Synopsis of the MBA thesis:

**Strategic Corporate Design and Branding in the Corporations:**
the role of Design Management in building the Corporate Identity

**Problem**

In the new millennium we already know that corporate identity is getting more interest in the leading business schools (van Riel et al 1997, p. 352; Balmer 1998, p. 983). In the late 1990’s the International Corporate Identity Group was formed, which has published the so called “Strathclyde Statement” instead of a definition of a corporate identity (van Riel et al 1997, p. 341). The Strathclyde statement was developed by academics from the Strathclyde, Erasmus and Harvard Business Schools and leading consultants in an attempt to articulate the corporate identity. From the statement it is clear that every organisation has an identity. It is also explaining how corporate identity can help to differentiate the organisations within its competitive environment. From the statement we know that corporate identity is a strategic issue and that it differs from traditional brand marketing. (van Riel, Balmer, 1997, p. 341).

The core of the corporate identity is build around three themes – coherence, symbolism and positioning (Olins 1989, p. 148). In the first stage of building a corporate identity there should be done the communications, the design and the behavioural audit (Olins 1989, p. 161). In the thesis we would like to describe the process of the corporate identity building.
We would like to find out **what is the role of design in building and maintaining a comprehensive and sustainable corporate identity?** Why is the role of design important?

Is the role of design to develop a logo and/or a name or should we agree with the statement that: “Eine Unternehmensmarke ist mehr als nur ein Name und ein Logo – sie ist die Essenz dessen, was das Unternehmen tut” (Faust, W. H. in Paulmann, 2005, p. 2)?

**We would also like to find out what is the connection between brand architecture and corporate identity?** Is it possible to form a successful corporate identity without established brand architecture? Is branding the corporations a necessity in every industry?

Branding in the thesis is going to be connected with the brand architecture and not with branding in general. Although some authors, recommend that brand is the term that everyone will understand (Olins 203, p. 208) in the thesis we are going to use term corporate identity and not corporate brand or corporate branding.

Brand architecture of every company starts with its name. We differentiate six different name categories (Olins 1989, p. 178) and in general three kinds of corporate structure - monolithic, endorsed or branded (Olins 1989, p. 79). We would like to present the relationship between the brand architecture and corporate identity.

More specific, we know that in the brand relationship spectrum we have continuum “that involves four basic strategies and nine sub strategies.” (Aaker, Joachimstaller 2000, p. 10). We are going to be interested in brand architecture in connection, if there is one, with building the corporate identity and not so much with the product or brand portfolio itself. We recognize though the importance of the brand portfolio analysis which has originally developed from the Boston Consulting Group matrix of “Stars, Cows, Children and Dogs” (Davidson 2002, p. 28).

Usually authors claim that corporate identity or corporate identity mix is build around three plates:
+ corporate design
+ corporate behaviour and
+ corporate communications (Paulmann, 2005; Parum, 2006; Abdullah in Hinz et. al., 2007).
**What would be the role of design management?** How to manage the process of design and branding in the corporations, taking into consideration that design management is connected with three vectors: management, communications, layout/design ("Gestaltung"), and has three main tasks: design direction, design realisation, design coaching (Hase in Hase et. al., 2007, p. 24).

We would also like to explain the role of design manager, with role model in one exceptional example in the business world, namely Eliot Noyes as a corporate design director at IBM, who worked with Paul Rand in graphics and Marcel Breuer in architecture for 20 years since 1956 (Borja de Mozota 2003, p. 27). And since then the corporate identity of the IBM has evolved but not changed significantly although the IBM corporations has rapidly changed its offerings.

We see design management as organizational learning process which could be based on two perspectives: reactive (managerial) and proactive (strategic) (Borja de Mozota 2003, p. 74-75). We also see brand differentiation and brand management (especially in connection with the brand architecture, added by M. S) as part of design management (Borja de Mozota 2003, p. 82)

**What are the possibilities to manage the process of design and branding, especially the corporate identity?** From within the corporations or with outside consultancies or are there other options?

We are going to explain the strategic corporate design based on three possible definitions:
+ Design is an activity involving a wide spectrum of professions in which products, services, graphics, interiors, and architecture take part (IDSA) (Borja 2003, p. 3).
+ Design and branding: design is a link in the chain of brand, or a means of expressing brand values to its different publics (Borja 2003, p. 4).
+ Design and corporate strategy: design is a tool for making a strategy visible (Borja 2003, p. 4).

Those are the problems that we would like to address in the MBA thesis.
Purpose

Why study brand architecture and corporate identity? **Is it possible to build corporate identity without establishing the brand architecture of the corporation first?** We would like to find out if it is possible to build corporate identity without establishing the brand architecture first. We would also like to find out what is the connection between the two, the corporate identity and brand architecture. In that process we want to explain the role of design management, including the suitability of the design management for that process.

**Why would we like explain the role of design management?**

In explaining the role of design management we would like to find out what are the specifications of design profession be that inside corporations or in the design consultancies. We would like to present the possibilities that corporations have in building their corporative identity. We would like to present the process of building a corporate identity.

**What are the necessary resources in establishing the corporate identity?** We would like to present the role of the corporate stakeholders; the role of the corporate top management and the role of other outside resources especially design consultancies.
Goals
In master thesis we would like to find out:

1. What kind of the connection, if there is one, is between corporate identity and brand architecture?

2. What discipline or disciplines should have the main role in establishing and managing the corporate identity process?

3. In supposing the corporate identity is strategic issue, what kind of resources from within the corporations and from outside the corporations are needed to manage the process of corporate identity. Which of the stakeholders of the corporations are to be included in the process of building the corporate identity?

4. What could be a further endorsement for a strategic corporate design, branding and design management, especially in building and maintaining the corporate identity?
Main hypothesis
H1: It is not possible to build a corporate identity without establishing brand architecture first.

H2: Design management has the leading role in building a corporate identity.

H3: Corporate identity demands resources from the corporation, especially from the top management, and from outside consultations.
Methodology
The thesis will be monographic and written mainly in the descriptive manner. Inside the descriptive approach we are going to use the method of compilation. In the concluding part of the thesis we are going to use the analytical approach using inductive method of reasoning (Ivanko 2007, p. 23).
The structure of the chapters

I. Introduction

II. Corporate Identity

III. Brand Architecture

IV. Strategic Corporate Design

V. Design Management

VI. Conclusions

VII. Literature

VIII. Sources
**Suggested Literature**


Bailey, Simon. 2006. Effective design is measurable. Design Week: 04.05., p. 22.


Exon, Mike. 2006. Is design really under threat from the ad agency? Design Week: 13.07., p. 3.


