Who are we?

*Integrating corporate communication and corporate identity into museums’ strategic management*

Bachelor thesis in Marketing & Management Communication

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Abstract

Purpose:
This thesis seeks to investigate “how museums can theoretically benefit from integrating corporate identity into their overall corporate communication and strategic management?” by testing the following hypotheses:

1. Museums micro- and macro environments are changing, consequently leading to greater competition, multiple stakeholders, multiple product/service offerings
2. as a consequence incorporating a corporate communications approach might be useful
3. and in order to meet both of these successfully, museums might utilize the corporate identity

Design/methodology/approach:
Based on the approach of critical rationalism and falsification the above mentioned hypotheses were subjected to testing in order to falsify the problem statement. Following the deductive logic, a situational analysis was conducted with the specific aim of theoretically investigating the environment of museums more specifically looking into the market and the management. When looking into the market the product offerings and the customers were analyzed leading to an analysis of museum management and funding so as to comment on the complexity of the environment.

Following this, a discussion was conducted on the basis of the second and third hypotheses to look more specifically into corporate communication and whether museums can employ the concept to meet a complex and fast changing environment along with discussing the corporate identity principle as a means for establishing a starting point for integrating corporate communication into the management of museums.

Findings & practical implications:
As the hypotheses were subjects of testing, they were for the moment consequently found justifiable i.e. indicating that museums can in fact benefit theoretically benefit from integrating corporate identity into their overall corporate communication and strategic management. More specifically the museum environment showed signs of complexity with increasing
demands/needs from museum stakeholders, decreases in public funding, and a strong competitive market situation with increasing focus on products and marketing. Moreover a change was spotted in that museums have gone from an object-oriented, custodial management view to a more visitor-oriented one leading to the increased focus on product/market development.

As a consequence, corporate communication was found to be a possible solution as its focus on integrating management-, organizational-, and marketing communication would secure alignment of all communication efforts leading to an all-stakeholder perspective. Further it was found that corporate identity can provide a starting point for establishing a foundation for corporate communication and as such leading to increasing stakeholder relationship building and -loyalty.

**Originality/value:**
To the author’s knowledge, no research similar to this one has been conducted and as such this thesis contributes with a new perspective towards museum management that takes into consideration its current situational factors.

**Keywords:** Corporate Communication, Strategic Communication, Strategic Management, Management, Museums, Corporate Identity, Corporate Branding, & Museology
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1. Introduction

With globalization, increasing competition, technological developments and modernization, museums constantly find themselves in a turmoil that can be difficult to manage. Customers are increasingly seeking entertainment, and with the arrival of, among others, experience economy and edutainment, private corporations are increasingly gaining footing in what used to be the museum market i.e. providing experiences and learning to the general public. Moreover, with decreases in both public and governmental funding, museums are consequently battling for media and public attention with the aim of increasing alternative funding. Though not profit-maximized as such, they do have a need to be profit-oriented in order to survive in today’s society, thus museums are currently expanding their product offerings by market- and product development strategies. All this complexity increasingly puts pressure upon museum managers to attract the resources needed for survival and for gaining a competitive advantage consequently leading to a museum market where multiple stakeholders are present and should be managed strategically.

Research within the business world has concurrently presented corporate communication as a means of aligning all communication strategies and efforts to deal with these situational changes, as corporate communication, though still an emerging field has provided management with a particular approach towards securing unified and aligned communication at the highest level.

This view, however, indicates that managers acknowledge corporate communication as an umbrella that influences all management functions and moreover that the environment is no longer an exogenous factor, but forms part of the individual, thus implying that everything is based on communication (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002, p. 134). Along this line the issues of corporate identity and branding have gained much interest “as the function of the firm has evolved from the finite task of selling products, to the more complex task of projecting a positive identity to the multiplicity of its stakeholders” (Editorial, Journal of brand management, 2006, p. 1)
## 1.1 Problem Statement

With a theoretical focus and applying a deductive method, this thesis will therefore seek to investigate

> “how museums can theoretically benefit from integrating corporate identity into their overall corporate communication and strategic management?”

when the following three hypotheses are justified, thus not falsified:

- **H1:** the museums micro- and macro environments are changing, consequently leading to greater competition, multiple stakeholders, multiple product/service offerings

  and

- **H2:** within this complex situation a need for a corporate communications approach becomes apparent, more specifically with regards to the strategic management of museums

  and

- **H3:** in order to meet both of these successfully, museums might utilize the corporate identity principle

## 1.2 Scientific Approach and Methodology

Seeing that this problem statement is empirical with its appertaining hypotheses, the scientific approach of critical rationalism seemed appropriate for guiding the research, more specifically the notion of falsification.

From Popper’s (1975) perspective “*what characterizes the empirical method is its manner of exposing to falsification, in every conceivable way*” (p. 42) Moreover, the aim of the empirical method is to select one theory which by comparison is the fittest by exposing all theories to the fiercest struggle for survival (Popper, 1975, p. 42) As this thesis is built upon previous research within various fields, it is necessary to employ a scientific view that sees science as a continuous process, of which theories can be tested empirically and falsified. Approaching this thesis
thereby is through the eyes of deduction logic that seeks to falsify the abovementioned hypotheses.

“If we adhere to the demand that scientific statements must be objective then those statements which belong to the empirical basis of science must also be objective, i.e. inter-subjectively testable. Yet inter-subjective testability always implies that, from the statements which are to be tested, other testable statements can be deduced. Thus if the basic statements in their turn are to be inter-subjectively testable, there can be no ultimate statements in science… and therefore none which cannot in principle be refuted by falsifying some of the conclusions… Thus… systems of theories are tested by deducing from them statements of a lesser level of universality (Ibid, p.47)

Through this critical/rational line of thinking, this thesis thereby seeks to falsify the three hypotheses with the specific aim of pointing to its difficulties and errors and moreover sketch one possible solution. As argued by Popper (1975) the method of critically testing theories always proceeds from the following line of logical thinking:

From a new idea … not yet justified in any way … conclusions are drawn by means of logical deduction. These conclusions are then compared with one another and with other relevant statements, so as to find what logical relations … exist between them” (p. 32)

The generic nature of the problem statement leading towards developing one theory that should be tested empirically thereby lies at the heart of critical rationalism because the world and the society are seen as containing regularities, which can be generalized. Through critical rationalism, the abovementioned hypotheses can be exposed to deductive testing, and thus be falsified, as relating to the overall aim of the thesis.

