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# Identity and Image: a different way to consider the brand

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*“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” – A. Einstein*

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## Summary

## Abstract

The main objective of this thesis is to provide a complete and structured analysis of the brand through three fundamental aspects: identity, culture, and image. The thesis tries to find an answer to the question: how can I understand a brand and make it competitive in the reference market?
Starting from the first chapter, an in-depth analysis of identity is presented based on the main philosophical and sociological theories. It is presented the concept of identity and the difference between individual identity and corporate identity.
Subsequently, it is introduced the concept of corporate culture and corporate image. The objective is to present a tripartite structure that shows the relationship between identity, culture, and image and the importance of applying it in the analysis of a company.
Going on with the second chapter, it is analyzed the concept of the brand, its nature, and its components. The objective is to show the main models that have studied the concept of the brand: some of them have shown the pros and cons to allow the reader a better understanding of our analysis approach.
At this point, the third chapter presents a new model that has been structured to better analyze the brand identity and image. The model tries to overcome the limits present in the previous models and to give a wider vision to better support the brand analysis.
Finally, in the last chapter, a practical example of the proposed model is presented to make it clearer and comprehensible.

# Chapter 1: The identity concept

The following chapter will be based on the book: Bagnoli, C., Mirisola, B., & Tabaglio, V. (2020), *Alla ricerca dell'impresa totale: uno sguardo comparativo su arti, psicoanalisi, management,* Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of the identity concept, starting from the philosophical and sociological studies to the economic applications in the corporate field.

## 1.1 The individual identity

In times of increasing difficulty in defining identity traits and questioning the entire world, it seems appropriate to begin by remembering the Pirandellian Mattia Pascal. With his paradoxical parable, the late *Mattia Pascal* (Pirandello, [1904] (2014)) presents a character that binds in an indissoluble knot the threads of identity and action, showing that without the first the second also ceases to exist. It is from this literary suggestion that it is intended to start to attempt a redefinition of the enterprise, in a multidisciplinary perspective that connects heterogeneous notions and methods.

It is necessary to introduce some concepts taken from the theory and business practice, to understand the precise meanings in which certain keywords are understood and used. The first concept to be defined to avoid ambiguity is that of 'corporate identity', whose centrality for the enterprise will be evident as soon as it is addressed. However, one cannot approach a collective identity, as is that of the company, without first having properly considered the concept of 'individual identity'.

The term 'identity' is polysemic: based on the theoretical context in which we use it and the regime of speech in which it is inserted, it reveals a multiplicity of meanings, sometimes difficult to coordinate with each other. The various disciplines within their reference system cover the concept of specific semantic nuances. When we propose to reconstruct the historical genesis of the concept from its philosophical roots, we must first know that, over time, it has been overloaded with meanings, and then consider that it can take on specific connotations based on the field in which it is inserted: physical, metaphysical, logical, gnoseological, ontological, epistemological, etc.

Generally, that is, based on the current use of the word, ‘identity' means that allows you to determine an entity, a thing, as well defined and recognizable, because it has a set of qualities or distinctive features compared to other entities. In other words, 'identity' is what makes two things the same. In classical or traditional logic, the concept is formalized as follows: ‘identity' expresses the relationship that an institution has exclusively with itself, as opposed to difference, as a relationship that the institution has with other institutions. Thus, logical identity is a relationship normally defined as binary, which exists between a thing and itself. In detail, identity is a dual predicate such that, for each 'x' and 'y', 'x = y' is true if and only if 'x' is the same as 'y'. As usual, this concept is called the principle of identity: together with the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of the excluded third, it is one of the fundamental laws of logic. It stipulates that $A \rightarrow A$; report which can also be expressed in terms of $A \equiv A$ (i.e., A is equivalent to A).

From this logical formulation derives the fact that the principle of identity is by its nature tautological, that is true by definition, but devoid of informative value because it does not increase information about the subject of the proposition. In essence, if I say: «the dog is the dog», instead of «the dog is a mammal», I do not add intelligible properties, further preached, to the subject of the statement.

Following the history of Western thought, we can isolate big way three great speculative paradigms, at the base of which we find again the concept of identity declined in different schemes, if not for some lines incompatible. It is necessary to remember that, following the nature of philosophical research, certain types of research, especially if wide-ranging, necessarily approximate and affect the limits of any attempt at historical periodization or schematization conceptual, always hypothetical.

Bearing this warning in mind, it has chosen to select three 'macro-areas' of thought, which match as many declinations as possible of the concept of identity. In summary and with a simplified language, we can speak of 'default identity’, that is to say, established once and for all; of identity 'built', as outlined by theoretical assumptions Constructivist or constructionist type; of identity' narrated' or narrative, that is conceived within a theory where the linguistic function of telling is central.

Apart from these intuitive and general considerations, the intent is to bring the question of identity closer from the perspective of determination teleological, that is, of the purposes or ends (from the Greek τέλος, télos, ends, and λόγος, logos, speech). Incidentally, dealing with finalism/teleology on the philosophical level refers specifically to discernment not only of intentionally adopted and planned goals by the rational subject, but also by those who are supposed to orient and secretly organize involuntary attitudes of man and the processes of nature. In this context, therefore, returns are useful to outline the idea that is at the bottom of each of these three identity models.

Within the framework of metaphysical substantialism (the default 'identity'), under which a very precise and unalterable essence can be identified, it is possible to summarily say that my purposes depend on what I am, namely that the definition of objectives to be achieved is conditioned in whole by a specific nature that forms me and limits me: the sense of my prerogatives, of the purposes I set forth, is already all contained in my essential individuality. I cannot do other than to exploit (even exhaust) the possibilities provided by my constitution: in short, the properties of the substantial body to draw a set of ends, beyond which the way is barred.

On the contrary, in the constructivist approach of the problem, especially from the last thirty years of the twentieth century, are accentuated the crisis and dissolution of the substantive primacy of the subject (sub-jectum, what is below, what holds a set of predicates, qualities, characters), the event that takes shape progressively along the entire arc of thought contemporary: if my identity is 'built', this means that I can find it at the foundation of my acts, as a basis and support of them. My 'being' is not a solidly structured hinterland, where peculiar traits are sedimented, then become stable heritage. Not even, all the more so, can I conceive myself holder of an essence universal and eternal, which guarantees the continuity of the core of my essence in the perpetual change of life. My identity is made and undone as I design myself: the changing purposes which I pursue each time temporarily fix a physiognomy of my being, except then alter and rebuild it in tension with the purposes or hierarchies of purposes to which my acts or efforts are addressed.

In a less radical position and the tripartite scheme, equidistant from the two extremes, is the hermeneutic perspective on identity configured narratively. We refer, in this case, to philosophical hermeneutics, a broad and branched current of thought which, conventionally from the mature Heidegger (1889-1976), has had a considerable influence on the destinies of Western thought in the last century. In the first approximation, we can say that, within the coordinates of this philosophical current, after being idealized (during modernity) thanks to its abstract projection in the concept of Cogito (‘I think'), the human individual is returned to a dimension authentic and also passable of finiteness. On the other hand, its original linguistic constitution makes it possible to conceive it as an entity capable of renewing its openness to being, of illuminating unpublished aspects of the real. Keeping to the identity-purpose combination, these lines could be translated as follows: my being and my ends influence each other dialectically; being, as constitution more or less stable identity, determines the purpose and simultaneously the multiple purposes included in the project of an existing act retroactively on being, enriching it. We will see how, in this case, the category of narration - especially in thought by Paul Ricoeur - offers important insights for the understanding of similar conceptual nodes.

