

## Brand Identity and Its models

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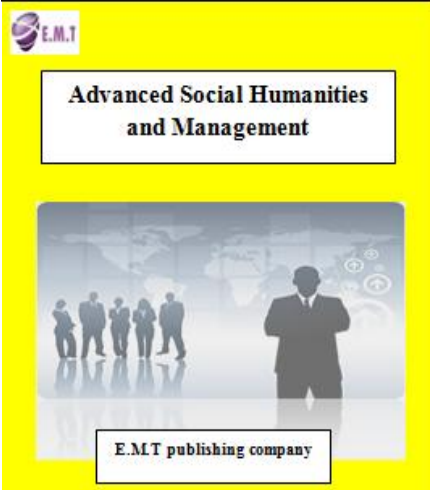
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### Abstract

The brand identity is the internal desired image that the company wants to communicate to the target group. A strong brand has a clear and specified brand identity, which is a set of associations that the company tries to create through, for example, market communication. Kapferer first mentioned the concept of Brand identity in 1986 and since then there have been many discussions of its definition. According to the researchers, Brand identity represents how companies aspire to be perceived. They also suggest that the purpose of Brand identity is to establish a relationship between the brand and the customer. In this article we define a brand identity and its models.

**Keywords :** brand identity , Personality , Positioning , Vision & Culture , Relationship

### Introduction

Brands are among the most important intangible assets possessed by firms, contributing to greater value and market success (De Asis 2001; Shankar, Azar, and Fuller 2008). The brand premium is based on the equity that brands gain from being familiar, credible, and trustworthy, which lowers information costs and perceived risk involved with a purchase (Shankar, Azar, and Fuller 2008).

In traditional economic literature, labor, capital, and land are three fundamental production elements and are regarded as the main sources of wealth and value creation; however, it cannot explain how a product with the same efficiency, quality, and features is sold at the price three times the competitors' products. New marketing approaches explain this phenomenon by the identity that different brands provide for their customers. Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members.

The brand identity is the internal desired image that the company wants to communicate to the target group. A strong brand has a clear and specified brand identity, which is a set of associations that the company tries to create through, for example, market communication. (Mårtensson, R. 2008) . Brand identity specifies the frames of a brand's uniqueness and value. It describes what a brand stands for and is difficult to copy (Melin, F. 1997) By generating a value position, brand identity establishes the relationship between the customer and the company. The benefits can be functional, emotional or self-expressive. (Aaker, D. 1996) Brand identity involves all the basic characteristics of a company that will persist over time and provides a framework for the overall brand coherence. It expresses the unity and durability of a brand.

### Brand identity

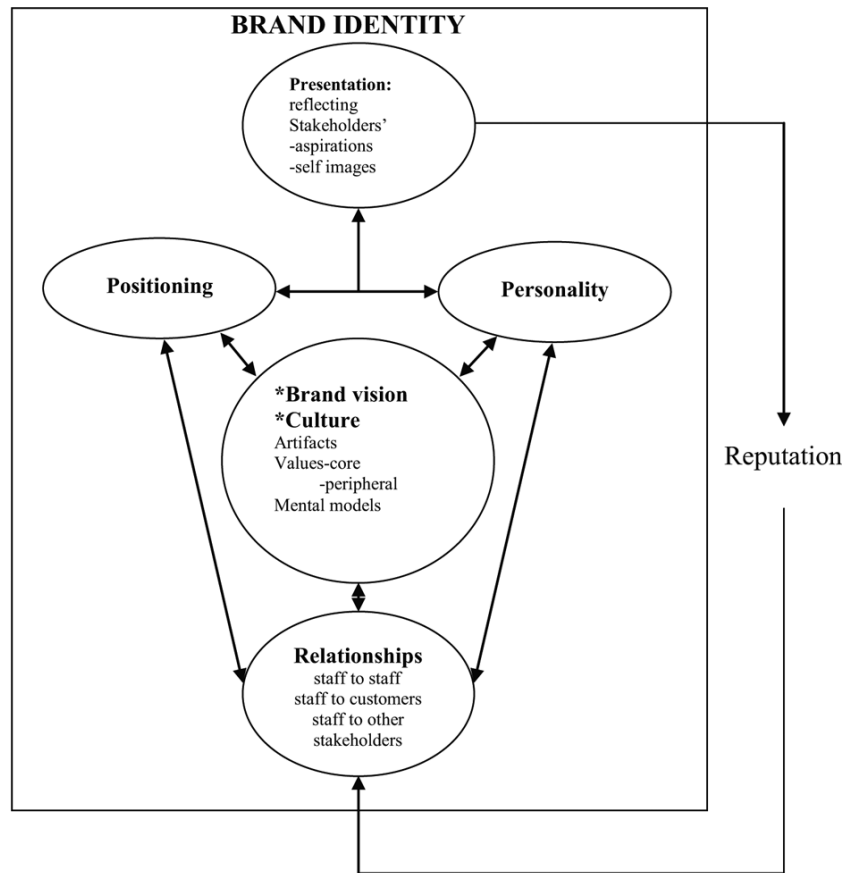
Kapferer first mentioned the concept of Brand identity in 1986 and since then there have been many discussions of its definition (Janonis et al., 2007). According to Janonis et al. (2007), Brand identity includes everything that makes the brand meaningful and unique. De Chernatony and Harris (2001) suggest that Brand identity