1.3 Research Nature & Purpose

To the author’s knowledge, no research similar to this one have been conducted; i.e. the linking of an overall corporate communication strategy and corporate identity with strategic management to benefit museums as they face a complex society. Some theorists however, have been focusing on combining some of these concepts with for instance
- Corporate communication & museum/nonprofits: Gürel & Kavak (2008), Wiggill (2011)

Thereby, the value and originality of this thesis thus contributes a new perspective to the corporate communication field. Moreover seeing that this is a first attempt of combining these theories with regards to a museum context, this thesis specifically seeks to detect a foundation for further research, and more importantly improve the interest to the combination of corporate communication at the strategic management level, and how it can benefit museums.

1.4 Structure

Following the deductive logic, an overview of the complex theoretical background was established in order to provide a foundation for the analysis. This foundation was particularly concerned with the museum micro/macro environments for the more importantly testing of the first hypothesis. As this situation was justified as complex, a discussion concerning corporate communication was conducted leading to its relationship with strategic management in order to test the second hypothesis. As a consequence of it not being falsifiable, the third hypothesis was tested through a discussion of the corporate identity principle. Thus the following structure emerges:

i) Introduction: to the methodology and theoretical context are established, indicating the deductive logic of which this thesis employs in order to falsify the hypotheses i.e. “the logical comparison of the conclusions among themselves, by which the internal consistency of the system is tested” (Popper, 1975, p. 32)

ii) Analysis: of the museum environment originates through an “investigation of the logical form of the theory, with the object of determining whether it has the character of … scientific theory” (Ibid, p.32)

iii) Discussions: on corporate communication, strategy, management and corporate identity i.e. “the comparison with other theories, chiefly with the aim of determining
whether the theory would constitute a scientific advance should it survive... various tests” (Ibid, pp. 32-33)

1.5 Delimitations

As a consequence of the above mentioned deductive logic one delimitation becomes apparent as the final stage of the deductive testing of theories is not present in the thesis. Thus the actual testing of the theory by “empirical applications of the conclusions which can be derived from it” (Popper, 1975, p. 33) have been excluded. Nevertheless, as Popper (1975) moreover argues “I only demand that every such statement [i.e. a scientific statement] must be capable of being tested” (p. 48) which leads towards the reason for the exclusion of this particular stage. As the aim of this thesis concerns the connection and the logically deduced sequential relationship – as reflected in the hypotheses – there was no apparent reason for actual empirical testing. Moreover seeing that, also as argued by Popper (1975), one should strive for constantly testing and falsifying of the theory, an extensive analysis must be conducted at a larger scale, which was not possible within this framework. Along the same line is also the reason for excluding empirical data and specific case stories.

As this thesis specifically deals with strategic corporate communication at management level, where many concepts are interlinked, some logically following processes were excluded. More specifically, all the tactical elements and strategic choices, thus the implementation and its correlation to other important areas of management such as planning, organizing and staffing. Furthermore, in order to ease the research and choice of theory and consequently for the purpose of proposing a generic theoretical statement, the concept of corporate culture was also excluded, though culture “help create the diversity and the richness of the organizational forms and institutions located between the state and the market” (Anheier, 2005, p. 35). As such, all abovementioned factors were only selectively included in this thesis, because of the purpose of testing a homogeneous and generic theoretical statement. Although acknowledging these as very important elements - and especially that this is a field that is in fact heterogeneous – including them would have undermined the overall argument and thereby also the purpose of the paper.
2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Strategic Management & Corporate Strategies

Strategic management is a continuous process of thinking through the current mission of the organization, thinking through the current environmental conditions, and then combining these elements by setting forth a guide for tomorrow’s decisions and results (cited in Steyn, 2003, p. 170). As strategic management is the means of pursuing the organization’s aims and goals, the focus on external and internal environment is very important. Therefore, relating to this thesis, strategic management is the necessary link between corporate communications and management.

Moreover, there are a number of different approaches to strategic management, as presented by Steyn (2003), of which a few is worth mentioning.

- **Shareholder approach:** the traditional profit-centered approach to management, personified by Friedman, which originated during the Industrial age (1900-1950)
- **Social responsibility/ethical approach:** a business is seen to be an actor in an environment of which it should respond. The concept was introduced in the neo-industrial age (1960)
- **Corporate social responsiveness approach:** by the early 1980’s social responsiveness made entry and referred to how organizations should operationalize their social responsibilities
- **Stakeholder approach:** the conceptual shift in how an organization sees itself and its multidimensional and varied stakeholders and -relationships
- **Issues approach:** the organization tries to manage issues. Included here is a more proactive approach where organizations focus on anticipating strategic and other issues, and devising ways to diminish those.

Throughout this thesis, the concept strategic management has been thought of - in line with and inspired by Steyn’s (2003) thinking – as comprising of three clusters:

- **Linear strategy:** focusses on planning and consists of integrating decisions, actions, or plans that will set and achieve the overall goals.
- **Adaptive strategy:** concerned with developing a key link between the current opportunities and risks in the external environment and the organization’s capabilities
and resources for exploiting these. The organization must adapt to the environment, which is seen to consist of trends, events, competitors, and stakeholders.

- **Interpretive strategy**: focusses on desired relationships, symbolic actions and communication, where the organization is a collection of cooperative agreements entered into by individuals with free will. Its existence relies on its ability to attract enough individuals to cooperate in a mutually beneficial exchange. This strategy is identified by Steyn (2003) as “correspond[ing] to the stakeholder approach to strategic management” (p. 171)

At last, this thesis operates with the following five different levels of strategic management (Steyn, 2003):

- **Enterprise strategy**: how a company fits itself into the social environment. It influences the organizations relationships with its environment i.e. focus on non-financial goals. “At the enterprise level, strategies should to a large extent be stakeholder oriented” (Steyn, 2003, p. 173)

- **Corporate strategy**: “Can best be described as the responsibility of the board and top management for the organization’s financial performance” (Steyn, 2003, p. 173)

- **Business-unit strategy**: here strategies are often marketing and product/service related

- **Functional strategy**: how the functional areas such as marketing, operations, finance etc. should work together to achieve higher-level strategies. It is most closely associated with strategy implementation.

