2006), Bullis & Bach (1989, 1991), Burke (1991), Byker & Anderson (1975), Cheney (1983), Cheney & Tompkins (1987), Cerulo (1997), Christensen & Askegaard (2001), Czarniawska & Wolff (1998), van Dick (2004, 2006), van Dick & Wagner & Stellmacher & Christ (2004), van Dick & Ullrich & Tissington (2006), Dutton (1994), Dutton & Dukerich (1991), Elsbach & Bhattacharya (2001), Elsbach & Cable (2019), Elsbach & Pieper (2019), Foreman & Whetten (2021), Glynn (1998), Hatch & Schultz (2010), Hogg & Terry (2000), Kogut & Zander (1996), Larsson & Pepper (2006), Littlejohn & Foss (2009), Mael & Ashforth (1992), Meyer & Allen (1991), Myers & Kassing (1998), Ouchi & Jaeger (1978), Patchen (1970), Parent (2008), Parker & Haridakis</i></p>	<p><u>Organizational identification</u></p>

	(2008), Powers (1973), Rousseau (1998), Russo (1998), Ryu (2015), Tajfel (1978, 1979), Tompkins & Cheney (1983, 1985), Weick (1979, 1995), Wiesenfeld & Raghuram & Garud (1998)	
HERITAGE & SHARED VALUES, CORPORATE IDENTITY AND EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION		
8	Mona Agerholm Andersen (2020) Times are changing: the role of heritage identity on employee identification in a Danish family-owned company, Aarhus University	<p>Insights into heritage organizational identity and the role of history, founder and country of origin in the employee identification process.</p> <p><u>Heritage & shared values</u> <u>Organizational identity</u> <u>Organizational identification</u></p>
9	Robyn E. Parker, Paul Haridakis (2008) DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION SCALE: INTEGRATING COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS, journal of communication studies	<p>Deeper insights into the organizational identity and identification process.</p> <p><u>Organizational identity</u> <u>Organizational identification</u></p>
10	Peter Foreman, David A. Whetten (2021) The Identity Conundrum and an Expanded Framework of Organizational Identity, National University of Ireland Maynooth,	<p>Deeper insights into the organizational identity and organizational identity concept and specifically the employee identification process</p> <p><u>Heritage & shared values</u> <u>Organizational identity</u> <u>Organizational identification</u></p>
11	Anna Blombäck, Marcela Ramírez Pasillas (2012) Exploring the logics of corporate brand identity formation, Jönköping University	<p>Insights into the role of family business perception (from a marketing-related perspective)</p> <p><u>Heritage & shared values</u> <u>Organizational identity</u> <u>Organizational identification</u></p>
	<p>Other important researchers:</p> <p><i>Balmer (2006, 2011, 2019), Balmer & Burghausen (2015), Hudson (2007), Ind (1992), Larsson & Pepper (2006), Ljungkvist & Boers (2019), Maier & Anderson</i></p>	<u>Culture, shared values, history and heritage</u>

	(2017), Scott, (1997), Tourky & Foroudi & Gupta & Shaalan (2021), Urde (2007), Zandel & Holt & Popp (2016)	
IDENTITY THEORIES & CONCEPTS		
1 2	<i>Brunhilde Scheuringer (2016) Multiple Identities: A Theoretical and an Empirical Approach, cambridge university</i>	Insights and understanding of the most relevant identity theories and its developments from the sociological perspective. <u>Identity theories</u>
1 3	Rumelili, Bahar; Todd, Jennifer (2017). Paradoxes of identity change: Integrating macro, meso, and micro research on identity in conflict processes, political studies association	Further insights into identity theories and concepts <u>Identity theories</u>
	Other important researchers: <i>Brunhilde Scheuringer (2016), Burke (1973), Florence Stinglhamber, Géraldine Marique, Gaëtane Caesens, Donatienne Desmette, Isabelle Hansez, Dorothee Hanin, Françoise Bertrand (2015), Merriam-Webster (2017), Randel, A.E., Chay-Hoon, L. and Earley, P.C (2005), Tajfel & Turner (1986), Tyler & Blader (2000, 2003)</i>	 <u>Identity theories</u>
<p>QUERY: 'corporate identity' 'organizational identity' 'organizational culture' 'employee identification' 'identity' 'individual identification' 'multinationals' 'multinational corporations' 'heritage corporate identity' 'business heritage'</p>		

Figure 3.1 Overview literature review (oudijk, 2022)

4. Research Model and assumptions

Section 2 has widely discussed the research around organizational identity and organizational identification, the introduction highlighted the gaps which resulted in the question: 'For what reasons do employees of foreign subsidiaries identify with the organizational identity?' Browaeys & price have mentioned that 'when a company develops a multinational conglomerate, headquarters culture may influence the subsidiaries abroad' (Browaeys & price, 2008). In addition, Balmer pointed out the country of origin effect, concluding that 'characteristics of national culture affects company culture' (Balmer, 1998). Therefore, this research makes an assumption related to the link between the company's

national culture, history and heritage, implying that employees of foreign subsidiaries have a weaker identification with the organizational identity:

Assumption 1: Employees of foreign subsidiaries have a weaker identification with the organizational identity

Again, section 2 mentioned several researches and conclusions around culture and shared values in multinational companies. It has been concluded that 'members from different subsidiaries interpret corporate culture differently' (Petersen & Ribsén, 2013)(Xi & Koch & Othman & Liu, 2020). Following-up on this thought, it is possible to suggest that employees of foreign subsidiaries identify through different elements with the organizational identity:

Assumption 2: Employees of foreign subsidiaries identify through different elements with the organizational identity

5. Methodology

This section dives into the potential research methods. It discusses how to conduct semi-structured interviews, defining the data collection process and sampling. Lastly, it explains what data analysis methods will be used.

5.1 Research methods

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding into the identification process of employees of foreign subsidiaries within multinational companies. Specifically gaining insights into the 'reasons' of identifying with this identity, through what elements and why through those elements, it focuses herein on shared values and corporate heritage. Therefore, the aim is to gain in-depth knowledge into this specific process and context, to

better comprehend these subjective experiences and perceptions and so explore this gap and bring new insights into this research domain.

This aim clearly requires a qualitative research method. Both primary and secondary data are important for this research. Firstly, secondary data is collected to understand the already existing knowledge and gaps around this topic, this research then focuses on collecting primary data to fill in the existing gaps. It concerns phenomenological research following a combination of deductive and inductive research, this means the research follows certain theories while investigating the concept of corporate heritage through the perception of individuals. The deductive part is however limited, therefore this research follows a deductive method and then switches to an inductive research method to further explore these concepts.

Consequently, this research will use the survey method, specifically using semi-structured interviews, to collect data about the perception of organizational identity, heritage identity, shared values and organizational identification. These interviews will be conducted online, and if possible, in-person. These interviews are focused on having an open discussion about the perception on these topics, exploring these concepts further. The interviewer therefore must be careful with its questions, avoiding bias, and prioritizes observation and taking notes about the interviewees perceptions.

Semi-structured interviews are considered to be the best method within this research aim because it provides in-depth insights, flexibility to ask follow-up questions and so dive into the interviewees perception, while at the same time providing comparable and reliable data. Moreover, by having a thematic framework beforehand, the interview can stay focused and encourages two ways communication and so avoids distractions. The other side of structure is that it sometimes limits detailed and richness, through semi-structured interviews, there is still space for open-ended questions, focusing on elaborating and clarifying perceptions.

As all methods, semi-structured interviews have both advantages and disadvantages, the validity and comparability of results is usually limited. Even though the interview will include some structured questions, the order and moment will vary and this on its turn might affect the validity. In addition, there is always the risk of bias. The most likely bias to present itself in this research is the social desirability bias. Employees of a company will have to discuss their perception of the organizational identity, they are likely to be biased about social desirability, and avoid giving negative answers.

5.2 Semi-structured interviews

The interview is structured into several topics. First of all, the aim is to gather the perceptions regarding (1) organizational identity, (2) corporate heritage and (3) shared values. The next topic (4) would be to understand how these 3 concepts are interrelated to each other. We can then move on to a crucial part; (5) the perception of the identification process. Finally, (6) some structured questions will be asked to gather a kind of measurement of the identification process. It must be noted that this questionnaire functions as a basis of the interview, not all questions will necessarily be asked within these exact words, neither in this order. The aim is to gather an insight into (1) perception on the role and importance of organizational identity, (2) perception on the role and importance of corporate heritage. (3)

perception on the role and importance of shared values and most importantly; (4) an understanding on how employees identify with the organizational identity, and what the role of shared values and corporate heritage is within this identification process.

Intention	Hard question	Soft questions
Introduction part 1	introduce myself and 5min small talk with interviewee	-
Introduction part 2	Introduce the research, confirm recording, data processing etcetera	-
Understand the organizational identity concept	Could you tell me about what organizational identity means according to you?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How would you describe the organizational identity in your company? 2) Is the organizational identity relevant for you? and why would you think so?
Role of corporate heritage	Could you tell me about what corporate heritage means according to you?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How would you describe the corporate heritage in your company? 2) Is the corporate heritage relevant for you? and why would you think so?
Role of shared values	How would you describe shared values, and what do you think are the most important shared values in your company?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do you think the shared values are relevant for you? and why?
Interrelations	Do you think shared values, corporate heritage and organizational identity affect each other?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How do you think that shared values affect corporate heritage? 2) How do you think that shared values affect organizational identity 3) And how do you think that the corporate heritage affects organizational identity? 4) And how do you think that corporate heritage affects the shared values
Understand the identification process	How do you identify with the organizational identity of your company?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What does identification mean to you?