### 1.1.1 The default identity

Concerning the identity that has been designated as 'default', it is necessary first to clarify some key steps of philosophy by Plato. From the corpus of the Platonic writings, considered in our optical research, emerges with evidence the book 'Sophist', a work of the maturity and summit of the logical reflection of the Greek philosopher. The Sophist, dealing with the relationship of Ideas between them, is partly connected with the book 'Parmenides', where it is explained which is the relationship between the Ideas (intelligible, eternal, always true reality: what is in maximum degree) and the sensitive world (questionable reality, changeable, apparent: what seems to be). The particular objects (this dog that is in front of me, that I perceive with the senses) imitate, are 'copies' of ideas ('the dog'), which are therefore models, exemplars, archetypes. The theory of Ideas serves as the basis sure to answer the typical question through which is formed any knowledge about any entity: 'what is it?'. When asked, Plato responds by directly highlighting the essence of a thing, its intimate nature, the idea. The idea of a thing is being in itself, for it is an eternal self-subsidizing. For example, all the things we call beautiful have in the Beautiful their stone of comparison. We can almost say that perceptible, concrete objects are inspired by the idea that provides them with a common quality, are shaped on it, they draw from it a reason to exist in time. We could also say that the idea is the cause and explanation of the individual thing here present and tangible. Well, a clear contrast emerges neat between two spheres of the reality, one of which - the kingdom of the sensitive experience - is devalued and relegated to the second plan, compared to the purposes of authentic philosophical research, which is only universal science, of what is worth always and everywhere. You can already see here the birth of ontological dualism. The body is not the true being of man: it is his prison, from which he must get out using the knowledge of the entities (in the sense of things which are) universal, the Ideas.

To summarize, on the ontological level we have on the one hand: multiplicity, change, imperfection; on the other hand: unity, stability, perfection. On the one hand, time; on the other, eternity. It is also possible to trace the famous anthropological doctrine to Plato of the soul/body dualism: man is the synthesis of heterogeneous elements. While the soul is akin to the ideal, over-sensitive element, eternal being (world of Ideas), the body is linked to the dimension earthly, sensitive, and corruptible of becoming. The soul is the vital principle of the body; it is the principle of identity, unity; the body is the principle of diversity and multiplicity. The soul is immutable essence; the body exists alone and is destined to disappear.

Platonism introduces, therefore, the ontological concept of identity giving, subsequently, an anthropological connotation, in the sign of an inexorable dualism: the soul is a divine principle, unique, indivisible, and logically preceding the body; it is always equal to itself and therefore it is a manifestation of absolute and stable identity. So, according to the tripartite scheme, with Plato, there is the inauguration of the great tradition of metaphysical substantiation and, during modernity, of subjectivism.

Aristotle maintains that every living organism possesses a soul, as a shape of the body, which is matter; the living is a synopsis, the indissoluble unity of soul and body. Also, here it is possible to see the dualistic structure of conceptualization, in a way less drastic than Plato: man, an organism whose perfection and completeness surpasses that of animals, has in itself a substantial principle which is the soul (conceived as the seat of different faculties, the most prominent being the intellect); the body is its passive counterpart that is shaped by the vital spirit. The soul, therefore, is the shape of the body. A similar conception of the human individual is not so foreign to our way of thinking: when we seek to identify someone to discover their true nature, or even to know who we are, we find the word ‘soul', being to indicate, in the collective imagination, what deeper and more authentic there may be. It alludes, with 'soul', to a region hidden behind our apparent behavior, which represents the constant, primitive trait and identical with our being, that is, our nature.

With the work of Descartes (better known as Descartes; 1596-1650), we can say that the constitution of modern subjectivism takes place. According to some interpretive traditions, he would have oriented philosophical research towards the logical-metaphysical foundation of interiority. We could almost call it the Aristotle of the modern age of thought, because of the fruitful conciliation between physical research and metaphysics. Central in his thinking is the dualistic theory that sees opposing a 'thinking substance' (res cogitans) to an 'extended substance' (res extensa). In the *Metaphysical Meditations*, Descartes comes to establish a metaphysical principle certain and free from any threat of doubt (about its existence): the so-called Cogito. The contrast between res cogitans and res extensa will have remarkable anthropological implications for the subsequent philosophical tradition: to the subject, holder of the faculty of thought (internal world), the object (external world) is opposed. Between the two spheres, it acts as mediation the category of representation or idea.

A quick examination of the empiricist vein of modern thought, as a critical alternative to Cartesian rationalism, will allow us to grasp further problematic aspects of the concept of identity and to test a philosophical current that destabilizes the solid foundations of substantiality. Locke (1632-1704) distinguishes concepts of ‘man’ and ‘person’, apparently synonyms, but instead different: the man may mean a structured material-living body, where is the <<participation in the same continuous life of ever-fleeting particles of matter, united to the same organized body in a vital succession>>. (Locke, [1690] (1971)) It is therefore this living material constitution that characterizes man and not his rational essence. The person, on the contrary, is an extensible concept to that of man, when he is able, through consciousness and memory, to believe in his own identity such as to differ from all the others.

With Lockean thought, the old idea of the Aristotelian substance began to crack. This was part of the metaphysical and religious conception of the soul, which allowed to give a unitary and transcendent characteristic (i.e., it goes beyond the senses, beyond the immortal) to a contingent, corruptible organism, and to maintain, at the same time, the permanence of its identity in the succession of time.

Hume (1711-76) in the *Treatise on Human Nature* argues that reason (intellect) comes to know (knowledge) based on perceptions (each psychic content: impressions and ideas), in the case of the knowledge of the ego is faced with the void. Our impressions and ideas are unstable and changeable, thinking that it is possible to have a permanent idea of our ego is an illusion: <<We are nothing but bundles or collections of different perceptions that follow each other with an inconceivable rapidity, in a perpetual flow or movement.>> (Hume, [1739-40] (1992)). In other words, since it is no longer possible to assume an element of continuity, metaphysical or natural of the individual, you must look for it in something that relates the moments, the hours, the days of our existence with the whole span of our organic-lived life.

Leibniz (1646-1716) elaborates a characterization logical-ontological concept of identity, giving accents different from the traditional theory of substance. The principle of substance, identifiable because simple and without parts, is called by Leibniz monad: immaterial atom, metaphysical point, force center, the principle of the constitution, and explanation of the entire universe. A universe that thus comes to be configured as a set of independent monads (they have no 'windows' to communicate between them and exert influence on each other), worlds closed, each of which reflects in its way God and the universe.

Summarizing the main reasons for the substantive view identity (rooted in a dualistic ontology), there is the immutable substance (subject) and there are its accidental properties (predicates); the substance can be conceived as consciousness (internal) and accident like body (external); there are therefore an 'I' who thinks and knows and thought and known object; there are being and becoming, permanence and change, the essential and accidental. In an anthropological framework, we can say that, if I want to know the true nature of an individual (or of an entity, in the broad sense), I must discover its substance, what it already is, and it is not possible to go back to it by analyzing its passing properties, its wandering purposes, its acts changeable: the opposite happens, that is to understand the meaning of his purposes, gestures, words, actions, I must bring them back to their fixed matrix, the essence that defines a man that one, unique and unmistakable.

### 1.1.2 The constructed identity

The antipodes of the theorizations just examined place constructionism or constructivism, whose main exponents are George Kelly (1905-67), Ernst von Glasersfeld (1917-2010), Heinz von Foerster (1911-2002) Humberto Maturana (1928-), Francisco Varela (1946-2001). It is that gnoseological and epistemological orientation according to which reality cannot be regarded as something objective, independent from the subject that experiences things because it is the subject himself who participates in his creation, building representations, cognitive structures, of the world (which exists only in them). It is the subject that creates, builds, invents what he thinks exists. All those properties believed to be part of things are revealed to be the properties of the observer. In the traditional philosophy, it is assumed as an acquired datum that knowledge represents a reality that exists as such, independent by the observer.

