

COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY

An approach to communicate the
sustainable values of South Sea Exclusive to
the City Government Puerto Princesa City
and the Palawan Council for Sustainable
Development

“Is there a difference between the corporate identity and the corporate image of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc.?”

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I. Preamble

This paper is the result of a three months during internship at the company South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. in Puerto Princesa on Palawan, in the Philippines. The focus of this paper is the external communication of the company South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. This company aims to improve the sustainable mariculture of Southeast Asia and specifically the island Palawan. The main purpose of this study was to demonstrate the balance between the corporate identity and corporate image of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. and how the equality between both concepts could be improved.

The paper starts off with a short introduction of the problem definition, the research question and the goal of study. After the introduction, an explanation of the applied methods follows. A chapter about academic research elaborates the thoughts, paradigms and theories which concern external communication. The corporate identity and corporate image and the balance between these two concepts are furthermore presented in the last chapters. Finally, the paper contains a concluding part of advice and discussion.

It is important to mention and emphasize that this study is held autonomous and has an independent character. The study is held with an objective view and both external stakeholders and the company South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. are approached with a neutral attitude.

1. Introduction

The interest in corporate image and the management of the corporate identity has grown over the last decade (Markwick & Fill, 1995). The corporate identity and the corporate image are nowadays more and more acknowledged as important concepts for a company. Firms have become increasingly aware of the importance of developing and managing their corporate identity as well as their corporate image (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). The identity of a corporation is affirmed as a strategic resource and source of competitive advantage (Van der Jagt, 2002). A strong corporate identity will result in a higher productivity, a higher demand and believe and trust by the stakeholders. The corporate identity is besides its strategic and competitive advantage also affirmed as important, since academics acknowledge that actions and practices of a company form a corporate image out of the corporate identity (Stuart, 1999). It is important to manage the communication and expression of the corporate identity to direct the corporate image. The corporate image is significant, since it can be seen as the measurement of the willingness, attitude and opinion of the stakeholders. Effective management of the corporate identity is therefore useful to form a desirable corporate image and to address indirectly the needs of the firm's stakeholders for example. The objective of corporate identity management is to establish a favourable reputation with an organization's stakeholders which is hoped to be translated by such stakeholders into propensity to buy that organization's products and services, to work for or to invest in the organization (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997).

But literature abounds on the subjects of corporate identity, corporate image and its management. Academics still did not find a unanimous definition, there are a lot of different theories, thoughts and paradigms that concern the concepts and there are above all a lot of factors that are accounted to play a key role in the establishment, maintenance and improvement of the identity and image (Stuart, 1999). It is hard for companies to find one comprehensive strategy to control all these factors and in that way their corporate identity and corporate image.

South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. is having the same problem as a lot of firms have nowadays. It is a young company that arose in 2007 and is still working on their communication with stakeholders and the accomplishment of the expression of the corporate identity. A volunteer carried out a study in March 2010 for the company to research the communication between the firm's management and the internal stakeholders, such as the employees. Results showed that the internal stakeholders did not understand what the company stands for and what their job added to the whole company process and continuation (Jorna, 2010). The difficulties for the relatively young company and the study of the internal communication raised questions about the

communication between the company and its external stakeholders. Do the stakeholders receive the corporate identity as the company desires? What corporate image results out of the external communication? And how could the corporate identity management be improved? These questions led to the research question for this study: “Is there a difference between the corporate identity and the corporate image of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc.? And if yes, what are the differences?” This study will clarify the functionality of the external communication of the company via a literature study and interviews. The goal of this study is to give the company support to improve their knowledge about the corporate identity and corporate image and how the company could improve the communication with the external stakeholders to obtain the desirable balance between identity and image.

This paper is divided in several chapters. First of all, the theories and methods that are used for the study are elaborated. After these chapters, the results of the study of the corporate identity and corporate image will be shown and the paper will be concluded with an analysis of the balance between both concepts with an advice and discussion of the overall results and conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

Communication is an ongoing contextualized process of interaction in which meaning emerges from the relationship of the individual interaction and the system of articulation (Campbell, 1985). It has been held that people are not capable of not communicating: all behaviour transmits some meaning to those aware of the behaviour. The possibility also exists for any message to have a meaning to the receiver which is different from the meaning intended by the sender (Campbell, 1985). The knowledge about the corporate identity and corporate image became with this in mind increasingly important in the last decades (Markwick & Fill, 1995). Gray and Balmer explain in their article that the pervasive blurring of boundaries between organisations and their stakeholders in today's business world has highlighted the need to strategically manage corporate reputation and image (1998). Moreover, ongoing discrete trends such as globalisation, merger mania, deregulation and privatisation and the acceleration of product life cycles have created a sense of urgency for many firms (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

The identity of a corporation is affirmed as a strategic resource and source of competitive advantage (Van der Jagt, 2002). A strong corporate identity will result in a higher productivity, a higher demand and believe and trust by the stakeholders. The corporate identity is besides also affirmed as an important basis for the actions and practices of a company that form the corporate image (Stuart, 1999). A lot of academic work is done to found out more about the way in which the corporate identity and corporate image function and can be managed. The development and continuation of research about the corporate identity and corporate image is elaborated in the following paragraph.

