

Green Corporate Identity: Definitions, Importance, Components and Methods

Suraporn Onputtha / Sookchok Thongsook ularn / Jantima Banjongprasert

¹ *Corresponding Author, Silpakorn University International College (SUIC), Silpakorn University, Thailand, E-mail: onputtha_s@su.ac.th*

² *Silpakorn University International College (SUIC), Silpakorn University, Thailand, E-mail: sookchok@sicga.co.th*

³ *Silpakorn University International College (SUIC), Silpakorn University, Thailand, E-mail: jantima_b@yahoo.com, banjongprasert_j@su.ac.th*

Abstract:

This paper attempts to review the definitions, importance, components, and related studying methods of green corporate identity based on the concept of corporate identity by focusing on managing identity to represent the environmental concerns and encourage the employee's collective identity to the corporate. From the literature, the green corporate identity can include green corporate communication and visual identity, green corporate culture, green corporate behavior, and green market condition. The promising method can be quantitative, qualitative or hybrid approach. The unit analysis can be organizational or individual unit and the samples of the study can be either top management level or operational staff. The ability to identify the right corporate identity management can help create good strategies and stakeholders' identification towards the identity of organization. Finally, it can then link to corporate culture and performance.

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Introduction

Today issues now are emphasizing on environmental concerns. The term “environment”, in this paper refers to the natural resources such as water, soil, air, forests and plants, animals and other creatures. Significantly, it has played a crucial role in human lives; no matter for making money (such as companies utilizing natural resources to produce products and services) or making a living (people utilizing natural resources to stay for a life). However, it has been continuously damaged seriously due to the human's economic, technological, social and political development activities. The damages seem to display in terms of such air pollution with PM 2.5 dust, noise pollution, ozone layer reduction, climate change with higher temperature, ice melt, animal shortage and disappearance, water pollution with hazardous

chemical substances, and others (Moryadee, Aunyawong, & Shaharudin, 2019). All of these have strongly negative effect back on the human, who especially is in the next generation, lacking good environment and enough nourished natural resources for living. Therefore, the importance of environmental conservation is raised. Many profitable and non-profitable organizations from many countries initiated the awareness of environmental concerns and established the regulations and standard enforcing the conservation ability for environmental saving purposes (Jermstittiparsert, Namdej, & Somjai, 2019; Jermstittiparsert, Somjai, & Toopgajank, 2020; Chetthamrongchai & Jermstittiparsert, 2020).

The challenges and obstacles for many organizations and companies are that they have to regulate and strategize the requirements for their

employees to strictly conform to the environmental saving requirements, which the organizations and companies must encounter with financial problems, technological lacks, employee collaboration, governmental support and incentives, and other stakeholders (Majumdar, & Sinha, 2019; Xia, Zhang, Yu, & Tu, 2019). However, if the organizations and companies can overwhelm the aforementioned challenges and obstacles, they can help conserve the environment and create sustainable resources for their new generations (Xing, Wang, & Tou, 2019).

Many routes have been established to remedy the challenges and obstacles regarding the environmental issues. This includes creation of regulation and standard such as ISO14001 environmental standard and governmental supports (Boiral, 2007), leadership management (Robertson, & Barling, 2013), employees motivation and enforcement (Boiral, 2009), organizational resource management and business strategy (Garrod, & Chadwick, 1996), supply chain management (Demeter, Simpson, Power, & Samson, 2007) and especially, green corporate identity management (Chen, 2011; Mason, & Mason, 2012; Chang, & Chen, 2013). The green corporate identity was developed from the corporate identity and it can successfully contribute to employee performance and commitment, business operation efficiency, stakeholders' involvement, customers' attraction, good corporate image and good corporate reputation, and organizational performance (Whetten, & Mackey, 2002; Puusa, & Tolvanen, 2006; Bingöl, Şener, & Çevik, 2013; Norman, Avey, Nimnicht, & Graber Pigeon, 2010; Zollo, Laudano, Boccardi, & Ciappei, 2019). In addition, the green corporate identity itself can create corporate reputation and image (Whetten, & Mackey, 2002), green shared vision, organizational citizenship behavior for the environment, green product development performance (Chang, Chen, Luan, & Chen, 2019)

and corporate environmental performance (Xing, Wang, & Tou, 2019). Recently, the green corporate identity is an interesting field to create the mindsets of employees and stakeholders towards the environmental issues and strategy.