Constructivism was born as an approach to knowledge in which, like what happened to the sciences the concept of objectivity, the possibility of knowing the absolute and exhaustive truth, of knowledge complete that faithfully represents an independent external order by the observer. As in the natural sciences, the attitude positivist has been surpassed by the most recent theories of quantum physics, so in cognitive sciences and philosophy such an attitude is has been challenged by an approach to knowledge that holds account of the observer's point of view. In this perspective, knowledge is not so much the reality as it is, but rather the reality as it appears to an observer who examines it by operating specific distinctions. In other words, knowledge is not conceived as a collation of information taken from the world 'external', but rather as an 'interior' construction, consisting of 'interior' material.

Traditionally, there are two types of constructivism: that critical, emphasizing the inevitable limitations in our knowledge of the world, direct and approximate; the radical one, which denies any type of reality, in addition to that produced by the cognitive activity. The latter is an epistemological orientation developed from the mid-seventies of the twentieth century based on the rejection of the concept of 'objective reality'. It criticizes the use of 'linear' explanatory models based on knowledge implicitly dualistic (e.g., true/false; cause/effect, principle/end, input/output), and advocates the use of circular notions (e.g., self-regulation, self-reference, self-organization), such as those developed in cybernetics and other related research fields (in particular, in the pragmatics of human communication).

The approach Radical constructivist stands in a holistic perspective and is defined as a 'theory of knowledge'. Man is considered in its complexity and multidimensionality. To understand it, it is necessary to evaluate both its explicit behavior and its motivational processes and cognitive (linguistic, imaginative, procedural, and emotional) that can be conscious and unconscious. Everyone defines, based on his life experiences, his theory of self and the world and according to it interprets the data actively gathered, building anticipations of future events. Based on these considerations, one can say that constructivism (especially radical), concerning the problem identity, is configured as a form of precise anti-essentialism: the identity (referred to a person or a thing) does not possess an essence, that is, it is not an immutable and necessary datum, something that has a 'nature'. It is rather a cultural and social construct, object choice, adhesion, and manufacture (more or less conscious). Consequently, the criteria based on which identity is established and the difference are created are chosen by the subject and cannot be ascribed to an independent world, 'the real world'.

### 1.1.3 The narrated identity

Now to illustrate what has been defined as 'identity' let's focus in particular on the thought of Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). To do this, it is necessary to put some premise before considerations on relevant issues within the landscape of so-called 'philosophical hermeneutics'.

Hermeneutics is a theory of understanding of texts and relationships between meaning and meaning, between data and interpreter, between sender and recipient. Its philosophical peculiarity, however, lies in its being a global theory of knowledge. Therefore, truth is not something that remains above everything, stable and immutable independently from the ages and the different societies, but it is the sense that can gradually cover the reality within the changing and subjective paths given by the interpretation of events. The 'hermeneutics of self' developed fully in the work *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1993) represents for the French philosopher the only way viable today for philosophy reflective (a philosophy that is inspired by that tradition that Descartes passes through Kant, arriving at Nabert), after the lesson of the masters (so the philosopher defines Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud). These authors have implemented a kind of second Copernican revolution, in which the subject of doubt (philosophical question) is no longer only the reality of the outside world, but the world itself of subjective consciousness, which from a given original and certain, is transformed in 'completed task', the long and tiring task of becoming conscious, through the recognition in itself of the multiple traces of the other.

Criticized the utopia of the immediate self-transparency of the subject to himself (Cartesianism), Ricoeur elaborates a conception of identity as a result of a long hermeneutical process of the subject in the world of signs of the other in his various faces (language, institutions, morality, interpersonal relationships, etc.). The narrative model of identity which he elaborates represents an idea of totality and unity: a totality personal, however, always open, that recomposes in itself the conflict, but never in an absolute way.

The human being and the world are always and constitutively open works, to be made, to be fulfilled. To know himself for the human being means always recognizing oneself through the mediation of otherness in the various signs in which it manifests itself: you, the historical context of membership, language, institutions, etc.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory focuses on the philosophical category of Self. This conceptual figure is a de-substantialized 'subject', that he no longer shares the traits of permanent substance. The Self does not have a stable 'bottom', previously given, to which all the acts are brought back as indeed to a foundation; it is rather a task to be made through the hermeneutical relationship with the world, which is a world of language, of works of culture.

Specifically, the Self has an internal dialectic structure: two poles with their overlapping reciprocal relations complete (idem) or equally extreme divergence (ipse). According to the first term, 'identical' is synonymous with 'extremely similar', 'analogous'(idem). The same, or better still equality, implies any form of immutability in time: the contrary will therefore be 'different', 'changeable'. In the second term, ipse, 'identical' is linked to the concept of selfhood, of a self: an individual is identical himself. This does not imply any fixation as to permanence, to persistence in time. Between these two instances operates a narrative mediation, since it is possible to conceive the 'components' of the Self as elements of a story: it is possible to move on the level of the narrative phenomenon the two identities (idem-ipse), which will be seen as: on the one hand a sedimented, stratify ed history, partially independent of me ('Character', predispositions, unconscious), on the other hand, an open and subject to variations history since I can design it in a multiform way thanks to the power metamorphic (mutative) of the story (especially literary). In such a picture, the factor of the other, of the otherness, is fully inserted.

It can be said that the finding of identity by an entity - as the human being - placed in time, inevitably passes through the narration of a cohesive and configured life story. Concerning the two poles of the Self in dialectic tension, the following appears the idem means, in the human, the stable pole of finitude, conditioning, especially when it has the function of character, with the sphere of involuntariness implied in it. The ipse, instead, to the antipodes of the previous, illuminates a different mode of permanence in time, symbolized by the figure of promise: when I promise something (to someone), implicitly I promise to be, in a future moment, the same (identical) person who made the promise in the past (just to keep it). If we, in the moment of respecting the pact, were not the same who promised it, we would not accept this amendment. The same is true for a purpose: if I put an end to realize in the future, I must be the same person to realize it practically in the here and now. This is a mode of identity, concretely not separated from the other, the idem.

The hermeneutic position of Ricoeur about the identity involves the assumption of an elastic and dialectical model: identity is the result of the equilibrium of dimensions (of the Self) that go constantly reconcile with each other, since, on the one hand, my being is limited, conditioned by inherent finitude that is expressed in many ways (body, character, unconscious) on the other is inserted in a current narrative in continuous expansion and variation, it is subject to the possible (as an existential category) and therefore to incessant renewal. The Self, therefore, is not monolithic: its constitution includes moments of 'otherness', of non-belonging concerning himself.

## 1.2 From individual to corporate identity

To continue exploring the theme of identity in a collective and no longer strictly individual, it is necessary to retrace the main contributions of sociology, assuming that a sociological approach will hardly start or will recognize itself in the first philosophical paradigm, that of the default identity, while it will be easier to find consonance with the second or the third. Ad example, it just seems to look at the concept of constructed identity the theorization of sociologist Charles Horton Cooley, according to which the perception that an individual has of himself depends mainly on how he appears to others (1998).

According to the theory of looking glass self, an individual tends to form his own identity based on how he feels perceived by the people closest to him: parents as a child, spouse, colleagues, etc. as an adult. His identity reflects not what he is, but the assessments which others make of him, who end up acting as mirrors. More precisely, an individual imagines, in sequence, how he appears to others, as they judge him, and, finally, what are their feelings towards him which, if negative, will induce him to change their behavior. According to Erving Goffman, however, the perception that an individual has of himself determines primarily how he appears to others.

According to the theory of impression management, an individual tends to use techniques to guide and control the impressions that others are formed on its identity. The aim is to make coherent the vision that everyone has of himself with the feedback that he receives from the social groups to which it belongs. Goffman (1956) compares the social life of each individual to a theatrical performance that alternates moments of the limelight, in which people enter the role of the character assigned, setting up real stage performances, at moments of background, in which the stage furniture is settled to prepare for the limelight, relaxing control techniques of impressions. The behavior of the individual varies, therefore, to the variation of the specific role that he is interpreting in a given moment. The role played by the actor corresponds to the identity of the individual, which in this sense seems to approach the two paradigms of identity, the 'built' and the 'narrated'.