- **Operational strategy**: where strategies are translated into action

### 2.2 Corporate Communication

Communication practitioners often use the concepts of corporate communication, strategic communication, public relations, strategic public relations, strategic planning and/or relationship management interchangeably (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 540) reflecting the view that there is no theoretical difference between the concepts (Steyn, 2003, p. 169). Some of the following key aspects have been defined within the field of corporate communication:

- **Strategic PR**
- Communication with non-consumer stakeholders
- Reputation or relationship management
- Integration of communication with all stakeholders
- Persuasion, rhetoric or spin (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 540)

Though these aspects all in some way touch upon variations of the very complex concept, it is obvious that it is written from a public relations perspective. Tench & Yeomans (2009) argue that the term public relations becomes synonymous with the notions of ‘spin’, propaganda and corporate lying (p. 540) which is supported by Steyn (2003) who argues that the use of the term corporate communication is preferred because of the negative connotation that public relations has for some members of management (p. 169). For the purpose of this thesis, the concept of corporate communication is adapted from van Riel (1992) and defined as

a framework in which all communication areas integrate the totality of the organizational message, thereby helping to define the corporate image as means to improve corporate performance

The specific communication areas are:

- **Management communication:** “one of [the] manager’s roles is to continuously persuade individual subordinates that the goals of the organization are desirable [thus] communication... is vitally necessary to an organization, not only to transmit authority but also to achieve cooperation” (van Riel, 1992, p. 9). Communication at this level is used to achieve desired results
- **Marketing communication:** consists primarily of the forms of communication that support sales of particular goods or services such as advertising, sales promotions, direct mail, sponsorship, personal selling or other communication elements in the promotional mix.
- **Organizational communication:** is here used as a general term covering areas such as public relations, public affairs, investor relations, labor market communication, corporate advertising, environmental communication and internal communication. Unlike marketing, the forms of organizational communication are less obvious in their attempt to influence stakeholders
Corporate communication thereby integrates all three concepts into one total concept functioning at management level. It takes into account both the total marketing efforts, the large spectrum of organizational communication and management communication. It is as such mainly an approach that management can adopt to streamline their overall communications activities. Thus “[c]orporate communication is primarily ‘corporate’; it only subsequently encompasses ‘communication’ that is to say, communication specialists must focus initially on the problems of the organization as a whole (corpus)” (van Riel, 1992, p.21)

Conversely, Balmer & Gray (2000) have expanded the notion of corporate communication, and as they define it, corporate communication entails three distinctive characteristics. They comprise of:

(i) **Primary communication:** the communication effects of products and of corporate behavior,

(ii) **Secondary communication:** in essence van Riel's communication’s mix

(iii) **Tertiary communication:** word-of-mouth and messages imparted about the organization from third parties

These three are the components of a pragmatic natured model that they call “A new model of the corporate identity-corporate communications process”, which has the aim of not only “showing the inseparability of corporate identity, corporate communication, corporate image and reputation in securing a corporate advantage, but also depicts the pivotal role of the three components of the corporate communications system” (Balmer & Gray, 2000, p. 259). They moreover argue that “corporate communication forms tripartite bridge between an organization’s identity and the resultant image and reputation” (Ibid, p. 259) and thus understand communication processes in a conceptual and operational manner.

For the purpose of this thesis, van Riel’s (1992) holistic approach towards corporate communication will be the underlying foundation of where its specific strategic approach towards the relationship between the internal and external communication is key. Moreover Balmer & Gray’s (2000) expanded notion of corporate communication and its inseparability towards corporate identity, -image, and –reputation provides the framework and perspective of interrelatedness of which many arguments are built.
2.2.1 Corporate Identity

Many theorists have proposed different variations of the concept corporate identity even though it seems to be easy to define it. This difficulty in distinguishing between them is what Balmer (2001) has identified as the fog currently existing in the field, and that “as several writers have remarked, there is a lack of consensus as to the precise meaning of many of the concepts... and the relationships between them” (pp. 251-252). As with forming identities, in the forming of a corporate identity or laying the foundation for it, several elements are of key importance such as culture, strategy, structure, history, business activities and market scope.

Throughout this thesis corporate identity is as such referred to as the mix of elements which gives an organization its distinctiveness i.e. competitive advantage.

2.3 Corporate Marketing and Corporate Branding

The concept of marketing has been present for many years and has gradually been a discipline built-into almost every organization. However, marketing is currently undergoing a paradigm shift and is thus increasingly characterized by having an institutional-wide focus (Balmer & Greyser, 2006, p. 730). Relatedly, Balmer (1998; 2001; 2006) has named this new paradigm “corporate marketing” (ac cited in Balmer & Greyser, 2006, p. 730). Since the 1950s various concepts about corporate-wide marketing with different scholars and practitioners proposing similar corporate level approaches; i.e. corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate image, corporate reputation, and corporate communications and “while individual corporate-level concepts provide a powerful, and radical lens through which to comprehend organizations, these individual perspectives are necessarily limited” (Ibid, p. 730). It is for that reason that especially, Balmer advocates an integrated approach including these concepts (Ibid, p. 730). Nevertheless, even though Balmer defines it as “corporate marketing”, this integrative approach will throughout this thesis be referred to as corporate communication and thus adhere to the abovementioned sections.

2.4 Introducing Museums and Museology

Museums have existed almost since the beginning of civilization, or at least since classical times, with its origin often traced back to the Ptolemaic mouseion in Alexandria; a study collection with a library attached for scholars, historians and philosophers. Now, the sense in which the word is
more commonly understood dates back to the latter part of the eighteenth century with the foundation of the publicly funded and accessible institutions; the British Museum and the Louvre (Vergo, 1989, p. 1; Kotler, Kotler & Kotler, 2008, p. 9-10). Today the field of art and culture account for a relatively small part of the nonprofit sector (Anheier, 2005, p. 104) with worldwide count\(^1\) of 53,017 museums in 202 countries (Kotler et al., 2008, p. 6). Though seemingly not a relatively high number, it seems that there has been a significant growth in the number of museums in the past few decades which have continued into this century as “a quarter of all responding museums were founded in the last twenty years or so after 1983” according to the American Association of Museums (AAM) (cited in Kotler et al. 2008, p.7).