Due to the importance of environment issues, this paper then attempts to understand the definition, importance, components, and studying methods of the green corporate identity based on the concepts of corporate identity by focusing on managing identity to represent the environmental concerns and encourage the employee's collective identity to the corporate. The ability to identify the right corporate identity management can help create good strategies and stakeholders' identification towards the strategies. Finally, it can then link to corporate culture and performance. In the next section, this paper will identify the definition, importance, components and studying methods of green corporate identity.

Definitions of Green Corporate Identity

The corporate identity has been widely studied by many scholars and there are various definitions. Generally, corporate identity refers to the perception, thought, and feeling of employees, customers, and stakeholders towards the organization, which reflect the understanding of organization's values, distinctiveness, and characteristics (Hatch, & Schultz, 1997). Also, Balmer and Stotvig (1997) advocated that the corporate identity is the intersection between the customers' perception towards the behavior of employees and organization activities which includes visual image, total service quality and internal structure. Riel and Balmer (1997) linked corporate identity to wide range of functions including organization' business strategy, philosophy, history, culture, behavior, and corporate design. In the meantime, Balmer (2001) added that the corporate identity is characterized by the

organization complexity (corporate is multifaceted and multidimensional), variability (corporate is evolutionary in character) and heterogeneous (corporate is informed by multidisciplinary perspectives). Cornelissen and Harris (2001) mentioned that the corporate identity refers to the expression of corporate personality. Balmer (2008) advocated school of thought regarding identity and identification, characterized as corporate identity, communicated corporate identification, stakeholder's corporate identification, stakeholder's cultural identification, envisioned identity, and identification. In addition, there are terms used interchangeably among corporate identity, organizational identity, and organizational identification, which they, due to the fact, consider differently. The terms of corporate identity and organizational identity refers to creating corporate identity and communicating it to the related stakeholders including employees, customers, suppliers, and shareholders; meanwhile, the organizational identification refers to the perception and reflection of corporate identity creation (Balmer, 2008).

In various studies, the green corporate identity has been found mostly and popularly in the term of corporate social responsibility, having been developed to study activities related to both environment and society (Sharma et al., 1999; Abimbola, Lim, Hillestad, Xie, & Haugland, 2010; Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010; Atakan-Duman, & Ozdora-Aksak, 2014). Nevertheless, the corporate social responsibility was put forward as a basis of argument that the management towards corporate social responsibility was wide, and the term of management towards corporate's environmental issues should be more specific. It focuses directly on environmental strategies and management (Chen, 2011, Mason, & Mason, 2012; He, & Brown, 2013; Dalvi, & Janati, 2014). Regarding green corporate identity, it must reflect the perceptions regarding

environment care in all related dimensions of stakeholders including shareholders, employees, customers, and community. In other words, it means about the management of corporate identity related to the green concept and environmental issues (Shrivastava, & Hart, 1992; Shrivastava, 1994; Green, Morton, & New, 2000; Harris, & Crane, 2002), conveying their green corporate identity to the eyes of internal and external involvers. Also, Chen (2011) advocated the green corporate identity as the interpretation of managerial employees in top, middle and low level on company history, strategy, culture and management related to the environment. The green corporate identity can be the encouragement for employees behaving in the meaningful work manner towards the environmental concerns. Other scholars (Chang, & Chen, 2013; Song, Ren, & Yu, 2019; Mushtaq, Zubair, Khan, & Khurram, 2019; Xing, Wang, & Tou, 2019) also defines green corporate identity similar to Chen (2011).

Importance of Green Corporate Identity Management

Green corporate identity management is fundamentally developed based on the corporate identity management. The objectives of corporate identity management are to create the reputation of the organization to the stakeholders. It is expected that if the organization has potentials to create the perceptions to the eyes of the stakeholders, the organizations are able to receive the interests from the stakeholders in the forms of products/services purchase, hardworking from internal employees and more investment from shareholders or outsiders (Riel, & Balmer, 1997). Based on Riel and Balmer (1997), the corporate identity will be created by the mixture of the corporate identity management including corporate behavior, communication, and symbolism. This mixture of corporate identity management must respond to both external business

environment such as technology, society, economy, and politics and internal business environment such as culture history and corporate strategy. Melewar, & Jenkins (2002) identify the managing corporate identity must be good at managing corporate communication and visual design, creating employee behavior, valuing corporate culture, and identifying the response to market condition. Similarly, Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, (2006) advocated that in managing the corporate identity, there should be emphasis on corporate communication, corporate design, corporate culture, corporate behavior, corporate structure, industry identity and corporate strategy. Maurya, Mishra, Anand and Kumar (2015) identified the corporate identity management as the management mixture of symbolism or visual, corporate behavior and communication that can create perception towards the target stakeholders. Their study indicates that the symbolism and visual must represent the business strategy, mission, and values, which its contents must be articulate, specific, and identifiable for the stakeholders. In terms of corporate behavior, the organization must ensure that both new and existing employees are aware of organizational values, understand the organizational mission, and follow the organizational direction. In terms of corporate communication, the organization must select the appropriate channel to communicate with stakeholders, and standard of target communication is set by the top management level.