Completely comparable to the later formulation of identity is the thought of George Herbert Mead (1934), according to which perception that an individual has of himself (the 'Ego') depends on and determines how he appears to others (the ‘Me’) recognizing a circular identification process. The Ego is formed through the individual’s experience with himself, looking in the mirror, and represents, therefore, its most intimate and creative part. Instead, Me is formed, through the interaction of the individual with others, internalizing the attitudes towards him, and therefore represents his most social and passive part. The Ego predates Me and forms a part of it. For Mead, self-awareness by a child takes place in two stages. In the first phase of the simple game or play, the child learns to assume, progressively, the roles of the people who are part of his life: play to be a mother, teacher, doctor, etc.; beginning to become an object to itself and building itself of partial Selves. In the second stage of the organized game, the child learns to assume, simultaneously, the roles of all the people of the social group belonging by taking awareness of the 'Other Generalized' and, by contrast, of the unitary Self. Despite the differences, all the authors cited to believe that the individual identity concerns the way and the extent to which a subject feels integrated into the social groups to which it belongs. It takes form from a process of identification of the individual with other subjects close to him and to which he feels similar, until generating a sense of belonging to them. Once established the common points, the subject will operate in an inverse way recognizing the characteristics that make it different from the other members of its group and giving it uniqueness.

This definition of individual identity can be considered valid also for organizational identity. The latter concept refers to the way members of an organization perceive whether and what they represent as an organization. The idea that identity is a relational construct generated by interaction with others is certainly not a recent acquisition in organizational studies and therefore boasts a fair tradition of different formulations. Albert and Whetten, close to the 'default' individual identity paradigm, define the organizational identity as the set of features the central, distinctive, and long-lasting nature of an organization, which can be identified through a series of comparisons with other organizations (1985).

The aspect of distinctiveness has sparked some controversy from those authors who believe, on the contrary, that the definition of organizational identity takes place many times for imitation (for example, Sevón 1996); the same for the aspect of durability, to which the concept has been opposed continuity. According to supporters of durability, the features central to the organizational identity remain both nominally and substantially identical, showing permanence characteristics in time and space. For those of continuity, however, they remain nominally assuming, in time and space, different meanings to allow the company to adapt to the changed context of reference. Being an innovative company, for example, is an identifying characteristic that can assume over time and in space also very different meanings that need equally different action programs to be implemented. Persistence in the expression used to define the organizational identity is functional to reassure the members of the organization on business continuity.

Other authors, on the contrary, welcoming the paradigm of the 'built' individual identity reject the idea of durability and, even more radically, the existence of an essence (cf. Gergen, 1991). Other authors still, interpreting organization as an autopoietic system, admit the durability of identity while recognizing it as a cognitive construction. The autopoietic system is characterized by reacting to changes in the reference context, specifying the changes necessary to maintain their identity. This becomes the goal of the organization, which is distinguished by referring only to itself: a self-referential subject able to make distinctions, first of all, to stand out and then be defined by difference from what, while interacting, is external. The specific system, moreover, such as changes in the reference context trigger certain structural changes that they assume, therefore, the status of cognitive acts. The system, in essence, specifies a reality so that cognition does not constitute representation of a given world, but as a process of continuous generation of a world in which, in the case of social systems, communication is essential (<<mutual induction of behavior coordinated that occurs between members of a social unit>>, (Maturana & Varela, 1987)), primarily through ordinary language. This position, therefore, ends by being very close to that which refers to the paradigm of narrated identity welcomed by those authors who assert that the organizational identity has a narrative character, for which different attributes are underlined at different times depending on the interaction between those who speak and those who listen (cf. Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994).

Whetten and Godfrey (1998) distinguish the concept of organizational identity, which concerns central, distinctive, and long-term perception of an organization, by that of organizational identification, concerning the process whereby the members incorporate the same characteristics by the mere fact of being part of the organization. The two concepts are linked in how much the organizational identity constitutes a cognitive and emotional foundation with which the members of the organization establish a link and represents the channel through which they create relationships significant with their organization.

Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) gave a partially different definition, describing the concept of organizational identification as the degree to which an individual defines himself through the same attributes that he believes define his organization. An attempt at management to make this concept operational is the Rotterdam Organizational Identification Test that measures the affinity of individuals with their organizations analyzing different elements: the congruence between objectives and values; the need for affiliation; the perception of belonging; positive assessment; perceived benefits; perceived support; perceived recognition; perceived acceptance and security perceived that derives from belonging (cf. Van Riel 1995). The application of this indicator has led to the emergence of the following dimensions: pride and involvement; recognition and perceived opportunities; congruence (cf. Smidts, Van Riel, Pruyn 1998).

Schultz, Hatch, and Larsen (2000) distinguish the concept of organizational identity, elaborated in the organizational studies, from that of corporate identity, elaborated in the studies of marketing and communication, specifying how the studies of strategy have contributed to the definition of both concepts. Authors define corporate identity as the central and distinctive idea of a company. It can be described as the answer to four key questions: who you are, what you do, how you do it, and where you want to go (cf. Olins 1995). This idea is represented and communicated to differentiate the organization from the others in the eyes of external stakeholders but always even more frequently in the eyes of internals, which are the employees (cf. Margulies 1977).

Focusing on this specific sub-category of organizations opens to further definitions and theoretical models. For Balmer and Stodtvig (1997) for example, corporate identity is, quite simply, what a company is: in other words, its history, its philosophy, its mission, its strategy, and its product offering, but also its personality, constituted by corporate values. The importance of the latter is also recognized in the Strathclyde Statement elaborated by Corporate Identity Group for which, however, corporate identity is what differentiates it from other competitor companies (cf. Van Riel, Balmer 1997). Its correct identification is therefore fundamental to communicate a consistent corporate image to the different stakeholders, to attract and maintain the best customers, employees, partners, financiers, etc. generating a sense of direction and purpose (Corti 2005, 84-5).

Birkigt and Stadler (1986) define the corporate identity starting from the recognition of its constituent elements:

1. the conduct, that is to say, the actions which the holding carries out and which shall be judged;
2. communication, that is the messages which the holding transmits outside;
3. symbolism, that is the instrument by which the various expressions are harmonized.

The whole of these three elements constitutes the manifestation of the self-perception of the company. In turn, these three internal elements to the organization together with the personality constitute, finally, the channel through which the company communicates its image to the external environment [fig. 1].