2.1 Development of conceptual framework

The concept of corporate image was developed in the 1950s. The first author to draw a comparison between the corporate image and the human personality was Newman in 1953 (Abratt, 1989). Boulding contributed by emphasising the relationship between image and behaviour and by suggesting that what an individual believes to be true, is in fact true for him or her (1956). Swanson, approaching it from the perspective of the consumer, was first to suggest that there was such a thing as an ideal corporate image (1957). Martineau argued strongly for management to take the topic seriously and he was the first to suggest that a company faced not one, but seven publics to whom it should be projecting itself (1958).

Since the 1970s the concept of the corporate identity received more attention in the academic world. Stuart highlights in her article the most important models since the 1970s that improved the knowledge about the corporate identity and corporate image (1999). The first influential model is Kennedy's model from 1977. The focus of the model was on how the company image was formed. The model consists of three main elements, respectively the objective company criteria, the company personnel perception of the company and the perception of the company of external groups (Stuart, 1999). Objective company criteria, influenced by extraneous influence such as government legislation and prevailing economy, are together with company policy the factors that influence the company personnel perception of the company. After which the personnel influences the perception of the company of the external groups, or in other words, influences the corporate image. Dowling changed Kennedy's model in 1986 by adding a so-called organisational culture that has in the view of Dowling also influence on the employee's image of the company (Stuart, 1999). The organisational culture can be seen as the ontological groundwork of a company. Both the models of Abratt in 1989 as the model of Stuart in 1994 make an innovative distinguish between corporate personality, corporate identity and corporate image (Stuart, 1999). The corporate personality influences the corporate identity, whereupon the corporate identity affects the corporate image via an image interface. Stuart explains furthermore that marketing communications strategy and the employee's view of corporate identity are the link between the corporate identity and the corporate image (1999). All these models together resulted in a definitive model created by Stuart in 1999.

2.1.1 Definitive model of Helen Stuart

Helen Stuart composed in 1999 a definitive model of the corporate identity management process. This model includes all the schemes, models and theories that are mentioned above and gives an overview of how the corporate identity of a company could be perfectly managed. Stuart distinguishes three main parts in the model that all influence the final management process (1999). The first part is the organisational culture, which is subdivided in three levels. The lowest level, the starting point, is the corporate personality. The corporate personality consists of the corporate philosophy, core values and corporate mission for example (Stuart, 1999). The second level, the corporate strategy, is based on the corporate personality. The top management vision, products or service and the organisational structure are elements of the corporate strategy and are derived from the corporate personality. At last the third level, the corporate identity relies on both the corporate personality and the corporate

strategy. The segments of the corporate identity are for example the behaviour of both management and employees, symbolism and the means of communication (Stuart, 1999). The corporate identity is the element of the organisational culture that has to be communicated by the managers and employees to the external stakeholders.

Besides the organisational structure is the translation of the corporate identity to the external stakeholders is the second part of the definitive model of Stuart (1999). The company translates the information via interpersonal communication, marketing communication and management communication to the stakeholders. This interface can be aimed by the management of the company. The final corporate image will be created by the stakeholders and derives from the interface. The corporate image itself can not be directly remodelled. The corporate image will ultimately lead up to a corporate reputation, which is the final stage of the definitive model.

The third part of the definitive model is the existence of external, environmental forces (Stuart, 1999). These forces are together with the feedback in every phase autonomous.

2.1.2 Model Gray & Balmer

Beside the definitive model of Helen Stuart is the model of Gray and Balmer an important sum of communication theories and ideas. The model of Gray and Balmer is more simplified than the model of Stuart. Gray and Balmer implicate that the corporate identity will be translated through corporate communication into a corporate image and corporate reputation (1998). Every phase of this model contains feedback. The model is very similar to the definitive model of Stuart. Gray and Balmer are also of the same opinion as Stuart that there are autonomous, exogenous factors that influence the creation of the corporate image and reputation. Gray and Balmer nevertheless do not acknowledge the influence that exogenous factors could have on the organisational culture (1998). Gray and Balmer above all included an extra phase in their model compared to the model of Stuart. Following their model, the corporate image and corporate reputation can lead to competitive advantage (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

2.2 Definition of concepts

The concepts of corporate identity and corporate image are much-discussed (Van Ruler, 2004). There is a voluminous amount of literature about both concepts, which lead to a broad view and knowledge of what these concepts stand for (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). Moreover,

Abratt indicates that the two concepts of corporate identity and corporate image are often used interchangeably or imprecisely (1989). Abratt clarifies that the two concepts and also the concept of corporate personality have an obvious relationship (1989). But that it also is important to distinguish these concepts clearly. Abratt defines the corporate personality as the decision on what the company it is to do, what it shall believe in and how it shall operate (1989). Besides, the corporate identity is, following Abratt a concept which covers the assembly of visual cues. Both physical and behavioural cues by which an audience can recognise the company and distinguish it from others and which can be used to represent or symbolise the company (Abratt, 1989). Markwick and Fill agree with this definition that the corporate identity is the organization's presentation of itself to its various stakeholders and the means by which it distinguishes itself from all other organizations (1995). The corporate image at last is the overall impression; a mosaic synthesised from numerous impressions formed as a direct or indirect result of a variety of formal or informal signs emanating from the company (Abratt, 1989). Hatch and Schultz (1997) as well as Arendt and Brettel (2010) agree with this definition and clarify that the corporate image is a construction of public impressions created to appeal to an audience.