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Do you identify with the corporate heritage? And why and how do you identify? 3) How would you describe your identification process? 4) Do you think shared values play a role in your identification? and if so, why and how? 5) Do you think the corporate heritage plays a role in your identification? and if so, why and how?
Measuring the identification process	How would you measure your identification process?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How would you measure your identification process? 2) How would you describe your identification with the corporate heritage? → weak - intermediate - strong - very strong why? 3) What do you consider to be the main elements/factors in your identification process? 4) Could you make a ranking of the following elements? include shared values, corporate heritage & own input
Finalize interview	Thank interviewee for their time, ask for their experience, feedback and recommendations. Does the interviewee know other people who can participate?	-

Figure 5.2.1 Interview table (oudijk, 2022)

5.3 Data collection & sampling

The sampling is crucial for reliable and relevant research. Within a qualitative study, it can be complex to define the amount of necessary interviews. However, an estimation will be made which serves as a basis of the research, it must be noted that this might be adjusted during the process of conducting interviews, based on the results.

Most importantly are the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Companies who do not operate internationally or have a low involvement in constructing organizational identity will be excluded from this research. In general, it can be assumed that companies in the sports industry have strong organizational identities, therefore the main inclusion criteria is companies in the sports industry with an international/worldwide presence. It is also

important to note that the company does not only need to sell internationally, but they must have offices (subsidiaries), in foreign countries. The aim of this research is to conduct the interviews and investigation among at least 2 different companies. Therefore, companies in three different geographical areas are contacted: France-based companies, Germany-based companies and US-based companies. This refers to the fact that these companies were initially founded and started operating in either France, Germany or US and expanded from there. The figure below shows a selection of companies meeting the above mentioned inclusion and exclusion criteria, the figure provides an overview of the contact strategy.

Company	Contact person	Contact details	Contact strategy
France-based			
Salomon	Charlotte Vernet Matthieu Knibiehly David Farcot Franck Constant Cecile maxit	+33622304206 Matthieu.Knibiehly@salomon.com david.farcot@salomon.com franck.constant@salomon.com cecile.maxit@salomon.com	(1) Professor Wagner could possibly put me in contact with the director (2) Contact Charlotte, who is currently working there (3) Reach out to either Matthieu, David, Franck or Cecile
Decathlon	Cyril Cazin Stephane Ganassali	+33665865913 cyril.cazin@decathlon.com stephane.ganassali@univ-smb.fr	(1) Contact Cyril directly (2) Contact professor Stephane Ganassali and get more contacts through him
US-based			
North Face	Keith Byrne head of global people, purpose and culture team Haley Ells Senior global category manager Miranda Smith Head of global brand retail	Linkedin contact	(1) Reach out through linkedin to Keith Byrne (2) Get in contact with Haley and/or Miranda
Patagonia	Aileen Otterweller Head of brand and business impact	aileen.ottenweller@patagonia.com ottenweller.aileen@patagonia.com	(1) Reach out to Aileen through email (2) Reach out through linkedin

	Nathaniel D. General manager		
Columbia	Sylvie d'azemar Director of brand merchandising	+17075444590 slv.dazemar@gmail.com	(1) Be careful, do not contact personal email (2) Call sylvie & explain the research
Germany-based			
Deuter	Angela Vögele Public relations manager	Angela.voegele@deuter.com +498214987101	(1) Contact Angela
Jack Wolfskin	Daniele Uebel Senior manager HR		(1) Reach out through LinkedIn

The figure has provided an overview on how companies will be contacted and through which contact persons, the email construct below will be used to reach out to these contacts by email;

Dear X

I am writing on behalf of the University of Kassel. We are in the process of conducting a research project on organizational identity within multinational companies in the sports industry. For this project, we are interviewing employees on the perception of organizational identity. We specifically need to interview employees from both the headquarters and foreign subsidiaries, preferably both management and operational employees. The interview results will be processed anonymously (company name & employee can remain anonymous).

By participating in this research, you will be able to contribute to academic research while also gaining an understanding of your employees identification process. If you wish, we would also provide detailed information about our findings and the results of the study.

We would like to set-up a video call with you to pitch the project and provide further information. If you are not the right person, could you recommend someone within your organization who may be the right contact for this subject matter?

Thank you in advance for your efforts.