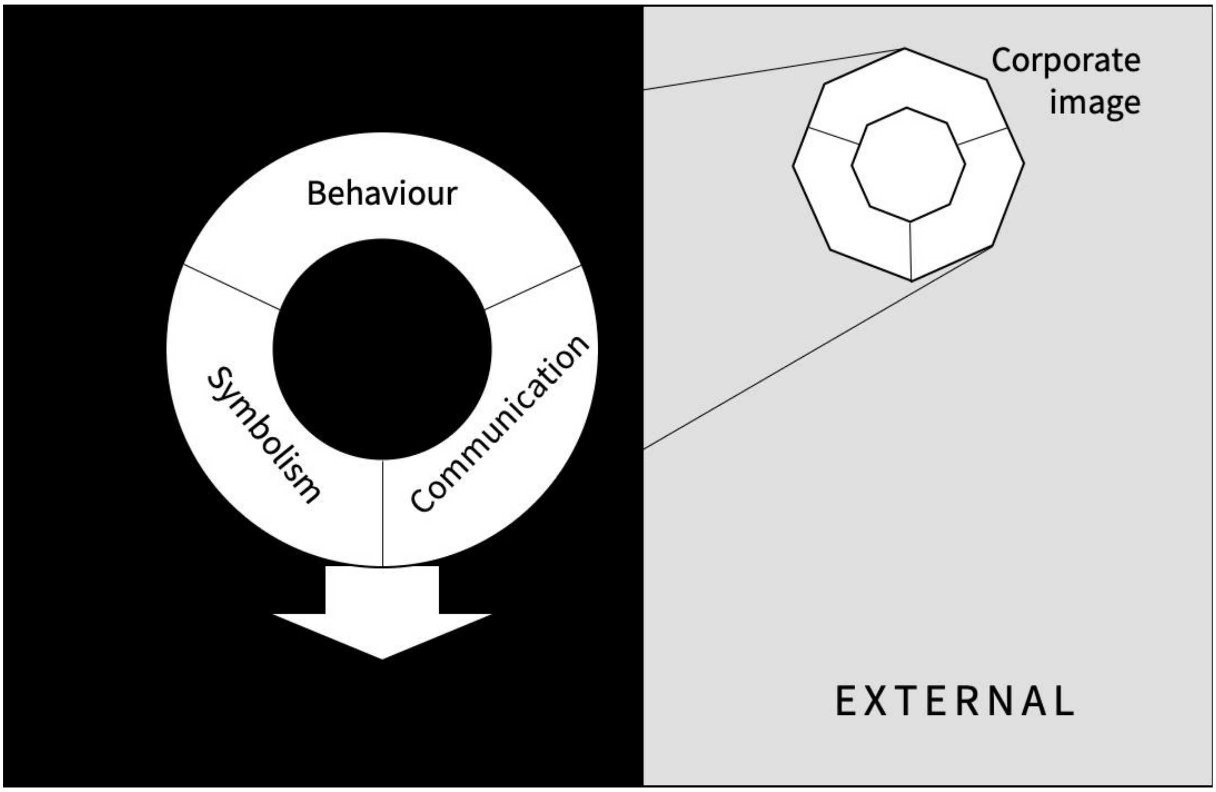


*Figure 1: Birkigt and Stadler's model*

For Kapferer (2012) the elements constituting the corporate identity are six and can be represented through a prism [fig. 2] whose sides indicate:

1. the physical nature, namely the objective and tangible reality of the organization;
2. personality expressed through the behavior of its members, but also distinctive signs such as the logo, the slogans, advertising, etc.;
3. the relationship, namely the relationship established with the stakeholders;
4. the culture, namely the values and beliefs of the members of the organization;
5. the reflection, that is how the company appears to the eyes of its customers;
6. the mental nature, that is, the image that customers have of themselves as consumers of the company's products.

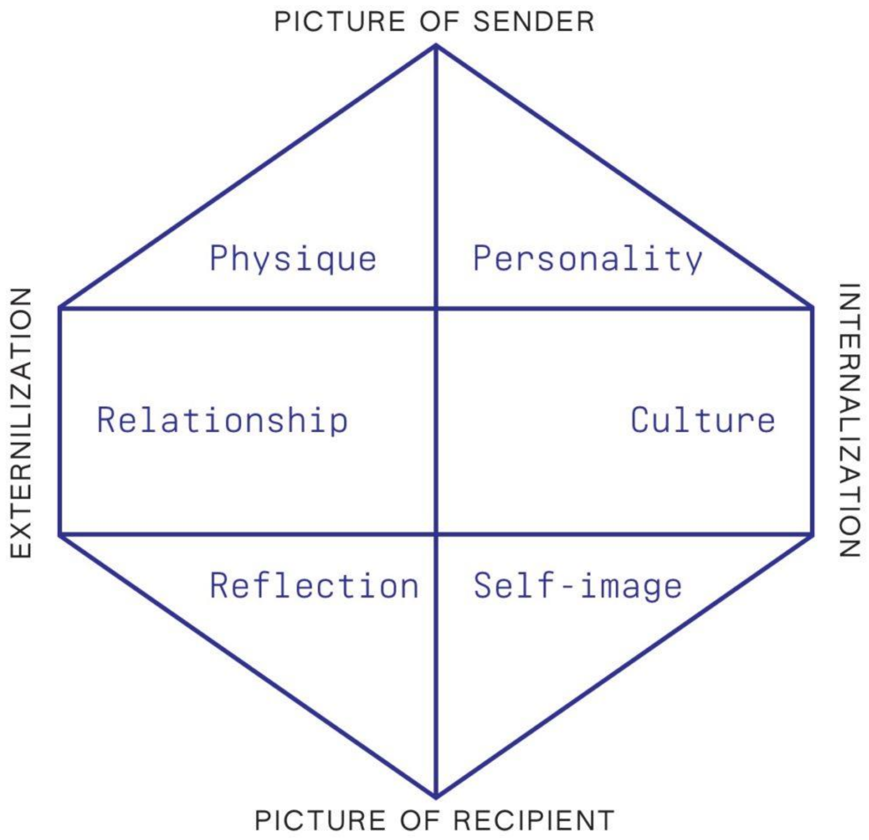


*Figure 2: Kapferer's model*

The model can be read both horizontally (the first pair concerns the company as an entity, the second its relationship with the actors, and the third the market target) and vertically (on the left lie the outer elements, on the right the interior).

Melewar (2003) assumes an even more detailed model, in which the elements constituting the corporate identity are seven:

1. communication, which concerns the way the company achieves its stakeholders;
2. corporate design, which includes all visual signs of the company (e.g., name, slogan, logo, symbol, color, and typography);
3. corporate culture, which summarizes how the business activities should be carried out;
4. behavior, which concerns the conduct of the organization's members;
5. corporate structure, formed by the organizational structure and the structure of the brand;
6. industry identity, which defines the competitive features of the company like strategic positioning, size, etc.;

7. corporate strategy, which summarizes the objectives and the competitive strategies.

Each of these seven elements can be further declined, as shown in Figure 3.