To understand organizational system; value; and belief, Riel and Balmer (1997) advocates four stages of Balmer' Affinity Audit. These four stages include (1) establishing the corporate mission and strategy, (2) revealing the system of value and belief within the organization, (3) evaluating the system of value and belief against the corporate mission and strategy and (4) nurturing value and belief that can respond the corporate mission and strategy. In addition to create the meaningful corporate identity,

Chandler (2007) suggests five stages, which are also adapted by Otubanjo and Melewar (2007). These five stages include (1) identifying the clear and recognized text, (2) examining the channels to coverage, reach, and target the stakeholders, (3) discussing the relationship between the text and channels, (4) determining the importance of signifiers signifying the corporate system, and (5) identifying the signifier and the signified in the advertisement.

Regarding the green corporate identify management, the concept of corporate identity management can be applied. Fundamentally, the organization must identify the green corporate identity, which can response to organization's external and internal environment. The external environment can refer to technology, society, economy, and government policy and regulation in the aspects of natural environment conservation. Whilst the internal environment means the set of the business strategy, mission, vision, culture, and practices that supports natural environmental issues. Green, Morton and New (2000) suggest that in greening the organizations, the concepts of supply chains can be adopted. The organization is supposed to manage the business context responding to changes regarding the environmental pressure on the supplier and consumers. Their study also indicates strongly to build strength from inside organization, which it can be internal company management, policy, regulation, and practices.

The successful corporate identity can create positive effects on the employee performance, corporate reputation, and corporate performance. Goodman, Rolland, and Bazzoni, (2009) investigate the way the companies become the green organization and how they convey meaningful messages regarding environmental concerns, based on Chandler (2007), by reporting corporate social responsibility in the aspects of environmental practices. The significant findings from this study

indicate that reporting of environmental corporate social responsibility can engage the stakeholders in acknowledging the green identity. Chen (2011) adapted the concept of corporate identity from Gioia and Thomas (1996) to study the green organizational identity. His study refers that the green organizational identity must be crucially related to company history, goals, and missions, traditional and culture, and management and protection regarding environmental concerns. There are also similar management in green corporate identity management from another recent scholar (Chang, & Chen, 2013; Mushtaq, Zubair, Khan, & Khurram, 2019; Xing, Wang, & Tou, 2019).

Components of Green Corporate Identity

The concepts of corporate identity originally related to the concepts of marketing. Later, there has been development related to corporate identity and extension to other fields. There are various studies about corporate identity. For instance, Melewar and Jenkins (2002) advocate the construct of corporate identity. Their construct consists of communication and visual identity, referring to corporate communication, uncontrollable communication, architecture and location, corporate visual identity; behavior, referring to corporate behavior, management behavior, employee behavior; corporate culture, referring to corporate goals, philosophy and principle, nationality, and organizational imagery and history; and market conditions, referring to nature of industry and corporate marketing strategy. Similarly, Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) categorize the dimensions of corporate identity from practitioner perspectives. Their six dimensions encompass with follow aspects. The corporate structure refers to brand structure and organizational structure. The corporate strategy refers to positioning strategy and differentiation strategy. The corporate culture refers to mission, vision, and values. The corporate

behavior refers to company behavior, management behavior and employee behavior. The corporate design refers to slogan, architecture, office layout, location, and website. The corporate communication refers to marketing communication, management communication, and organizational communication. Lastly, industry identity refers to company characteristics such as competitiveness, size, and rate of change. Meanwhile, Maurya, Mishra, Anand and Kumar (2015) study and identify three dimensions of corporate identity, which it includes symbolism or visuals, behavior, and communication. The components explored by Melewar and Jenkins (2002) are interesting and can be included in the development of green corporate identity.