3. Methods

This study is focused on the corporate identity and corporate image of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. These two concepts are very difficult to determine, academics did not find a unanimous definition yet and it is also difficult to decide which components of the definitions should be included and excluded. The characteristics of the subject of research are that complex that a qualitative study is acquired.

But besides the difficulty of the concepts itself, are there also some other elements that make the choice for a qualitative study necessarily. First of all the fact that this study aims to explore the knowledge of the external stakeholders about the identity of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. Knowledge, thoughts, ideas, opinions and expertise is widespread and subjective and can not be understood in a few scaled questions in a survey (Reuling & Lindeman, 2005). Secondly, because the subject of study is susceptible and complex and needs therefore caution and a working method that is subtle and flexible. These elements combined have led to the choice of a qualitative study. In this study the Ladder technique, a document analysis and open, half structured interviews are applied.

3.1 Document analysis

A document analysis is the study of documents, which can include different kinds of scripts and writing. The analysis is focused on documents that are products with a communicative function (Reuling & Lindeman, 2005). In this study it concerns academic articles and impersonal documents, such as a business plan and a protocol to research the corporate identity of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. The impersonal documents that are utilized for the description of the corporate identity are the website of the company, a former communication research for the company, several documents provided by the management team and through surveys. I will elaborate the sources one by one shortly.

The business plan of the company, a specification of their mission statement and the protocol of the internal functioning were the documents that were provided by the management team. The website of the company was furthermore a source of information that is all written by the management team. The website specifies the company profile, the products and locations and gives an explanation of what sustainable mariculture is according to the company (Southsea-exclusive.com, 05 January 2010). Besides, a former communication study was also a useful source. The study was conducted in March 2010 by a Dutch volunteer of the Wageningen University Research Alumni in the Netherlands. The study was focused on the way in which the management team communicates the sustainable values of the company to her employees and

the local government officers. The results of this study showed that the employees did not know or understand the mission and the organization of the company. The employees knew only about their own work (Jorna, 2010). They furthermore did not know why their own work has to be done. The advice that resulted from the study was a 'training and awareness action plan' of the employees.

Analyzing these documents saves time and makes it able to grasp the complexity of the concept 'corporate identity'. The academic articles clarify the theories and thoughts behind the concept. The impersonal documents are useful, since they are written for the own purpose of the firm and is therefore modified with care.

3.2 Ladder technique

The corporate identity is also studied with the so-called 'ladder technique'. The ladder technique was originally developed to determine the image of products and brands. It is based on the central notion of the means-end theory which explains human behaviour as a series of "meant-end" actions (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). The method includes open interviews whereby employees or the management are asked to describe what they do, how they do it, why they work in this way and why they consider this type of behaviour to be important (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). This ladder technique is used in a slightly different way, in the sense that it concerned more direct questions for the management-team about the corporate identity and in specific the corporate communication in a survey. Each member of the team is approached individually via an email. The choice for an email is made to give the respondent some time to think about the complex concept. The short surveys made it possible to verify if the management team has comprehensive, like-minded and unanimously thoughts about the identity of the company and especially in the way it should be expressed.

3.3 Open, half structured interviews

The applied method to study the corporate image is the open, half structured interview. The goal of an open interview is to collect information from statements of respondents to give an answer on the research question (Reuling & Lindeman, 2005). It is important for qualitative research that the researcher is flexible and can adapt to the circumstances and to the information that is given by the respondents. An open and half structured interview is a face to face conversation that is only structured with a topic list (Reuling & Lindeman, 2005). The researcher does not prepare the questions and can adapt in that way to the information he or she receives. The researcher is nevertheless able to cover all the aspects with the practice of the topic list.

The flexibility of this study is necessary, since it contains a difficult and in-depth analysis that can not be covered by a single, scaled question or even a single answer with 'yes' or 'no'. The questions are furthermore focused on confidential and susceptible topics. The trust of the respondents has to be obtained and maintained in a personal and face to face conversation with the interviewer. Body language can be an important feature to obtain the trust and the charisma of the interviewer will show that the answers of the respondents are taken serious. Both body language and charisma are also important to moderate the language barrier. The respondents are able to speak English properly and an interpreter is therefore not vital, but asking the questions face to face is useful to sustain the possibility to rephrase the question for example. Finally, cultural differences are also elements that gave the preference for an open, half-structured interview. Citizens of the Philippines are shy and do not want to insult others. The Filipino people are furthermore used to a collective life, since the Filipino society is group oriented. They hide behind each others opinions and thoughts and will never express their thoughts as Western people in an individual country are used to (Posadas & Posadas, 2008). The Filipino people have above all an almost subconscious deference towards foreigners, which is known as a 'colonial mentality' (Posadas & Posadas, 2008). In this research the gap between Filipino respondents and a Western researcher had to be taken in mind. And with a face to face and open interview, equality between the respondent and interviewer could be showed and emphasized.