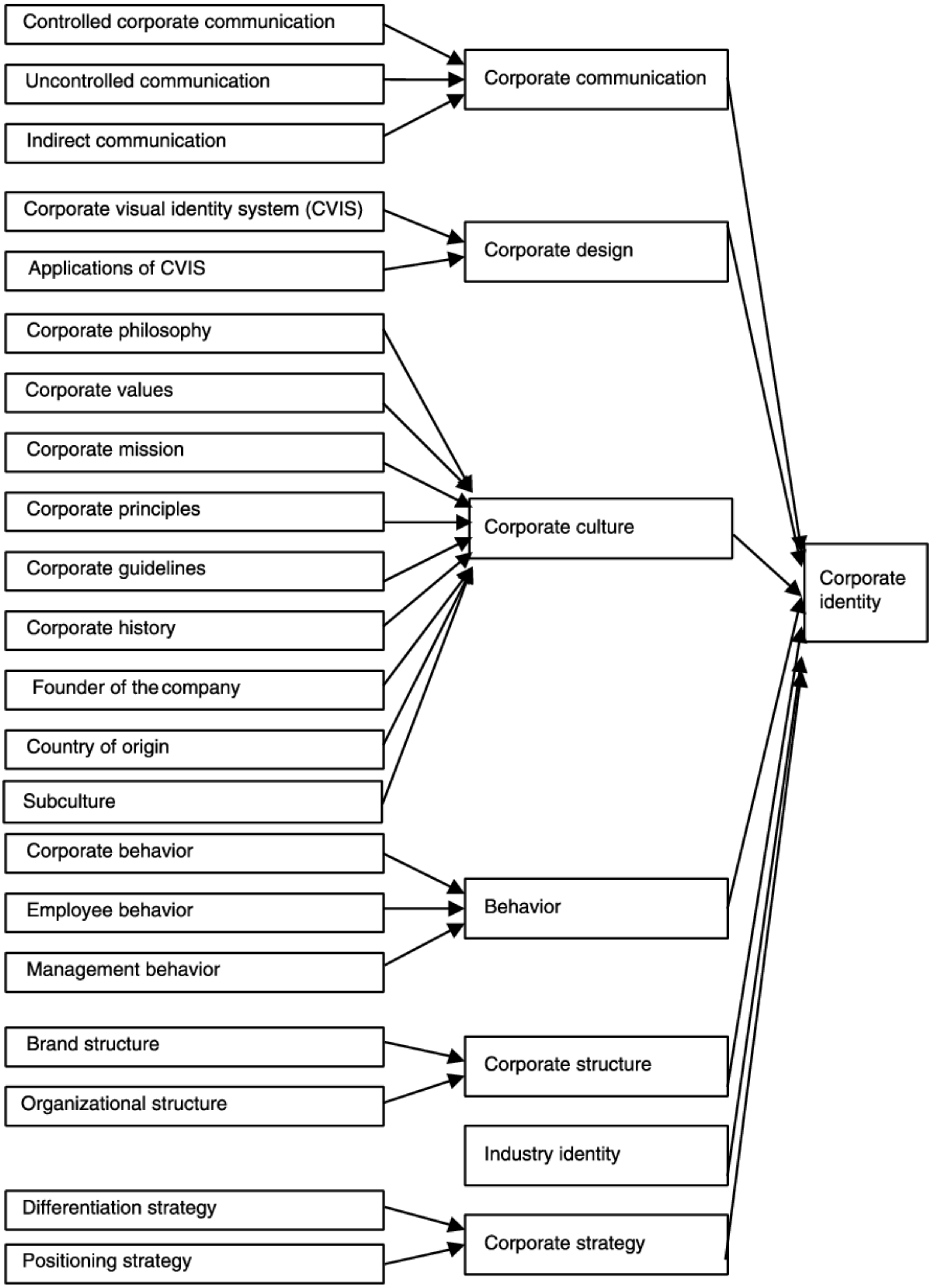


*Figure 3: Melewar's model*

A similar definition, in some respects, to that assumed by Birkigt and Stadler (1986) was proposed by Balmer and Soenen (1999), which use a fascinating nomenclature. The constituent elements of corporate identity would therefore be three: the Soul, i.e. values, corporate culture, employee relations, history; the Mind, i.e. the decisions that the company is called to take in respect to the strategic elements that characterize it (vision and mission, performance, identity of the sector to which it belongs, architecture of the brand, leadership, and style); the Voice, that is controlled communication, unintentional communication, symbolism (what constitutes the concept of visual identity), indirect communication. These elements are then integrated with those of the environment, the stakeholder, and reputation.

Attempting a synthesis of the above, the organizational identity emerges from the different definitions that the members of the organization elaborate in the form of stories, anecdotes, and emblematic events in their career path, while the corporate identity comes from communicative choices operated by the top management. Organizational identity is, therefore, received thanks to the daily and personal experience with rituals, spaces, etc. of the organization, while the corporate identity is transmitted through the main communication channels, as it tends to focus on outward communication functional to make its distinctive features perceived to potential customers and other stakeholders.

However, the most profitable aspect to bear in mind does not focus on detecting the differences between the different theories, but on the basic idea that the two terms are to be considered facets of the same phenomenon. Just think how difficult it would be, slavishly following those models, to place uniquely the members of the organization: often in fact they can be positioned in more than one stakeholder category (e.g., clients and financiers). Instead of distinguishing organizational identity from corporate identity, it seems therefore more useful to merge them to get to define a unitary corporate identity concept. The concept of corporate culture refers to the daily life of the organization and how it is lived by its internal members, and the concept of corporate image addresses the impressions of the organization in the eyes of external stakeholders.

## 1.3 Corporate culture and image

Even the concept of corporate culture, which describes one of the most visible and tangible aspects of an organization, has not been defined unambiguously by the scientific literature. The different authors who have deepened and framed the theme have highlighted the most important aspects.

Among these, we mention only some names among those that have focused on the ability of the culture to guide the actions of the group as the presence of a common feeling based on shared values. For Pettigrew (1979, 570-81), for example, culture is the set of meanings publicly accepted within an organization at a given time, which helps its members to interpret the situations in which they find themselves operating, while for Louis (1983, 1985) is a set of shared interpretations to organize the action, which explains the right way to act, expressed through languages and other symbolic vehicles. For Van Maanen, culture refers, instead, to the knowledge that members of an organization share to a lesser or greater extent. It informs, embodies, and justifies activities, routines, and not. Culture is therefore expressed only through the actions and words of the members of the organization (Van Maanen 1988).

Equally important, when discussing corporate culture, is to think in functional terms: culture is a glue that holds together the members of an organization and makes them perceive as such both by similarity and difference compared to other groups. For Siehl and Martin (1983) culture consists, thus, in the values, beliefs, and expectations that members of an organization find themselves sharing and that allow them to be united through the sharing of patterns of meaning. Hofstede (1991) defines corporate culture as the set of unwritten rules of the social game; a kind of collective mind programming that distinguishes the members of one group or category from those of another and manifests itself in values and practices. Values constitute how the organization chooses to operate and are the deepest aspect and, therefore, less visible than culture. Practices are the set of rituals (typical social occasions of an organization), heroes (people who constitute a reference point for their pattern of behavior), and symbols (objects that have a particular meaning for the organization) and are the increasingly visible aspects of culture. Linked to the integration function of its members, it should be considered the control function associated with the leadership and internal hierarchies.

For Kunda (1992), for example, corporate culture is a normative social control tool aimed at making members of the organization voluntarily internalize the declared values, the codes of conduct, and the organizational objectives established by the corporate leadership. It allows influencing the members of the organization to make their interests coincide with those of the company, thus eliminating the need for an external control: every subject is responsible for the control of himself. In summary, it is possible to say that, in all its different definitions, corporate culture has to do with the materiality of a company and its daily life. It consists of people, objects, places, hierarchies, and processes that are organized through orchestrated and planned rituals and actions. The definition of organizational culture more interesting is the one proposed by Edgard Schein (1985).

According to this approach, culture is the schema of fundamental assumptions that a certain group has invented, discovered, or developed while learning to deal with problems related to its external adaptation or its internal integration. These assumptions have operated in such a way as to be considered valid and therefore worthy of being taught to new members. The culture is a deeply rooted, complex, and extensive concept that covers all aspects of reality and influences the choices that are taken in the organization. Schein's most important insight, however, is not so much in the definition of the concept but in its structure divided into three macro-elements that bring order to the different definitions of culture organizational [fig. 4]. Any corporate culture is constituted, according to the author, from:

1. artifacts: organizational structures and processes visible from the outside (physical and social environment, technologies, language, behavior, rites, and ceremonies).
2. Declared values: written and oral manifestations of what is considered right by the organization. The declared values, however, do not always correspond to the actual behavior of its members.
3. Shared tacit assumptions: what is taken for granted unconsciously by the members of the organization. Include the beliefs that determine behavior and structure the relationship with everyday reality, space and time, truth, human nature, and human relationships.