In terms of green corporate identity, its components have been developed from the corporate identity. The model from by Melewar and Jenkins (2002) has been used in this study to develop as green corporate identity. Then, the green corporate identity can include as follows. Green corporate communication and visual identity refers to how the organization communicates and visualizes with stakeholders in terms of environmental concerns. Green corporate culture refers to how the organization manages corporate culture, values, and history in terms of environmental concerns. Green corporate behavior refers to how the organization manages corporate behavior in terms of environmental concerns. Lastly, green market condition refers to how the organization responds the market condition in terms of environmental concerns. When the corporate can be interpreted as the organization that concerns and be aware of environmental problems and protection, the identity will lead to better the organizational management.

Methods of Green Corporate Identity Study

There are two main concepts that have been used to study the corporate identity. The first is

corporate identity management mix or program, which focuses on the components that are necessary to be considered when managing the identity of the corporate (Melwar & Jenkis, 2012; Maurya, Mishra, Anand, & Kumar, 2015). This model emphasizes more in behavioral intent. Another is corporate identity identification, which determines the individual's strength of identification with the organization. The scales developed under this concept emphasize more in including affective components than behavioral intent. For example, Mowaday, Steers, and Porter (1979), and Gioia and Thomas (1996) include senses of belonging, senses of congruency between goal and values, senses of positive membership, senses of organizational support, senses of distinct contribution, senses of acceptance and senses of security. However, if the needs to create the good strategies, the corporate identity management mix or program can be well implemented, it can link to the organization's new strategies (Riel, & Balmer, 1997).

According to the methods used to study corporate identity, there are several techniques. The laddering technique originally developed by Reynolds and Gutman (1988) and later developed by Van Rekom (1993) can be one of methods that have been widely used to study and examine human behavior and reveal important insights regarding employee values. With open interview, the questions are asked for employees to describe what they do, how they do, why works in this way, and why they consider this type of behavior is important. Another technique is Balmer's affinity audit, which it is used to reveal the dominant systems of values and believe of employees. The technique of Balmer's affinity audit can be applied to numerous means, which can include semi-structure interviews, observation, and document examination. According to the Balmer's affinity audit, there are four stages involving in this technique including (1) establishing the corporate mission and strategy; (2) revealing the system of

value and belief within the organization; (3) evaluating the system of value and belief against the corporate mission and strategy; and (4) nurturing value and belief that can respond the corporate mission and strategy. The next technique is the Rotterdam Organizational Identification Test by Kennedy (1977), which is used to identify employees' behavior towards their organization identity and image. There are 15 items are constructed and they include feelings of belongings, congruency between organizational goal and values, positive organizational supports, recognition of distinct contribution feeling of acceptance, and security. This method is easy and affordable. However, it cannot reveal the nature of corporate identity since it only provides information of a given corporate identity (Riel, & Balmer, 1997). Organizational identity measurements by Gioia and Thomas (1996) also applied to study organizational identity must correlate with company history, goals, and missions, traditional and culture, and management and protection regarding environmental concerns. In addition, Chandler's (2007) raises the semiology process or semiotic method to study how the sign of corporate identity can be meaningfully interpreted in the eyes of the stakeholders. The semiotic method composes of five stages including text identification, nature of vehicle, relationship between vehicles and type token, choice of text and signifiers and signified identification.

In relations to the green corporate identity, Green, Morton and New (2000) applied a prescriptive anthropomorphism to understand the relationship between organizational purchasing and innovation in the context of the greening of organization and explain the greening of consumption. In addition, they use this idea to understand the inter-organizational links to green individual organization. Whilst, Goodman, Rolland, and Bazzoni (2009) utilize the content analysis with critique evidence technique to study reporting of the

corporate social responsibility activities regarding the environment on the selected company's website in order to understand about their green corporate identity. Similarly, Mason, and Mason (2012) applied genre analysis theory and semantic-based approaches to understand green corporate identity and its ability to communicate environment ideological persuasion to the audience members by studying the reporting of environmental activities from 100 companies listed in the 2009 Fortune 1000. In the meantime, Chen (2011) adapted Gioia and Thomas (1996) to study the green organization identity by using questionnaires to collect data and structural equation modeling to verify the framework and interpret the results. Similarly, Chang and Chen (2013) utilize a hybrid research method that consists of questionnaire data and public data and employ structural equation modeling to perform the empirical research. Also, the study done by Mushtaq, Zubair, Khan and Khurram (2019) and Xing, Wang, and Tou (2019) employ quantitative research approach and structural equation modeling technique to study association of green organizational identity with its dependent variables. As aforementioned literatures, the green corporate identity can employ both qualitative and quantitative approach to explore and study the relationship between green corporate identity and its endogenous variables.

Conclusions

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