As defined by the AAM in 1994, a museum is

> organized as a public or private nonprofit institution, existing on a permanent basis for essentially educational and aesthetic purposes, that cares for and owns or uses tangible objects, whether animate or inanimate, and exhibits these on a regular basis … and is open to the general public on a regular basis (cited in Kotler et al. 2008, p. 6-7)

In general most museums are organized around specialized or multiple collection(s) and are publicly funded. The museum categories range from historical-centered categories such as arts, history, archeology and anthropology to the more science-inspired categories technology and planetariums to the botanical and zoological gardens. Within these categories the museums can be organized around their collections or be more experimental and experience-focused like planetariums, zoos or open-air museums. The types vary greatly from large national museums covering many of the categories to small, local museums specifically centered around a subject, person, place etc. Furthermore these types also vary across countries even states and provinces – even in the way they are funded. A majority of the American museums are organized as private nonprofit organizations or as agencies of state/local governments, but they are expected to function as publicly minded educational and public service organizations. In turn they receive privileges and exceptions under the US laws and tax regulations\(^2\) (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 7-8). As a contrast the museums in Great Britain vary from national museums, which are substantially

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\(^2\) According to Kotler et al (2008) 59% of all US museums are privately governed, and 41% are government run in some form. In comparison 80% of the French museums are run by the national government (p. 8).
sustained by the national government to small local museums, which are supported by a combination of local government grants and private contributions (Ibid, p. 8).

2.4.1 Museology
Museology is “the study of museums, their history and underlying philosophy, the various ways in which they have, in the course of time, been established and developed, their avowed or unspoken aims and politics, their educative or political or social role “(Vergo, 1989, p.1). In 1989 Peter Vergo proposed the new museology, which he argued stemmed from “a widespread dissatisfaction with the ‘old’ museology” (Ibid, p. 3). According to Busse (2008) the new museology’s critical role has been to rethink the diverse and complex relationships between museums and the societies in which they exist (p. 189), since he argues for expansion in the kinds of communities with which museums interact and maintain relationships as well as a change in the substance of those relationships; in particular a movement towards a greater balance in the power relations between museums and their constituencies (Busse, 2008, p. 195).

Advocates of the New Museology have prominently sought ways to make museums less elitist but more inclusive, that is more directly and democratically involved with their various constituencies such as the people who create and use the objects that museums collect or the audiences who visit museum exhibitions and participate in museum programs. Unfortunately, the New Museology has been rather long on theory and rather short on detailed explorations or accounts of the implications of its theoretical formulations for museum practice, that is for the day-to-day activities and interactions comprising the work that goes on in and around museums (Ibid p. 189)

It is for that apparent reason this thesis seeks to test if museum management could benefit from thinking more strategically in their corporate communication.

3. Situational Analysis
The following is a brief somewhat generic analysis of the current museum situation, conducted with the aim of acknowledging a change in or complexity within the environment. Therefore, as one of the key methods for situational analysis, this analysis was implicitly directed using the
SWOT analysis through which an organization’s internal and external environment becomes apparent. Further, this brief analysis is particularly focusing on the relationship between the two and on identifying some of the specific strategic decisions behind.

3.1 Museum Market

3.1.1 Customers
Museums have many different types of visitors; locals, communities, schools, universities, tourists and corporations to name a few. The variety of museum goers is great, which especially adds to the complexity of offering customer value. As noted by Carnegie (2010) “Visitors to the official museum are noticeably tourists” (p. 235) which makes it extremely important to offer value for the customer and moreover engage them and thus in the longer-run increase customer loyalty. As identified by Kotler et al (2008) museums are especially concerned with eight types of consumers; namely seeking to

1) attract new visitors
2) convert single-time visitors into return visitors
3) convert visitors to members
4) retain existing members
5) build diverse audiences
6) convert members to donors
7) enlist volunteers and
8) attract tourists (p. 154)

thus indicating a management focus on visitors but more importantly also the fact that museums face extremely varied customer segments.

3.1.2 Products
Just as museums have identified a variety of goals for attracting customers, equally customers have different reasons for visiting museums relating to the product/service offerings. This section

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3 The overall evaluation of a company’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is called SWOT analysis (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2009, pp. 101-105)
therefor looks at the core-, actual-, and augmented product/services in order to identify the product/services platform of museums.

3.1.2.1 The core product

The core product represents the needs and benefits sought by the consumers. Traditionally, people have been highly motivated by educational goals, which have been illustrated by the museums’ great focus on collections and objects - as indicated by the Ptolemaic *mouseion*, or the Natural History Museum in London, who have been specifically focused on offering a profound selection of objects. Though, the needs/benefits of learning and acquiring knowledge currently might be most prominent for students/school visits, it is still present in many museums.

Looking at tourists, on the other hand, we can identify another particular of their needs/benefits, entertainment. “[V]isitors want to participate actively in the stories museums tell and the methods by which stories are told” (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 15) which more importantly also have given rise to the concept of edutainment; the combination of education & entertainment. This is also supported by Kotler et al (2008), who further identified curiosity, sociability, recreation, participation, remembrance, unique experience, visual/sensory experience (figure 2.2, p. 24) as being key needs/benefits sought by the visitors thus indicating great complexity.