The topic lists of the interviews are in accordance with the 'six drivers of corporate image' of Van der Jagt (2002). Van der Jagt mentions in his article six criteria that form the corporate image and corporate reputation for the external stakeholders. The six criteria are 'emotional appeal', 'vision and leadership', 'products and services', 'social responsibility', 'workplace environment' and 'financial performance'. The questions that are asked during the interview fit in these six topics and will all together form an overall view of the corporate image of South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc.

Two external stakeholders with in total four respondents are interviewed. The external stakeholders that are chosen as respondents for this study are the City Government of Puerto Princesa City and the Palawan Council of Sustainable Development. Of each organisation, two employees are chosen. The respondents are respectively an employee with a managing function and an assistant. These four respondents are selected to cover different layers of each of the two stakeholders and to be able to compare the two reigning authorities. These two external stakeholders are also the most relevant for the company South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc. Government is at all levels an important stakeholder, since is has critical

factors in hands in determining the degree of friendliness of the industry legislation (Gary & Balmer, 1998).

In short, a qualitative study is chosen to cope properly with the complex, susceptible concepts, the cultural differences and language barrier. In this study, a ladder technique, document analysis and open, half-structured interviews are applied.

4. Corporate Identity

4.1 Theories Stuart and Gray & Balmer

As explained in the chapter of methods, are a document analysis and a ladder technique method applied to study the corporate identity. The website of the company, a former communication research for South Sea Exclusive Philippines Inc., surveys, the business plan, a specification of the mission statement and the protocol of internal functioning are examined.

The corporate identity will be described following the theories of Helen Stuart (1999) and Gray & Balmer (1998). The models in both articles are elaborated in the theoretical framework. The models are administered in this chapter, because the models are comprehensive and explicit. The theories of both articles is combined and led to the structure of the chapter that the corporate personality, corporate strategy, corporate identity mix and corporate communication are in the same order discussed. The corporate personality and corporate strategy are the groundwork of the corporate identity mix and need to be explained. The corporate communication is an important feature, following the theory of Gray and Balmer (1998), to make the bridge between the corporate identity and corporate image visible.

4.2 Corporate personality

Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. is a sustainable mariculture company that is established in 2009 and is focused on hatching and nursing of high-value marine species for export purposes. It is a full daughter of the South Sea Exclusive Holding B.V. that operates in the Netherlands since 2007 (South Sea Exclusive Business Plan, 2008). Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. is located in the Philippines on the island Palawan. The company chose the Puerto Princesa Bay on the island Palawan, because of the cooperative and natural circumstances and opportunities. The main office is now located in *barangay* (= district) Santa Lucia, but the company is also leasing areas in *barangay* Luzviminda and in the near future in *barangay* Manalo in Honda Bay. The company chose for the location of the Puerto Princesa Bay in Abucayan Intel, because of the excellent water quality, the sheltered location against waves and the close location to the main airport (South Sea Exclusive Business Plan, 2008).

Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. operates with a triple bottom-line regarding (1) profitability, (2) sustainability and (3) corporate social responsibility. The concept sustainability can in the case of Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. be defined as an attempt to provide the best outcomes for the human as well as the natural environment, both now and in the future. It is a holistic

approach that balances both human and ecological well being. Sustainability is the key decision to every business decision of the company and each decision considers therefore the sustainability of the environment, the people and the finances of the company (ter Meulen, 2009). By proactively advocating this management, is the ultimate target for the company to realise a 'green' transition in mariculture in Southeast Asia in the coming decades. The team of Southsea Exclusive Inc. strives after the goal to become the leading company in sustainable mariculture in Southeast Asia in 2015. The target markets for the company are China, Japan and Malaysia and partially the domestic market in the Philippines. The management team strives after this goal with responsibility, integrity, stewardship and initiative (ter Meulen, 2009).

The company has furthermore some key and business strategies to accomplish the mission and targets. The key strategies are first of all that five percent of each high-value marine species has to be released to safeguard the wild stock of the species. The second key strategy, as mentioned before, is to invest five percent of the profit of the company in the projects of the foundation for poverty alleviation and biodiversity preservation (South Sea Exclusive Business Plan, 2008).

The company has besides the key strategies also a few business strategies. The main business strategies are the following:

- Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. combines the knowledge of European and Philippine scientists in their research laboratory
- Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. attracts local managers to implement innovative production strategies at our production facilities.
- Close collaboration with Local Government Units results in economic development in the production areas of the company through employment opportunities for local people.