With kind regards,

Dieuwke Oudijk

DieuwkeOudijk@outlook.com

+31646430040

Dear Xt,

I am writing to you in regard to my last email. We would like to know if you have any questions about the research and interviews, and if we can set-up a short call to pitch the project. Thank you in advance and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Dieuwke Oudijk

5.4 reliability and validity

To provide relevant research, it is important that the research is reliable and valid. By addressing the reliability, we primarily check the reliability of the measurement. Within qualitative research, reliability is limited as it is about gaining an understanding within a certain context. However, to provide reliable qualitative research, the interviews are conducted in at least two different companies, with at least two different subsidiaries per company, so this means that per company, minimum 6 interviews will be conducted, 2 interviews in the headquarters countries, 2 interviews in subsidiary one and 2 interviews in

subsidiary two. Moreover, per country, an interview will be conducted with both an upper-management employee and an operational employee. Through these requirements reliability is maintained within the limitations of qualitative research.

To deliver valid qualitative research, it is important to carefully record and process interview results. Before the start of the interview, interviewees will be asked to confirm acceptance of recording the interviews. The results of the interviews will be put into a transcript which will serve as a basis for the thematic analysis. Programs such as audacity and microsoft word will be used for creating transcriptions.

5.5 Data analysis

The data analysis is the crucial part to convert the results of the interviews into academic results, conclusions and implications. Following up on a qualitative, semi-structured research method, data can be analyzed through thematic analysis and discourse analysis. The thematic analysis primarily focuses on the content of the data, and it concerns coding and organizing the data to identify key topics. The discourse analysis puts focus on the context of the data. This research will use thematic analysis, understanding and defining what the (interrelated) key-topics are within the identification process of employees in multinational companies.

The thematic analysis starts with coding the qualitative data, this coding process focuses on finding patterns, similarities or contradiction. Once the data is coded it is possible to generate specific themes. These themes can then be reviewed and defined. Based on those results, it is possible to analyze and formulate conclusions.

Furthermore, both deductive and inductive reasoning is used within this research. Section 2 has highlighted previous research and theories regarding organizational identity and organizational identification. Therefore, section 4 formulated assumptions based on these existing knowledge. Consequentially, data will be collected and analyzed. This will result in final conclusions, either confirming or rejecting the assumptions.

6. Expected Contributions

6.1 Scholarly Contributions

Academically, this research contributes to the current literature regarding organizational identity, organizational identification and shared values and heritage within multinational companies. It aims to close the gap, and provide further insights into the relationships of less tangible concepts, such as shared values & heritage. A better understanding of the identification process among companies with a strong and weak corporate identity. This is the first research to specifically connect the heritage corporate identity and shared values to the multinational identity among subsidiaries.

6.2 Implications for Business and Society

On a more practical level, this research has a high value for managers and organizations, providing further insights into the identification process of employees of foreign subsidiaries. These insights are relevant for managers, as many researches have already shown evidence on the positive relationship between high employee identification, strong organizational identity and high labor productivity, low employee turnover, employees (intrinsic) motivation, ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees, firm reputation, corporate branding and competitive advantage. (Tichy, 1983)(Melewar & Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005)(Kiriakidou & millward, 2000)(Melewar & Jenkins, 2002)(Harris & Chernatony, 2001)(Blombäck & Ramirez Pasillas, 2012)(Jones, 2010)(Abratt, 1989)(Gray & Smeltzer, 1987)(Riel & Balmer, 1997)(Downey, 1986)(Gray & Smeltzer, 1985)(Schmidt, 1995)(Balmer, 2017).

7. Chapters Overview

1. Abstract
2. Table of contents
3. Literature & theories
4. results
 - 4.1 Perception on the role and importance of organizational identity
 - 4.2 Perception on the importance and role of heritage in organizational identity
 - 4.3 Perception on the importance and role of shared values in organizational identity
 - 4.6 Perception on how they identify with the organizational identity and what the role of shared values and heritage is within this identification process
 - 4.6 Measurement of their identification with the corporate heritage
 - 4.7 Assumption 1: Employees of foreign subsidiaries have a weaker identification with the corporate heritage
 - 4.8 Assumption 2: Employees of foreign subsidiaries identify through different elements
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Limitations
8. References

8. Work Plan

Figure 8.1 provides a schematic view of the work plan. Week 40 starts on monday the 3rd of october of 2022. While the expose will be updated and finalized I will start reaching out to companies. The months of October and November will be focused on conducting interviews, and the results will be written out during November and december. It is important to note that the literature is an almost continuous process, and this can be updated and adjusted before, during and after interviews. The aim is to have the main structure and draft of the thesis by the end of December. So January can be used as a back-up for possible delays, changes and to focus on finalizing the thesis: rewriting it into an academic writing style. The 16th or 17th of January the thesis will be presented at the University of Kassel.

	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3
Expose																
Conduct interviews																
Literature																
Write results																
Write discussion, conclusion & limitations																
Finalize thesis																
Prepare presentation																
Theses presentation																

Figure 8.1 Work plan corporate identity research (oudijk, 2022)

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