3.1.2.1 Actual products

Actual products are the features and characteristics of the museum itself and its offerings. These vary on a range from the actual tangible objects (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 28) to covering the attributes like workshops, comfortable surroundings and friendly staff (Lin, 2009, p. 109) to the building’s architecture, the appearance of the entrance, restaurants, and shops to the offering of educational programs and tours (Kotler, et al, 2008, p. 29). The collections are of course the most obvious ones as “[m]ost museums are organized around a specialized collection” (Kotler et al, 2008 p. 7) and it is “[a]mong its primary functions [that] the museum serves as a collector and preserver of objects” (Stephen, 2001, p. 297). However, providing a good quality service is also part of the actual product, as it contributes greatly to customer satisfaction; this both applies to service attributes such as friendly staff and excellent physical facilities, but more importantly also the many different kinds of communication material i.e. pamphlets presented in museums with the specific aim of providing in-depth information about exhibitions as “[t]hey offer
information beyond what is obtained in texts” (Kotler et al, 2008, p.17) thus contextualizing the exhibitions.

Additionally, a museums attributes also can be found in both the architecture in itself and in its connotations, the concepts of “historicality” and museums as “cultural property” also become apparent, which further indicates the museum’s very complex product portfolio and role, serving many different cultural, societal and customer needs.

Undoubtedly with the aim of bringing in needed extra earnings, museums also develop their products, as they open museum restaurants, -cafés, and -shops. Though these have started as augmented product offerings, they are now increasingly part of the norm; the “expected” museum product, thus a perfect example of the problem of augmented product offerings and diversification strategies; “as costumers strive to increase their perceived value for their money, augmented and potential benefits soon become expected necessary points-of-parity” (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen 2009, p. 507), thus indicating the need for constantly thinking in terms of product and market development.

3.1.2.3 Augmented product offerings

Museums are increasingly extending the product offerings as part of a growth strategy, product development strategy or diversification strategy. The augmented products are what can establish the necessary points-of-difference; a definitely strength in a complex market situation. Of the specific tendencies in museums, Kotler et al (2008) have pointed towards the increase in museums as organizers of social events saying that “today social events are widespread and intensive in the museum world” (Ibid, p. 15) Relating to this they more importantly also pointed towards developments such as behind-the-scenes tours and visits with the museum director (Ibid, p. 29) as part of the augmented museum product, along with the contextualizing of exhibitions (Ibid, p. 14; Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002, p. 752). Different service attributes have also been refined and further developed such as memberships, which have the specific aim of retaining visitors and increasing museum loyalty. These all illustrate a museum tendency of constantly

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4 Points-of-parity (POPs) are associations that are not necessarily unique to the brand but may in fact be shared with other brands (Kotler et al, 2009, p. 363)

5 Points-of-difference (POD’s) are attributes/benefits consumers strongly associate with a brand of which they think they cannot find with a competitive brand (Kotler, et al, 2009, p. 363)
thinking in terms of augmenting their product offerings\(^6\) and thus trying to increase customer loyalty.

Another significant augmented product offering is the many edutainment attributes that museums currently are implementing, as a result of the changing consumer needs. “*Museums increasingly provide visitors with [these] immersion experiences*” (Ibid, p. 15) which changes the status of the museum customers from simple visitors to actors in these experiences (Mencarelli, Marteaux & Pulh, 2009, p. 336). Moreover a growing number of museums are using computer stations to provide interactive learning experiences related to exhibitions and increasingly visitors expect these; whether they take form of computers, podcasts, or interactive experiences (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 17) thereby drawing the logical conclusion that museums tend to be more consumer-centered. Developing exciting experiences and the trend toward participation (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 16) is all significant of a highlighting and including of the visitors in the museum situation (i.e. attaching great importance to consumers and increasing their influence as well as letting go of the custodial focus and control, which more importantly can be seen as an indication of a significant change in the museum role and management.

### 3.2 Museum Management

The museums offerings and the customer demands take part in defining the way museums are run today and as hinted by many theorists Vergo (1989), Stephen (2001), Mencarelli et al (2009), Kotler et al (2008) to name a few, we are currently within the change from a custodial management paradigm to a more visitor-focused paradigm. “*The traditional focus... on collections, connoisseurship, and scholarship now coexists with the movement to visitor-centered museums. Indeed visitorship is crucial to today’s museums*” (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 154).

Moreover, the museums in modern society have now acquired a significantly broader public role than its early predecessors.

Underlying its present-day symbolic and utilitarian roles, therefore, is the goal of benefiting the wider public. This contribution first recapitulates the traditional view of the museum as partner in curating public education, and then moves to a more synoptic

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\(^6\) An augmented product is only augmented as long as it is not “expected” by the consumer (Kotler).
consideration of the museum’s interaction with the public and advances the view that this broad public context facilitates the experiences of leisure (Stephen, 2001, p. 297)

As a consequence, the focus is now more at marketing and of being customer-oriented through product development and market expansion, thus the museums are increasingly researching their market. Comparing this to the traditionally driven museum this new focus is a huge step forward as it relies heavily on customer research and a market orientation. Within the professionally driven museum orientation i.e. the traditional approach, the director and curators are at the top, thus attention is given towards the keeping/preserving cultural heritage. “Curators do not view the overriding goal of their institution as being to communicate and share knowledge with its visitors, and thus to bring about a diffusion of power and privilege from the specialist to the non-specialist” (Vergo, 1989, p. 134) which indicates a top-down and bureaucratic structure thinking towards management. The professionally driven museum consequently functions within the shareholder approach to management with a linear approach to developing strategies. The limited focus on integrating planning of decisions, actions, and/or plans to achieve the overall goals moreover has consequences for the way communication is seen within the organization by creating an environment where structural barriers to information flow and exchange complicates communication as there is a constant attempt to formalize communication, highlighting the power and status differences and stipulates relationships (Conrad & Poole, 2005, p. 72-76). “As a result... shared interpretations of information are reduced” (Ibid, p. 76)

Nevertheless, as museums are constructed through strategic choices, the implementation of the new consumer-centered museum approach additionally illustrates a focus on marketing communication where the “organization is to determine the needs and wants of target markets and to satisfy them through the design, communication, pricing and delivery of appropriate and completely viable products and services” (Kotler & Clarke, 1987, p. 36). Though the customer-orientation also focuses heavily on marketing, museums are incapable of integrating all stakeholders into one coherent marketing focus that would provide the museums with a broader perspective to their environment, as it primarily focuses on product development and – expansion. Managing museums by embracing the stakeholders into one coherent focus or strategy would, however, provide a more truthful picture of their surroundings, thus making the museums better prepared for their constantly changing micro and macro environments. Sargeant
(2005) further stresses the importance of interfunctional coordination in the market-oriented organizations by arguing they entail:

- “A close integration of the marketing function into the organizational structure and the strategic planning process;
- A primary identification with the organization as a whole rather than the individual departments;
- Inter-departmental relations based on cooperation rather than rivalry” (p. 37)

Integrating marketing functions into the organizational structure and the strategic planning process are of key importance in order to operationalize the marketing concept (i.e. its degree of market orientation), and thereby it seems that a full market orientation is still not something museums try to achieve. Moreover, stakeholders want to know if their needs are going to be met, which implies that museums “must know their stakeholders’ issues and needs by engaging in two way communication” (Wiggill, 2011, p. 227). Consequently the principal management problem in today’s marketplace of goods and ideas is not so much to provide commodities and services or to take stands on the salient issues of the day, but to do these things with a certain distinctiveness that allows the organization to create and legitimize itself (cited in Miller, 2009, p. 264),

3.2.1 Funding

An important part of museums’ management is funding. Increasingly, museums compete for the government and public donations as both the donated amount decreases and the number of museums increases. Consequently, museums start to charge admission fees, special exhibition fees, membership fees and discounts. Seeing that museums are cultural institutions, the public has a general interest in keeping the museums open, since some are holding objects that have significant value to society i.e. cultural property, and thus the survival of the museum is somewhat secured. Nevertheless, as they thereby also are controlled by the governments they have to be products of the society’s expectations of them, thus can be restricted in their corporate aim. Furthermore, since public institutions have very tight budgets, the limiting of public funding leads to an important need for money from corporations and private donors. As tighter budgets constraint the overall museum resources, the down warded spiral continues.
Related, are the financial problems from expanding and developing new products, which is adding to the complexity. As museums expand they create more space for exhibitions and collections, attract larger audiences and earned income, interest new donors, the new museum buildings increase the market value of areas of cities in which they are located, and they attract media, tourism and national and international attention. Nevertheless, product development also raises operating costs. Thus some expanded museums are thriving, and others face financial troubles as a result of the expansion (Kotler et al, 2008, p. 13).

3.3 Part Conclusion

Though traditionally highly motivated by educational goals, a variety of different needs and benefits are increasingly sought by the many different customer groups and along these thus follows an increased focus on product and market development, as the museums try to meet these ever changing demands, in order to hopefully increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

This moreover also signifies the change from a custodial management paradigm to a more visitor-focused paradigm, of which gives rise to the change in management from bureaucratic to more relation based strategy i.e. the interpretative. Moreover adding to this complexity is the various other stakeholders, of which needs and demands the museums constantly are fighting to meet – especially seeing as they increasingly need new funding. As a consequence they need to embrace a broader public and other management approaches while facing multiple stakeholder needs and demands in order to survive.

Thus it can be logically deduced that the first hypothesis has been justified
4. Intermezzo

So far, we have briefly touched upon a number of facets of the complex environment in which museums are facing. The challenges of increasing customer demands, decreases in public funding, fierce competition, and multiple stakeholders were rarely considered through the traditional custodial management paradigm, but today they point to a range of complex problems especially that of surviving thus gaining competitive advantage. The question then is how “organizational communication” can be conceptualized as a means for understanding and tackling these challenges?” (Miller, 2009, p. 9)
5. Discussion

Ultimately, this discussion therefore is about the status of corporate communication and - its strategic involvement in decision-making at the highest corporate level. “The changing world points towards the range of complex problems that must be met by... [organizations]. The question, then, is how “organizational communication” can be conceptualized as a means for understanding and tackling these challenges” (Miller, 2009, p. 9).

5.1 Corporate Communication

In order to meet all these challenges (from the external environment) organizations consequently can make use of strategic management. The museum director and the managers at the highest level of the organization deal with and formalize the different strategies to be employed in the organization. The preoccupation with strategy is widely accepted as a critical function of management, which, however, current theoretical work has argued is an activity that is actually shaped and constituted by specific activities and professional issues of strategists operating individually rather than as a structural function that is manifested at the structural level of the company (cited in Cornelissen, Bekkum & Ruler, 2006, p. 117). Similarly communication has had a constrained role in museum management as seen by the above analysis, which leads to the motives for the following sections, that is “to obtain a more comprehensive picture of corporate communication” (Ibid, p. 117) with regards to the museum situation.

However, as noted by Steyn (2003) the communications industry seem to have acknowledged that strategy is an integral part of its communication programs, nevertheless, few seem to understand the meaning of strategy (p. 168). Within the strategic management framework, communication strategies are most often looked at as tactical elements employed at the functional strategic level along with marketing within a linear strategy management approach thus seeing communication as a means of achieving the overall company goal(s). As the first hypothesis was - for the moment - justified, museums thus face a highly competitive and complex environment with many only relying on a small number of donors, which means that “communicating strategically and building strong relationships is particularly important ... because strong relationship could result in repeated and increased donations” (Wiggill, 2011, p. 227). Moreover focusing on the stakeholders through aligning and coordinating communication
can help secure reaching their organizational goals. This has also been the focus of research into stakeholder management, which also puts emphasis on communication between companies and their environment, more specifically through two suggested response modes; bridging\(^7\) or buffering\(^8\) (cited in Cornelissen et al, 2006, p. 116) with bridging as a key function in communication management as can be seen in the following definition of PR as:

> a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual line of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools” (cited in Windahl, 2009, p. 116)

However, because the abovementioned definition is of a more practical nature, it raises the question whether PR and corporate communication counterbalance each other.