4.3 Corporate strategy

4.3.1 Organisational structure

The corporate strategy of the company is based on a hybrid business model, containing a for-profit production company and a non-profit foundation. This foundation is working towards poverty alleviation and biodiversity preservation. Five percent of the company profit is invested in the local community and the natural environment through the projects of the South Sea Exclusive Foundation (South Sea Exclusive Business Plan, 2008). But there are some interfaces between the company and the foundation. Some of the employees work for both company and foundation and the papaya plantation, which is now part of the company, will become a livelihood project of the South Sea Exclusive Foundation in the near future.

The company Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. and the South Sea Exclusive Foundation have together in total 25 employees. Three Dutch and one Filipino work at the office and form together the management team that supervises the company and foundation. The 21 other employees are all Filipino and work as secretary, driver, cleaner, maintenance worker in the mariculture section and the agriculture section.

4.3.2 Company products

The company is, as mentioned before, specialised in the hatchery and nursery of high-value marine species, such as the grouper, abalone and sea cucumber. The breeding protocols for some of these high-value marine species are currently developing. But the grouper, which is a fish species, is the marine species that the company focuses on nowadays. The company breeds different grouper species, such as the green grouper, the tiger grouper, the mouse grouper, the leopard grouper and the coral trout grouper. The company sells a part of the fingerlings of the grouper species to fishermen on Palawan. The fishermen are screened, informed and educated by the South Sea Exclusive Foundation to make the fishermen able to nurse and culture the groupers. Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. will finally buy the groupers back when the fish have a marketable size to export the fish to the target markets of the company. Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. intends with this production cycle to create jobs, to avoid illegal fishing practice and to make the fishery and mariculture of Palawan sustainable and ecologically balanced.

Besides the mariculture, the company puts also effort in agriculture. The management team made this decision, because of the land that the Filipino government proposed to the company and the cash flow that would result quickly from agricultural activities. Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. produces different kinds of vegetables and fruit. The agriculture will become a part of the foundation when the company has become bigger.

4.4 Corporate identity mix

4.4.1 Management vision

The management answered a few questions about the corporate identity via the described Ladder technique. Questions that were asked, considered the identity of the company, the identity of the foundation and the way in which these identities are communicated by the management.

The results showed that there are different thoughts between the three managers about the identities of the organizations and the means of communication. The latter will be discussed in the subchapter 4.4.3.

The answers about the identity of the company were first of all the most unanimous. All of the three managers explained that the identity of the company relies on the key word “sustainable”. The managers answered all that the identity is focused on the strategy of sustainable production of high value marine species. But the specific approach for this strategy differed. Two of the managers focused more on the future of the oceanology in Southeast Asia. Following these managers, the identity is based on the aim to become the leading producer of high value marine species in Asia by 2015 and “*to start up a green revolution in South East Asia*”. While the third manager made the sustainable production clear with a social economic point of view. This manager explained that the identity is also grounded in the effort to provide jobs for locals and to improve the social economical status of the citizens of Palawan. The manager answered that “*the social responsibility more important is than profit*”.

Furthermore, the answers on the questions about the identity of the foundation differed even more. The first manager aimed at the biological aspects of the island Palawan as the most important feature of the identity of the foundation. The second manager aimed at the social aspects of the island Palawan as the most important feature of the identity of the foundation. And the third manager clarified that the identity of the foundation is more focused on the connection between the company and the foundation itself. All managers nevertheless explained that the foundation is working on a sustainable future of the island, although with different opinions about what kind of future, via conservation and livelihood projects and education.

4.4.2 Symbolism

South Sea Exclusive is the brand name for sustainable mariculture. ‘South Sea’ indicates the prime region of operation; the countries surrounding the South China Sea. As well, it represents the natural wealth of resources that are still abundant in the Philippines. ‘Exclusive’ represents the ambition to deliver a product of exclusive quality to customers in the target markets who demand the highest quality seafood products.

The logo (figure 1.) of the company is a definition of the purity of the sea in its colour blue and the motion of the wave, combined with the tail of the spiny lobster expressing the focus on exclusive, high-value marine products. As well, the logo expresses other forces of nature present in the operations of the company through the association with the sun and the air.

Figure 1. Logo

4.4.3 Corporate communication

4.4.3.1 Stakeholders

The company Southsea Exclusive Philippines Inc. has two types of stakeholders. First of all, there are the shareholders of the South Sea Holding B.V. Second, there are stakeholders who are involved in the business activities of the company Southsea Exclusive Inc. This study will be focused on the latter.

The stakeholders who are involved in the business activities of the company Southsea Exclusive Inc. are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Overview of stakeholders

	Mariculture
Costumers	Wholesalers
	Seafood restaurants
Partners	Locals
	Ocean Ethix
	Government
Competitors	None
Nature	<i>Nature</i>

Table 2 is useful to get an overview of the different government organizations that are stakeholders of Southsea Exclusive Inc. The relationship between the government and Southsea Exclusive Inc. is necessarily based on the control of the government over the international revenues, tax, permits, licenses and company activities. But the government and Southsea Exclusive Inc. also cooperate and collaborate to gain more knowledge and develop a sustainable environment on Palawan.