includes values, aim and moral image that together constitute the essence of individuality that differentiate the brand. Brand identity offers a possibility to position a brand and encourages strategic approach while managing it (De Chernatony & Harris, 2001). Kapferer (2008) suggests that Brand identity involves many dimensions and any communication from the brand; whether it is formal or informal, verbal or non-verbal, should be sync with its Brand identity. Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) propose another definition of Brand identity, describing it as a unique set of brand associations that firms aim to create or maintain. According to the researchers, Brand identity represents how companies *aspire* to be perceived. They also suggest that the purpose of Brand identity is to establish a relationship between the brand and the customer (Sääksjärvi & Samiee, 2011). Based on the reviewed definitions, the authors of this thesis have decided to define Brand identity as “a set of distinct characteristics, applied in brand communication, making the brand meaningful and unique”.

### **Brand Identity models :**

#### **De chernatony model :**

De Chernatony (1999) has developed a model called “the process of managing a brand”, which conceptualizes Brand identity. According to the model, Brand identity consists of four aspects; *Personality, Positioning, Vision & Culture* and *Relationship*. All aspects influence each other, however the brand’s vision and culture is the core aspect which determine and drive the brand’s desired positioning, personality and the subsequent relationships. The Brand identity is passed on to stakeholders that reflect and interpret the identity as a presentation (De Chernatony, 1999). As previously stated in the introduction, Brand image is presented as the consumer’s perception of the brand. This definition is well suited even for this model, however De Chernatony (1999) adds that aspirations and self-images are the main influences for stakeholders’ Brand image. The created Brand image thereafter causes stakeholders to forms opinions of the brand which De Chernatony (1999) refer to as reputation. The reputation can either be positive or negative and has a direct influence on the brand. Overall, the model highlights the importance of brand managements’ task of managing the brand, especially when negative brand images and reputations of the brand occur. This process of influence is seen as circular and ongoing, which is also reflected in the model (De Chernatony, 1999). Each aspect of Brand identity in De Chernatony’s model will be further discussed in the following sections.



**Fig 1. The process of managing a brand (De Chernatony, 1999. p. 443)**

### Personality

The brand personality establishes what specific characteristics the brand has, and these characteristics should indicate how the brand would be in human life. By humanizing a brand, it plays a more central part in consumers' lives (Kapferer, 2008), which is good considering individuals are keener towards brands that share the same or similar ideas (Ponnam, 2007). Aaker (1997) also states that brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. It regards how the brand personality enables a consumer to express his or her self through the consumption of a brand. Furthermore, brand personality increases consumer preference and usage, evokes emotions in consumers, and increases levels of trust and loyalty (Aaker, 1997).

Aaker (1997) has developed a theoretical framework of brand personality dimensions that measures the perception of a brand. These are measured by considering the extent to which the respondents believe it possesses the characteristics of personality dimensions. This framework enables experimental researchers to measure symbolic meanings of brands as if they were people (Aaker, 1997). Swaminathan et al. (2009) highlight that brand managements need to understand which brand personality traits are going to matter to customers in order to attach the potential of brand personality. However, not all customers are equally sensitive to a brand's personality. Interpersonal attachment styles determine what types of customers are most likely to be influenced by a brand's personality (Swaminathan et al., 2009).