Many theorists and practitioners agree that PR is both a practice and a management function as seen in the research undertaken by researches Broom and Smith (1979) and Dozier and Broom (1995) who identified two dominant PR roles: the communication technician and the communication manager (cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 28). As the name implies, the technician tactically implements decisions made by others; the “doers” (Cornelissen et al, 2006, p. 119; cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 28). They are thereby not generally involved in management decision-making and strategic decisions concerning communication strategy and programs. “Practitioners enacting the manager role [however] predominantly make strategy or policy decisions and are held accountable for program success or failure” (Cornelissen et al, 2006, p. 119) and they plan and manage PR programs, advise management, make communication policy decisions and oversee their implementation (as cited by Tench &

\[^7\] Bridging means seeking to adapt organizational activities, so they conform to the external expectations and claims of important stakeholder groups, whereas

\[^8\] Buffering involves trying to keep stakeholder claims from interfering with internal operations and trying to influence the external environment (as cited in Cornelissen et al, 2006, p. 116)
Yeomans, 2009, p. 28). In consequence indicating a two-fold role within organizations moreover supported by Tench & Yeomans (2009) saying “many ... associate PR with media relations although some do recognize its potential as a management function guiding interaction with publics” (p. 6) and Grunig & Grunig’s (1992) argument that “organizations vary their PR model as a function of the overall environment of that organization” (cited in Gürel & Kavak, 2008, p. 46). This gives an indication of public relations as being extensive enough to embrace many communication challenges and facets.

On the contrary, PR models do focus on being more practically concerned and applicable, as it particularly concerns the many types of communication situations, of which an organization can be part. However, as many museums already use PR as a means of communicating with their stakeholders, the need for a corporate communications approach does not seem relevant as PR, with its wide array of functions, already embraces and builds relationships with the stakeholders. Further, the PR models (Windahl, 2009, pp. 117-120; Gürel & Kavak, 2008, pp. 44-46; Pickton & Broderick, 2005, pp. 550-552) are indicating that the field is well equipped with theories for handling the current museum situation, with even one that best represents the professional approach to PR by having characteristics that so clearly relates to communication management; seeking to foster mutual understanding between the organization and its publics – thus, is directly linked to the important aspects of museums management, managing the stakeholders and communication.

Nevertheless, the huge focus on non-conceptualizing models focusing on PR practice in general again relates to the argument that PR is more practical and hands-on as indicated by the “[p]ractitioner definitions of PR tend[ing] to be more based in the reality of the day-to-day job” (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 6) thus it could be interpreted as a practice that is applied more operationally in the organizations thus consequently indicating a distinction between PR and corporate communication as they function at different levels of the organization. Along the same line Tench & Yeomans (2009) argue that “the main objective of PR is to develop and execute strategies and tactics that will benefit an organization in a given context” (p. 150) thereby clearly presenting PR as entailing a tactical approach, and thus having a more operational focus, which is perfectly in line with both the PR technician and manager roles; the technician’s role being translating strategies into action the operational level and with the PR manager advising
upper management in making communication policy decisions and overseeing the implementation. Thus clearly implying that the two are never integrated into the process of formulating and managing the overall enterprise strategy, of which corporate communication should be part.

According to Steyn (2000; 2002), this also seems to be the common position towards PR with well-known authors such as Windahl et al, Seitel, or Cutlip et al. emphasizing operational planning rather than strategy formulation (cited in Steyn, 2003, p. 177). Moreover it is also an argument that has been emphasized by Moss and Warnaby (1997) who states that “the dominant view of [communication] strategy … is that of strategy as planning, portraying the strategic planning process as a logical sequential process” (cited in Steyn, 2003, p. 177), which Steyn (2003) defines as the traditional linear view of strategy (p. 177) thereby not in line with the stakeholder approach which is incorporated into corporate communication.

Though, in the wake of this recognition of corporate communication as managerial function, much academic literature has started to consider communications not as a tactical or ‘functionary’ activity supporting the organization, but rather a strategic boundary-spanning function operating at the interface between the organization and its environment with the aim of helping gather, relay and interpret information from the environment as well as representing the organization to the outside world (as cited Cornelissen et al, 2006, p. 116). Securing congruency, alignment and integration are consequently very important in order to be proactive in a complex and fast changing environment.

This is moreover a focus that have been central to Wolf (1987) who emphasized the need for integration between marketing communications and effective communications along with arguing for stakeholder relationship management and its interrelatedness with communication.

[T]he building blocks for producing effective communications … efficiently remain consistent: know what the company is and where it wants to go; stay close to your customer, constantly monitoring needs, wants and expectations; keep marketing communications programs tightly linked to marketing plans and strategies (p. 20)
Even though, she in her article looks at communication at a more tactical level where communication is the *channel* - i.e. the way you market your products and company, as would be supported by the traditional strategy of organizing paradigm - she also argues for a broader role of communication by stressing that “[w]ith competition intensifying ... properly positioned communication is more important ever” (Ibid, sec. 4-5), clearly insinuating the need for strategizing communication. Many other theorists also emphasize this view and following Palp Alto’s school of research, in particular, “awareness that the environment is no longer an exogenous factor, but forms part of the individual, implies that everything is based on communication” (cited in Moingeon & Soenen, 2002, p. 134). Consequently, museums can shift their focus from a traditional linear view of strategy to a focus on corporate communication with regards to the overall enterprise strategy, i.e. thinking more in terms of the interpretive strategy of which relationship building is a critical part – provided they see the need.

This does not mean, however, that PR practice is excluded from the organizational functions nor that it is less important. The need for PR is as important as ever. Not only because it heavily emphasizes stakeholder relations, but more importantly because its functions are based in the actual operational level of the organization. “PR practice is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization’s and the public interest” (as cites in Newsom & Haynes, 2008, p. 3). It outlines the main roles of the professional PR practitioner, which is further indicated by to Newsom & Haynes (2008) to fall within the management context as analyzing, predicting and counseling are roles in which personnel help to frame, implement, adjust and communicate the policies that govern how an institution interacts with its publics (p. 2). The overall enterprise strategy should thereby be deeply rooted in every aspect of strategic communication management at the lower levels; i.e. with regards to PR, internal communication and marketing communications. Thus it is the aim to incorporate the three concepts of PR, marketing and internal communication into corporate communication securing integration for sending the same message to all stakeholders.

### 5.1.1 Part Conclusion

Thus, arguing that integration of organizational-, management- and marketing communication into the “umbrella term” corporate communication at the corporate level will secure an
alignment of all efforts in the company since “corporate communication strategy provides focus and direction for an organization’s communication, building relationships with key strategic stakeholders” (Steyn, 2003, p. 179)

and as such this thesis found no foundation for falsifying the second hypothesis.