Table 2. Overview of government organisations

Government organization	Government level
Barangay Santa Lucia	Local
Barangay Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Committee	Local
Bantay dagat (= water police)	Local
City Government of Puerto Princesa City	Regional
Mayor E. Hagedorn of Puerto Princesa City	Regional
Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources	Regional/National

Palawan Council for Sustainable Development	Provincial
Department of Environment and Natural Resources	National
Bureau of International Revenues	National
Security and Exchange Commission	National

The nature is also an important stakeholder for the company Southsea Exclusive Inc. The company needs the nature for the breed of groupers and their agricultural projects. It needs to communicate with the nature in a way that the profit for nature and the company maintains in balance.

4.4.3.2 Means of communication

Following the theories of Stuart and Gray and Balmer, are the means of communication the finances, fund and capital that are available to communicate the corporate identity. The answers of the management nevertheless showed that there is no plan of procedure formulated and there are therefore no means reserved or set aside.

The managers indicated that they know that all actions of the company, the management and the employees result in a specific image that the external stakeholders will form. But they also explained that they do not have a strategy or any planning about how to communicate their corporate identity. The communication with external stakeholders goes now, both for the foundation and the company, via one manager. He is present at almost every meeting and has the leading position in the communication with the governmental institutions. Other ways that are used by the management to communicate with the external stakeholders are via text messages, which is common in the business culture of the Philippines, a news letter which concerns both company and foundation and a website with weblog. But the website is outdated and has to be renewed.

Subsequently, the part of the Ladder technique about how the corporate identity should be communicated in the future, postulated that the managers have each different ideas and thoughts. The first manager elaborated only that there should be a PR plan “*or something like that*”, but did not explain how, via which communication channels or why. The second manager predicts that social networks, such as Facebook and the Dutch version ‘Hyves’ could be useful platforms for their transmission of the corporate identity. This manager furthermore mentioned that the local news should be spread via the management and the manager and that they therefore hold a

speech for the employees each month. The third and last manager aimed at simple, but clear communication wherein the foundation and company should be separated.

5. Corporate image

As mentioned before in the chapter of Methods, are the six elements in the article of Van der Jagt used for the topic list of the interviews. The theory of Van der Jagt implicates that these six elements together form the corporate image of a company. The results of the four interviews are, following this categorization, described one by one.

5.1 Emotional appeal

The emotional appeal is the aspect that has the biggest difference between the City Government Puerto Princesa City and the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD). The City Government first of all expressed a strong commitment with the company Southsea Exclusive. The whole interview showed an emotional and moreover personal commitment between the respondents of the City Government and the managers of Southsea Exclusive. The respondents appreciate the way in which the management accomplishes their jobs. The City Government highly supports the company therefore.

The PCSD nevertheless revealed that they do not trust Southsea Exclusive for the full hundred percent. They do not have any emotional commitment with the company and explain that they first want to see some results before they believe in the intentions of the Dutch managers. The respondents of the PCSD furthermore explained that they do not appreciate the organisational structure of the company. The respondents would prefer to communicate with a management team that exists of both Dutch and Filipino managers. This instead of the current structure wherein the three Dutch managers have 22 Filipino people working for them. The whole explanation of commitment between the PCSD and Southsea Exclusive seemed to be based on a feeling of an 'invasion' by the Dutch. The attitude shows almost a kind of hate that could be placed in a setting of colonization.

5.2 Vision and leadership

The vision of the company Southsea Exclusive is based on a triple bottom-line regarding (1) profitability, (2) sustainability and (3) corporate social responsibility. Both City Government and the PCSD only mentioned the sustainable character of the company. More questions about the vision and corresponding corporate personality, strategy and approach resulted in the reprise of the sustainability of the company. All of the four respondents were nevertheless able to explain the sustainable approach en view of the company utterly.

But the answers on the questions made at the same time clear that the respondents do not know the difference between the company and the foundation. The hybrid business model is clearly not known by the City Government and PCSD. They mixed up both organisations. The PCSD did not even know that there are two different institutions.

At last, both the City Government as well as the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development were not sure who of the three Dutch persons are involved in the management decisions. The respondents think that all of the Dutch have great influence, but that one man in specific is the official manager. That man is always present and moreover often on his own during meetings with the stakeholders.

5.3 Products and services

The questions about the products and services made clear that the governmental stakeholders do know that the company Southsea Exclusive is striving after the leadership of the sustainable development of high value marine species in Southeast Asia by 2015. They also know very well what kind of actions and work the company accomplishes to gain this goal. The breeding protocols are also clear for both the City Government as well as for the PCSD.

The City Government and PCSD nevertheless do not understand entirely why the company also puts effort in agriculture. Although the respondents of the City Government know that the production of papayas will finally become a livelihood project.

5.4 Social responsibility

Social responsibility was interpreted as sustainability during the interviews. The question that concerned the social responsibility resulted in answers about how the company Southsea Exclusive is focused on the ecological well-being of the island Palawan. The projects of the foundation were moreover brought up as a part of the work of the company. Sustainability is, once again, a very well-known and clear feature.