### Positioning

According to Kapferer (2008), companies can distinguish brands according to their positioning, which is when one emphasizes the distinctive characteristics that make it attractive to consumers and different from its competitors. Keller et al. (2002) agree that positioning sets the product apart from the competition. However, the researchers stress that companies also need to pay attention to other aspects of the positioning; understanding the frame of reference that your brand is working in and address the features that your brand has in common with the competition. This will ensure the companies a better understanding of the market (Keller et

al., 2002). Kapferer (2008) further states that positioning controls the words that are communicated to the customer and can be explained as the brand's message and outward expression of the inner substance. However, the researcher rather refers to this as "physique", which mainly describes the brand's physical qualities and the brand's performance characteristics (Kapferer 2008).

Bronnenberg and Wathieu (1996) state that positioning is an important aspect that managers need to take into account when evaluating the promotion asymmetry and communication. Moreover, Sujan and Bettman (1989) believe that the aspects of the brand itself, such as physical attributes or situational factors, determine which positioning strategy is best suited for the brand. The positioning also influences the customers' perception of the brand and their memory, which in turns can determine in what category the brand is seen to operate in (Sujan & Bettman, 1989). However, Kotler and Gertner (2002) state that brands can add or subtract from the perceived value of a product. They also suggest that differentiation based on product characteristics do not motivate consumers or making them able to evaluate the products in dept. Companies should therefore use the combination of a brand name and brand significance in order to achieve a better evaluation for consumers (Kotler & Gertner 2002).

### **Vision & Culture**

As De Chernatony (1999) mentions, a brand needs a clear vision that describes a well-defined direction of what it wants to achieve. Managers need to envisage the brand's environment for at least five years ahead and consider how the brand is going to make the future world they operate in better (Collins & Poras, 1996).

The brand culture describes the set of values that are feeding the brand's inspiration, as well as explains from where the product is derived (Kapferer, 2008). To improve the communication with consumers and decrease misunderstandings, Kapferer (2008) stresses that brands need its own culture from which every product should originate. Banerjee (2008) adds that the cultural values are principles that determine how people perceive themselves and others. It is also highlighted that marketers need to view the brand culture as a main weapon considering it can increase the competitive advantage in operating markets (Banerjee 2008).

Kapferer (2008) and Schmidt et al. (1995) stress that the culture links the brand to the firm and highlights the differentiating factors, making it stand out from the competition Kapferer (2008) further states that these differentiating factors of the culture can refer to the basic principles leading the brand's outward signs, such as product and communication. It is also mentions that countries of origin are for example a highly valuable factor used by well-established companies; Volkswagen stands for Germany and IKEA stands for Sweden (Kapferer 2008). Moreover, forms and shapes, colours and materials in the visual and auditory communications express the brand's culture and values. This indicates that aesthetics either can add value to a brand, as well destroy a reputation if handling wrong (Schmidt et al., 1995).

De Chernatony (1999) further elaborates that one needs to audit brand culture in order to develop a strategy for reaching consumers. Schein (1984) believes that this can be measured through the brand's visible artefacts, employees' and managers' values and mental models of the people involved in brand building activities. One can then understand which values that have remained unchanged over time, such as core values, and values that have changed. This audit illustrates the brand culture's suitability to help achieve the brand vision, through appreciating the gaps between desired and current components of culture (Schein, 1984).

### **Relationship**

Relationship is defined by Blackston (1992) as the interaction between consumers' attitude towards the brand and the brand's attitude towards the consumers. This means that consumers' perception plays an important part into the brand communication (Blackston 1992). Kapferer (2008) stresses that companies should include the relationship facet into their brand in order to succeed in the process of transaction and exchange. Meenaghan (1995) adds that companies need to involve brands into the world of the consumer in order to gain a "magnetic" relationship between them.

Kapferer (2008) and Lannon and Cooper (1983) agree that brands need to be the voice that the consumers hear. The communication should answer who you are, where you are in life and where you are going. Brands and consumers are therefore connected since they are part of ourselves and we are part of our brands (Lannon & Cooper, 1983). Swaminathan et al. (2007) and Fournier (1998) mention that consumers therefore form strong

relationships with those brands that have values and personality associations that are similar to their self-concept.