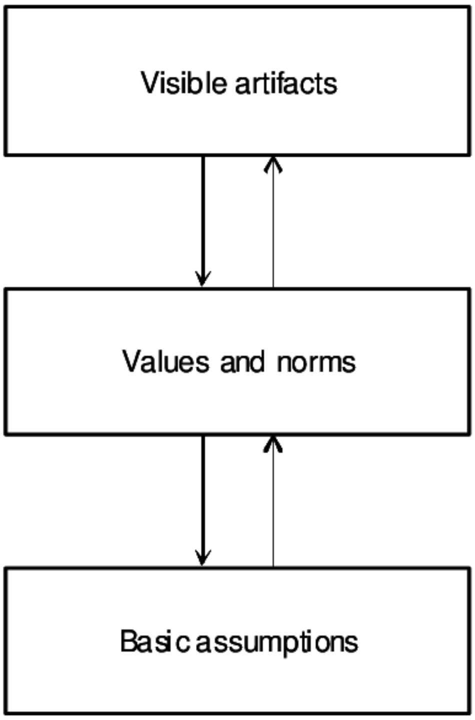


*Figure 4: Schein's model*

As can be guessed, the three elements while maintaining a relationship of mutual dependence occupy three positions that have very deep degrees different: artifacts are the most obvious part while assumptions are the most hidden and difficult part to analyze and describe.

Schemes like the one proposed by Schein serve at first to describe and analyze the culture of a company and, subsequently, to plan interventions stimulated both from within and from the outside. In this sense Martin (1992) recognizes three perspectives linking analysis and intervention processes:

1. integration, which considers culture as a vehicle for consensus and harmony assuming it as a well-defined construct and constantly strengthened by leadership through demonstrations and practices such as the recruitment of individuals already aligned with corporate values or through their subsequent socialization. Corporate culture is a coherent and widely construct shared within the organization that can be modified only through carefully planned changes;
2. differentiation, which considers culture as a vehicle to hold together the different subcultures that inevitably coexist - in a harmonious, conflictual, or indifferent way

- within an organization. A construct, therefore, is not definable univocally being an aggregation of multiple subcultures whose change generates conflict since they tend to respond differently to transformation stimuli from the outside;
3. fragmentation, for which there is no culture or more clearly definable corporate subcultures but only a variety of individual, ambiguous, and constantly changing views. A construct, therefore, that is not imposed by leadership and does not emerge from organizational subsets, but forms at each hierarchical level from the specific values of individuals and whose change occurs through a seamless process.

In addition to defining what corporate culture is, some authors have problematized whether it is an intentionally governable aspect. In general, there are three streams of thought about the possibility of intentionally changing the culture of an organization. For the former, artifacts and values can be modified by acting procedures for recruitment, training, training, socialization, etc.

Schein, for example, believes that corporate culture can be modified by differently designing the structures of the organization, defining new rites and ceremonies, inserting spaces dedicated to a certain type of socialization, redefining the mechanisms of selection, incentive, promotion, and dismissal of employees (1999). For the second current, however, culture is not an alterable construct, since the values on which it is based are thus deeply rooted in individuals that it is unrealistic to think of being able to modify them. The third current assumes an intermediate position whereas managers, especially through example, can effectively transmit new values to the rest of the members' organization. Hatch (1997) defines managers as artifacts who would like to be symbols, as it recognizes them an ambivalent role concerning the corporate culture of influencers and influenced at the same time. Culture is therefore a context to create not controllable meanings, but manageable through the commitment of managers.

Within this intermediate position, two contributions of the symbolic-interpretative school of the organizational culture, which has its roots in works by Schein, can be placed. The first is by Pasquale Gagliardi, according to whom each organization's primary strategy has a protective tendency. Especially in an external context of strong change, the aim is to preserve the corporate identity. The author then distinguishes the secondary strategies instrumental to the achievement of organizational, and expressive goals, to preserve the coherence of meaning within the organization. Gagliardi thus arrives to hypothesize three types of cultural change to address new situations:

1. apparent: shall be used strategies which are part of the framework identity of the organization, thus preserving the culture company;
2. incremental: developing new strategies compatible with the declared values and the existing basic assumptions, 'dilating' therefore the corporate culture;
3. revolutionary: new strategies incompatible with the declared values and the existing base assumptions are developed, without changing the corporate culture.

The second contribution, by Mary Jo Hatch (1993), focuses on the symbol's concept and includes it in the model proposed by Schein. Hatch shifts the focus from the elements of corporate culture to the processes that connect them contributing to the continuous regeneration of culture right through the symbols. With a similar model of cultural dynamics, culture becomes the set of processes through which symbols and artifacts are created in the context of values and organizational assumptions. At the same time, she explains how values and assumptions are maintained and modified precisely through the use and the interpretation of artifacts and symbols themselves. In particular, the four identified processes are the manifestation of images and visions that guide the organizational choices, deriving from expectations created by values and assumptions; the realization of artifacts of images; symbolization, that is, the creation of symbols from artifacts; interpretation or the ambivalent process of interpretation of the symbols. On the one hand, the assumptions serve to better understand the meaning of the symbols, but, on the other hand, the latter may contradict the first. If there is consistency between the created symbols and artifacts, the values, and existing assumptions, it will be possible to change the corporate culture. In case business leaders do not know deeply the culture and how it is interpreted by the other members of the organization there is a risk that interventions will not be as planned.

Even for the concept of corporate image, there is not a single definition in literature. Dutton and Dukerich (1991), referring to looking glass-self theory, define the corporate image as the perception of the members of the organization about how others perceive the organization itself. The image is therefore interpreted as the result of a cognitive process developed by internal stakeholders, introjecting the perceptions of external stakeholders. The image is distinct so from reputation (<<reputation describes the actual

attributes outsiders ascribe to an organization [...], but image describes insiders' assessments of what outsiders think>>, (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991)). Alvesson (1990), referring to the theory of impression management, interprets it as the action of top management that projects the desired image outside. A company has the opportunity to define its image chasing different objectives: may want to project an image that is as close as possible to the true corporate identity or to convey an impression of the organization that is socially desirable, hiding in whole or in part the true corporate identity.

In line with the latter objective, Bernstein (1984) defines the corporate image as a set of public impressions built to attract a certain audience, and not necessarily to represent actual reality. The corporate image can also project the vision of the company that top management wants to achieve in the future, more than that current (cf. Gioia, Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia, Thomas 1996). In this case, the corporate image is functional to destabilize consolidated and culturally constituted image to trigger a change at the level of vision, mission, strategy, and business model. To this end, it is also possible to act by revising the perception of the historical evolution of the organization, attributing different meanings to the events. This allows changing the corporate image maintaining a sense of continuity with the past to reassure members of the organization on the persistence of the original identity (cf. e.g., Biggart 1977).

The definitions mentioned above are united by considering the corporate image as a vision generated within the organization, although the first, unlike the others, emphasizes its dependence also on the perceptions of external subjects. Berg, instead, believes that the corporate image is a vision generated outside of the organization (1985). This impression can be the result of a personal experience of interaction with the company of subjects not directly influenced by its action and is often linked, therefore, to a specific act or event. The last image definition considered here recalls that of reputation proposed by Fombrun (1996; but cf. also Fombrun, Shanley 1990). The author defines, in fact, the corporate image as the set of judgments expressed by external stakeholders on the actions implemented and results achieved by the organization that allows it to grasp its ability to create value for stakeholders. Unlike public impression, reputation implies a more cumulative, durable, and widespread in the space of corporate behavior assessment.

> A corporate reputation is a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of

> its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals. (Fombrun, 1996).

Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) further explore the concept of 'reputation' by looking at it from different perspectives. From an economic perspective, reputation is the set of perceptions on the organization by stakeholders, while in marketing is the image of the brand present in the minds of potential customers. In the strategic perspective, it is a potentially intangible asset that can create economic value, while in accounting is a measure developed to capture its value. In the organizational perspective, reputation is rooted in meaningful experiences of employees, while in the sociological is the result of the sharing socially constructed impressions about the organization.

In all cases, the reputation is based on subjective and collective assessments about the reliability of the company and presents the following characteristics: it is the external reflection of the corporate identity and comes from how the company decided to allocate its resources in the past; it is the consequence of an industrial system that crystallizes the state of emerging companies and summarizes the evaluations on organizational performances formulated by the various stakeholders, which judge the ability of the holding to meet their needs; it arises from a multiplicity of images of the company and embodies two fundamental dimensions, economic performance, and social responsibility.