Questions about the social responsibility with regard to the Filipino employees of the company revealed again the distrust of the PCSD in the intentions of Southsea Exclusive.

5.5 Workplace environment

The workplace environment can be understood in a very wide prospect. First of all, it could be understood in the sense of cultural circumstances. The City Government explained that they do not feel any cultural or language barriers between their organisation and Southsea Exclusive. But the respondents of the City Government, as well as the PCSD, do not know that the company is

a full daughter of the South Sea Exclusive Holding B.V. The questions about the link between the Netherlands and the company raised even more questions for the respondents than that they could something tell about it.

Both City Government and PCSD are familiar with the location of the company in Puerto Princesa Bay. They attend meetings in the office of Southsea Exclusive and know that this bay is chosen by the Dutch enterprisers because of the excellent water quality, the sheltered location against waves and the close location to the main airport.

5.6 Financial performance

At last, the questions about the financial performance showed that the respondents are informed and have knowledge about the financial aspects of the company. They explained that Southsea Exclusive is always very open and honest about their financial performance.

An interesting note is that there is no difference between the managing function and the assistant of the governmental stakeholders. This implies that the communication is not based on a one to one commitment between the managers, but based on a company to company focus.

There are nevertheless differences between the City Government Puerto Princesa City and the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development. While the City Government has a more emotional and personal bond that shows trust and believe, is their a very weak commitment between the PCSD and Southsea Exclusive and show the respondents of PCSD distrust and reluctance against the Dutch-Filipino understanding.

6. Balance and advice

Now that both the corporate identity and corporate image are studied, is it possible to make up a balance between these two concepts. Comparing the corporate identity and the corporate image, shows that there are a few features similar and correlated, but on the other hand even more features that the external stakeholders receive differently than what the aspects should be like, following the corporate identity. The research question “*Is there a difference between the corporate identity and the corporate image*” can be answered with ‘Yes’. The similarities and differences between the corporate identity and corporate image will be discussed one by one in this chapter. An advice will be depicted after the elaboration of the balance between the two concepts.

The interviews with the City Government Puerto Princesa City and with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development showed that there are some aspects which are very well-known by the external stakeholders. It is clear for the respondents that the company Southsea Exclusive focuses on the sustainable production of high-value marine species and that they try to maintain their goal to become the leader in the sustainable production in the mariculture in Southeast Asia by 2015. All four of the respondents are familiar with the breeding protocols of the company in the Puerto Princesa bay. Finally, the external governmental stakeholders have knowledge of the financial performance of the company.

But there are also some aspects of the corporate identity that are unknown or confusing for the external stakeholders. The respondents did not know everything about the structure of the company. They were not familiar with the South Sea Exclusive Holding B.V. in the Netherlands for example and they only knew the pivot ‘sustainability’ of the triple bottom-line that the company is based on. Moreover, the City Government and PCSD do not understand the difference between the company and the foundation, as well as the accompanying project of the agricultural business.

Even more important is the attitude of the PCSD to the company Southsea Exclusive. There is a feeling of distrust and the stakeholder is aloof. Cultural differences, the necessity of exploring and a gap between the two organisations seems to be the problem. The relationship with the City Government is on the other hand strongly based on emotional commitment and personal relations, which could almost be dangerous for the business relation between both organisations.

At last, probably the most important issue that causes the difference between the corporate identity and the way in which it is received as a corporate image by the external stakeholders, is the fact that the management team does not have unanimous ideas and thoughts about the

identity itself, neither about possible means of communications, such as a communication plan or strategies.

All these differences taken together, leads to a package that shows a few pitfalls. The pitfalls are the direction and structure of the management, the means of communication and the communicational position of the company on Palawan that is too passive. The subchapter 6.2 covers an advice to evade these pitfalls. But first a comparison between the literature and findings will be elaborated.

6.1 Comparison with scientific literature

Besides the balance between the corporate identity and the corporate image is it also important to compare the findings with the scientific knowledge of the concepts of corporate identity and corporate image. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, it is possible to differentiate the corporate personality, corporate strategy and corporate identity, following the definitive model of Helen Stuart (1999). The comparison between this model and the findings shows that the corporate strategy is not ideally shaped by Southsea Exclusive. The management vision of the company is not unanimously and this causes a blurred notion of the corporate strategy. Compared to the model is the corporate identity of the company not complete. The translation of the corporate identity in the interface is unclear and results finally in an ambiguous corporate reputation. It leads for example to mistrust of the business performance by the external stakeholders.

Furthermore, taking the model of Gray and Balmer in account, leads to the insight that the competitive advantage of Southsea Exclusive can not be optimal. The corporate image and corporate reputation falter and this does not lead to a perfect competitive advantage.

At last, a comparison of the findings of this research with the conceptual definitions of Abratt shows that the company Southsea Exclusive should focus more on the behavioural cues and impressions that are important elements of the definitions. The company does not focus enough on the presentation of the corporate identity.

6.2 Advice

The balance and comparison show some failures in the communication of the corporate identity. The corporate image is often incomplete while the company has a well formulated corporate identity. The company Southsea Exclusive lacks communication in general. The management team has to communicate together about possible means of communication, about a unanimous

idea of the identity of the company and has to become more active in conversing and expressing the capacities and intentions of the company.