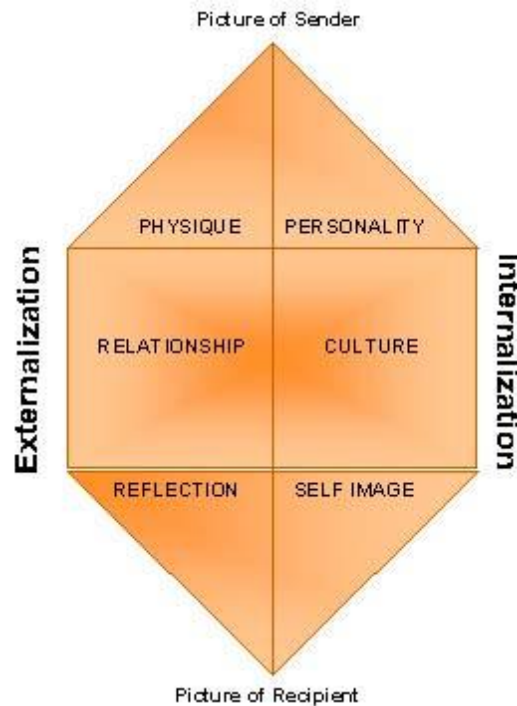
Brands need to act, deliver and relate in accordance to the consumers, and companies need to consider this when communicating to the consumers. Every part of the communication, such as images and symbols must relate to and exploit consumers' values and lifestyles (Kapferer 2008). Broadbent and Cooper (1987) mention that can particularly be a way to increase the added value and differentiating factors of the brand.

Moreover, De Chernatony (1999) explains that the relationship and increased interaction can boost the innovation and success for the brands, considering the company gain furthered understanding of the consumer. One downside of the Brand image studies however is that the focus of the relationship is on customer to brand, which makes the assumption that the brand is passive (Blackston, 1992).

### **Kapferer model :**

According to Kapferer, the brand identity prism is a good tool for analysing brands. It gives a description of how the brand owner wants the target group to perceive the brand identity. ( Apéria , T., Back, R. 2004)

The brand identity prism consists of physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and self-image. These concepts together define the brand identity that can be communicated to consumers.( Kapferer, J-N. 2004)



**Fig 2 Brand identity prisms ( kapferer , 2008)**

### **Physique**

The physique consists of the salient objectives, which are the features that immediately come to mind when thinking about a brand. Furthermore it is the brand's strength of character and its intangible outer value. Relevant questions when defining the physical facet are what is it concretely? What does it do? What does it look like? For Volvo it is the security that represents the physical facet. (Kapferer, J-N. 2004)

### **Personality**

This is a way in which the company is communicating its products. It describes what kind of a person the brand would be if it were human and its characteristics. A spokesperson can easily form a brand's personality. An example of brand personality could be a famous athlete or a fiction, like the Marlboro Man. (ibid)

### **Culture**

Culture is a set of values that are the brand's inspiration. It is the source of a brand's core values. Culture links the brand to the firm and plays an essential role in differentiating the brand. A question which can be asked is; what are the values for which the brand stands for? An example of culture are banks, such as American express gold card which symbolizes dynamic, triumph and capitalism where money is shown and flashed about. (ibid)

### **Relationship**

Every brand has to maintain a good relationship with their customer, which marketing measurements are intended to do. A question to be asked is; how does the brand want to be seen by customers in marketing communication? Dior symbolizes a relationship that is extravagant and grandiose, with a desire to shine like gold. (ibid)

### **Reflection**

It is a description of the way customers wish to be seen as a result of using a brand. This reflection becomes identification. The company needs to answer the question; what would the users imagine while using the product? The reflection is the idealized vision of the company's target group and is its outward reflection. For example Coca-cola that has a wider clientele than the narrow segment it reflects. This is because the younger segment identifies Coca-cola as a dream and the older as a way of living. They segment their target group based on customers' lifestyles rather than age. (ibid)

### **Self-image**

Self-image is the target's internal reflection. It is individuals' attitudes towards certain brands and by purchasing certain brands customers send out a picture of who they want to be. (ibid)

### **conclusion**

The purpose of the study has been to describe and understand the brand identity and its models. Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members. De Chernatony (1999) has developed a model called "the process of managing a brand", which conceptualizes Brand identity. According to the model, Brand identity consists of four aspects; *Personality, Positioning, Vision & Culture* and *Relationship*. According to Kapferer<sup>81</sup>, the brand identity prism is a good tool for analysing brands. It gives a description of how the brand owner wants the target group to perceive the brand identity. The brand identity prism consists of physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and self-image.

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