5.2 Corporate Identity

As the second premise or hypothesis was not falsified it thus gives the basis for investigating the third hypothesis relating to corporate identity.

As communication plays a crucial role in socialization and forming relationships, getting to know yourself as an organization is extremely important, thus the need for communicating the museum identity becomes apparent. “[T]he ongoing rhetorical struggle for organizations of most kinds is to establish a clearly distinctive identity and at the same time connect with more general concerns so as to be maximally persuasive and effective” (cited in Miller, 2009, p. 263). Creating a corporate identity implies looking inside the museum and identifying: who are we? However as such, it can only happen when the organization sees itself and their stakeholder relations as self-defining, and thus consequently already has been accepting and embracing the two former hypotheses.

This in turn means that when all corporate communication efforts are aligned in the corporate level, the corporate communication can be shared with the stakeholders, as communication becomes the channel for sending the aligned “message” or identity across all functions and to all stakeholders. Balmer (2001) argues that the question of identity cuts across and unifies many different organizational goals and concerns, indicative of the saliency of the identity concept to contemporary organizations (p. 250) Though many organizations accept the many positive outcomes of identity forming, the creation of stable and constant identities is not possible, as - like human identities - they conform to the environment; i.e. to the stakeholders’ and environment’s needs and demands, as such they are constantly changing and, as some would argue, thereby unmanageable.

Nevertheless, the creating of neither stable and constant identities nor identities that conform to the environment are strategies that can help museums’ complex situation as they both do not
account for the ever changing society, thus the identity should be revised constantly. Rather they should focus on their museum core, determining the POD’s, competitive advantage(s), and/or values in order to secure that these are the “messages”, which they want to communicate through every channel to all the stakeholders. Thereby it does not become a form of adapting to the environment expectations, but rather “marketing” the company in terms of an internally defined core. “[Museums should] try to impose themselves on their environments, rather than merely adapt to them. They [should] attempt to shape their environments by their presence in it, by what they do and say” (cited in Miller, 2009, p. 264). The miracle of organizational communication processes is that they allow large numbers of people from very different backgrounds, ways of thinking, needs, and goals to coordinate their actions and “create organizations” that at least seem to be stable containers within which information flows from person to person (Conrad & Pool, 2005, p. 10), thus it is about considering the overall strategy as a process of positioning the museum in the market whereby a unique identity and relationships with the stakeholders are important.

Ultimately, then it is important for corporate organizations to invest in their communication so that their given identities are sufficiently revealed to stakeholders, who subsequently will make sense of these identities in the exact terms of the organization (Cornelissen, Christensen & Kinuthia, 2012, p. 11)

5.2.1 Part Conclusion

As a concluding argument, defining the corporate identity calls for looking at the micro and macro level of a museum and then finding what key POD’s i.e. the competitive advantage, core, or values that should guide the museum’s every move. In aligning this across multiple functions, levels and stakeholder groups an overall corporate communication strategy integrated into the enterprise strategy will secure unified and supporting messages internally and externally in the museum, thus provide a good foundation for getting a good corporate image and reputation.

Consequently, this thesis cannot falsify the third hypothesis that museums can utilize the concept of corporate identity
6. Relationship between Hypotheses

As a last remark in order to show the relatedness between the three hypotheses, is the following ten situational factors as identified by Balmer & Gray (2000). Perfectly in line with the museum situation identified in the analysis, and moreover justifying the first hypothesis as they argue that these ten factors contribute to the increased importance of corporate identity and thus corporate communications:

1) Acceleration of product life cycles
2) Deregulation
3) Privatization programs
4) Increased competition in the public and non-profit sectors
5) Increased competition in the service sector
6) Globalization and the establishment of free trade areas
7) Mergers, acquisitions and divestitures
8) Shortage of high-caliber personnel
9) Public expectations for corporate social responsiveness
10) Breakdown of the boundaries between the internal and external aspects of organizations

In consequence, showing that - if justified i.e. not falsified - the three hypotheses are interconnected thus this thesis has established a foundation for their further testing.
7. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, the specific aim has been to show a relationship between the three hypotheses and as such presenting a relationship between the complex environment surrounding museums, corporate communication at management level and the principle of corporate identity thus at this stage museums can benefit from integrating corporate identity into their overall corporate communication and strategic management.

**H1:** *the museums micro- and macro environments are changing, consequently leading to greater competition, multiple stakeholders, multiple product/service offerings*

It can be logically deduced that the first hypothesis has been justified since the museum environment has shown signs of complexity. Increasing demands/needs from the museum stakeholders the fierce competition by competitive products has changed the museum focus from being object-oriented to visitor-oriented, thus hoping to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. A change from custodial management to visitor-oriented has improved the museum situation, though it was found that in order to gain better changes of attracting all stakeholders – for among others funding purposes – museums might look at other more broad management approaches.

**H2:** *within this complex situation a need for a corporate communications approach becomes apparent, more specifically with regards to the strategic management of museums*

As a need for a more broad perspective towards management that embraced all stakeholders and the complex environment was established, corporate communication was discussed finding no foundation for falsifying it as a possible solution since “*corporate communication strategy provides focus and direction for an organization’s communication, building relationships with key strategic stakeholders*” (Steyn, 2003, p. 179)

**H3:** *in order to be meet both of these successfully, museums might utilize the corporate identity principle*

With the possibility of aligning all multiple functions, levels and stakeholder groups through corporate identity within the corporate communication approach was found might provide a good
foundation for getting a good corporate image and reputation, and as such this thesis cannot falsify this third hypothesis either.

Following the logical deduction methodology, consequently as there was found no reasons for falsifying the hypotheses they are thus verified for the time being (Popper, 1975). Nevertheless, as this is a first attempt to logically deduce a relationship between strategic museum management, corporate communication and corporate identity, further testing is needed. With respect to the truth and falsity of this thesis it should be “capable of being tested by experience” (Ibid, p. 40) and moreover “be singled out by means of empirical tests, in a negative sense” (Ibid, p. 41) in order to truly draw the logical conclusions for accepting it as a theory.
8. Sources