6.2.1 Direction and structure of the management

Communication is essential for a company. Communication is especially important for a company that is located in a small and brisk community such as Puerto Princesa City. The image is for the company a matter of succession or failure. Southsea Exclusive is moreover an outsider from the West. To receive help and support from the locals, the company needs to disseminate reliability, stability, modesty, willingness and abilities. The small and brisk community has to believe in the activities of the company and therefore needs to be well informed.

The management team of Southsea Exclusive did not succeed completely in fulfilling this task. One of the reasons could be that the management team is educated in science and biology and therefore not familiar with any forms of social science.

The managers first of all need to work on the direction of the managements' communication. The managers have to figure out if they all agree with the corporate identity as described in their business plan and on their website. Or that this corporate identity must be revised. A question that for example should be raised is if the vanguard of the company is the ecological prosperity of Palawan or if social economical welfare of the local inhabitants is also a goal. Furthermore, the managers should realize that there is a difference between marketing and communication. And at last should the direction of the management be improved with a draft of a SWOT-analysis and communication plan. This will give the management has more to go by on the expression of the corporate identity.

Besides the changes in the direction of the company, the structure of the management should also be altered. The gap between the PCSD and Southsea Exclusive could be eliminated by changing the cultural basis of the management. By for example expanding the management team with at least one Filipino. A mixed management team of both Dutch and Filipino managers will carry out a message of interconnection between the company and the island. This will improve the believe in the good intentions of the company to help the island Palawan. Furthermore, the management team should be divided in two teams. In this way, there will be one management team for the company and one management team for the foundation. It is possible that these teams cooperate and collaborate, but it is important that these teams will always be divided when both the company or the foundation communicate with external stakeholders. This will make the difference between the two organisations more clear and will look more professional.

6.2.2 Active communication

Secondly, the communication of the company should become more active. Distrust can only be resolved with preventive and persuasive communication. The company has to have assertive ways of communication in a small and brisk community as Puerto Princesa City. This will prevent gossip and lies. The expression of good intentions and showing the right corporate identity will hinder these deceptions.

One mode that could be implemented is the relocation of the office. The office is now located in the *barangay* Santa Lucia which is about 40 km from the city centre. The relocation of the office in the city centre will make Southsea Exclusive more visible and accessible. Together with the relocation is another major mode to integrate more in the local community without losing the business attitude. The company could for example sponsor local events. But even more significant is lobbying as a way of active communication. The managers of the company should lobby via meetings and presentations. Lobbying makes it possible for external stakeholders to gain more knowledge of the company and in that way a positive attitude without a lot of effort.

6.2.3 Means of communication

At last, the means of communication should be changed. First of all, the business plan and the website of the company should be renewed. The information on the website and in the business plan are now outdated. Also could be considered to publish this information also in Tagalog which shows diligence and dedication. Furthermore, the foundation and company should become more differentiated. A new name, new logo and own website of the foundation would make a clear distinction. A hyperlink with information on both websites will make the interconnection between Southsea Exclusive and the South Sea Exclusive Philippines foundation more clear.

7. Discussion

Some aspects were going well during the three months of research and some aspects could be improved in a following research.

First of all, the location created some limitations for this external communication research. There were in Puerto Princesa no facilities for further research in a library or other databases than the online database of the home university in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. A better access to more sources of information could have changed the outcome and results of the study. Secondly, a language barrier between the interviewer and the respondents of the Filipino government may have resulted in different interpretations and segmental reporting than in a situation wherein the interviewer and the respondents have the same mother tongue. It might have occurred that the interviewer as well as the respondents were not able to translate their thoughts, ideas and questions perfectly which lead to perhaps misunderstanding or transformation of the original intentions without being aware of that. Furthermore, cultural difference might have influenced the interviews between the Dutch interviewer and the Filipino respondents.

Another limitation was the time-limit of three months for this study. The construction and cooperation of the company and foundation are much intertwined, the organization in both the Netherlands and the Philippines and the footing of both agriculture and mariculture were difficult to understand and unravel in such a short period of time.

The fourth limitation could also be seen as an opportunity. The study, the interviews excluded, is held totally in the office of the management of Southsea Exclusive. A limitation is that the permanent presence of the management might have influenced the objectivity of the study. On the other hand gave this permanent presence the opportunity to observe the functioning of the company and made it the management highly accessible for questions.

This study raised questions for further research. First of all would it be interesting to transform this study in a way that the employees are interviewed to examine the external communication with stakeholders. Besides, the study could be used for the foundation Southsea Exclusive Philippines as well. Thirdly, it is interesting to find reasons and arguments for the fact that there is a difference between the City Government and the PCSD in the way they received the corporate identity and formed a corporate image. Moreover, it will be useful to research how the external communication improved after this paper with advice for correction.

Finally, an idea for further research is to focus on the exogenous factors that might influence the corporate identity and corporate image, following the models of Stuart and Gray and Balmer.

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