Summing up, what unites the definitions of the image is the fact of believing that the image is the result of a perceptual process; interpretations become discordant, instead, as regards the focus on the development of this process. For some, it develops mainly within the organization and is aimed at showing the real or desirable corporate identity, while for others it is an outside process.

Grunig explains these different perspectives distinguishing those that define the image

> as something that a communicator creates-constructs and projects or gives to other people [...] a message produced by the organization" from those for which "receivers construct meaning-images-from their personal observations of reality or from the symbols given to them by other people [...] image as some sort of composite in the minds of publics (Grunig, 1993).

It is this second case that welcomes the paradigm according to which the identity is 'built'.

Regardless of the starting point, the whole process tends to run out in an image, or an illusion needed to reassure members of the organization so that the corporate identity is interpreted as an imitation of images that prevail in the market. Taking this interpretation to the extreme the reflections of Mario Perniola (1983) on the image without identity can be recalled, that is, an image that is not more the mirror of something but an autonomous artifact.

The review could continue, deepening the different shades between all these different positions. In the studies of marketing, in particular, there has been an exponential growth in publications focused on the difference and the relationship between brand identity and brand image, definitions which, to a certain degree of approximation, are similar to the distinction made by Grunig. However, what it is important to point out is the possibility of considering the prospects as complementary. Thus, instead of marking the distances between the different image definitions presented in the literature, it is intended to deepen the proposal by Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000), which integrate those different definitions proposing an interpretative model of how image influences dynamically the corporate identity and vice versa.

The model assumes that the members of the organization have developed a sense of self as an organization and that top management has communicated it to others. The periodic receipt of external feedback induces top management to compare the image perceived by them with the identity they developed. If the two visions are deemed aligned, then the corporate identity will be assessed positively and will have been communicated. Conversely, if the two visions are considered misaligned, the problem would arise if the discrepancies detected are or are not acceptable and, therefore, whether it is appropriate to intervene. Any intervention may be directed to change the corporate identity and/or corporate image. To overcome difficulties that naturally are met in bringing the members of the organization to change the current perception of themselves as an organization, top management can decide to project a visual attractiveness of the company. A public statement of the future identity shows to internal stakeholders and externals what the top management wants to change and is, therefore, able to influence both the identity and the corporate image.

Independently of the purpose pursued by the issuer, the image will always be interpreted subjectively by the recipients which, also influenced by additional information collected from other sources, will review their impression/reputation of the company. This, in turn, will feed new feedback that will induce top management to compare the changed corporate image with identity business, triggering a new process of mutual change. Such a process can be traced through the diagram in figure 5.

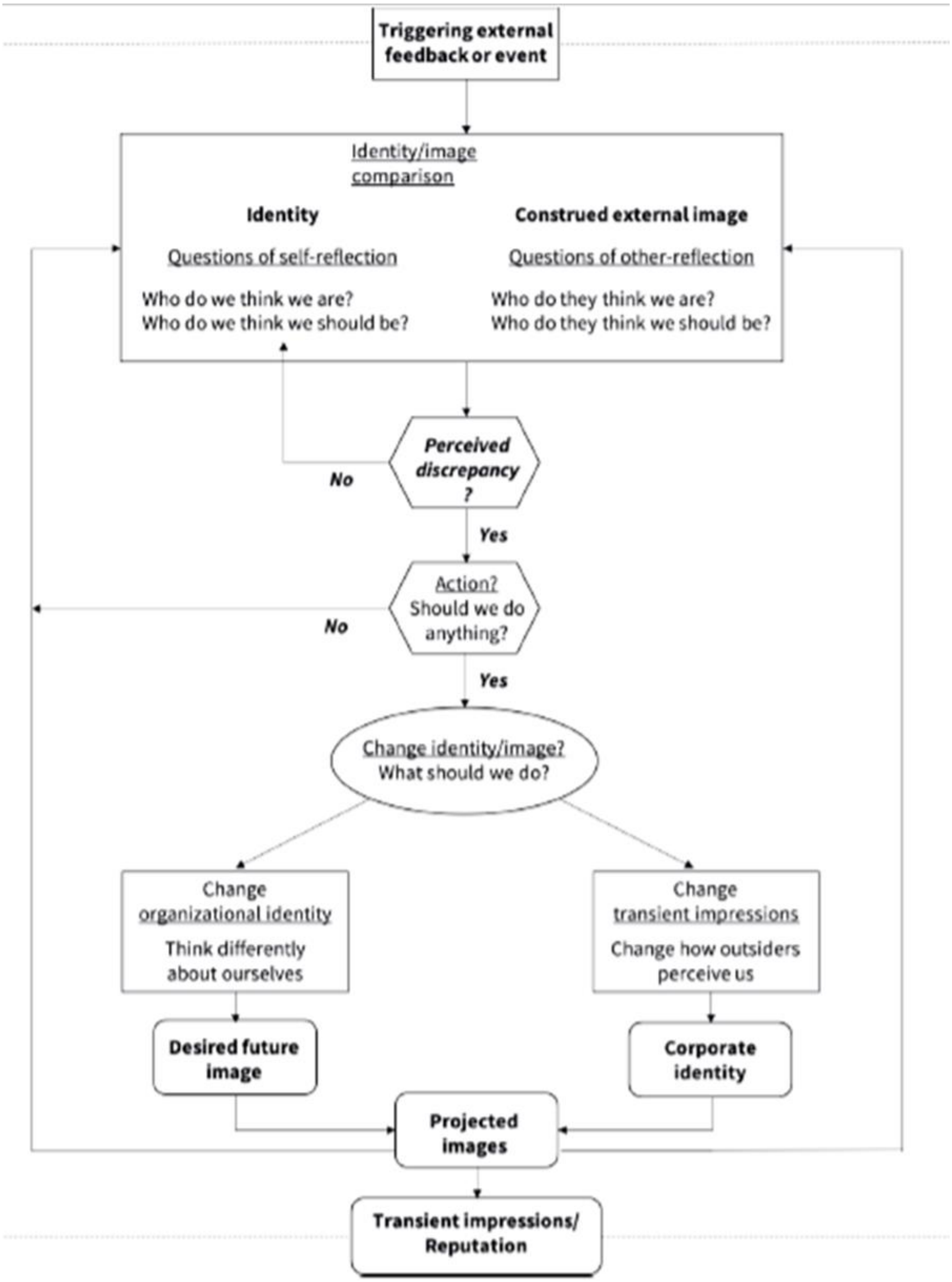


*Figure 5: Gioia, Schultz, Corley's model*

This model, moving away from the 'default' identity paradigm, recognizes how corporate identity and image entertain a dynamic and recursive relationship. The first is the basis for the creation of the second, which is then transmitted to the stakeholders; the latter interprets it and returns feedback to the organization about its ability to meet their expectations which, in turn, influences the perception that the organization has of itself.

According to this model, the corporate identity is continuously revised to allow the organization to adapt to requests and changes in the external environment, while the corporate image is how it can carry out such a review. Such model welcomes, therefore, the vision for which the corporate identity is not long-lasting, but still has a sense of continuity: it keeps fixed the fundamental values and beliefs, however, evolving the meaning to adapt it to the changed context.

It proposes, to the end, a vision in which the corporate image is the compromise between how the organization defines itself looking at its reflection, and the definition that instead emerges looking at the feedback received, approaching in this to the paradigm of identity' narrated.

## 1.4 The relationship between culture, identity, and image

The previous paragraph has deepened the concepts of culture and corporate image to define now more rigorously how these relate to corporate identity and how in part they determine it.

Emphasizing the difficulty in defining univocally identity, Hatch and Schultz (2000, 2002) propose a holistic vision that defines the corporate identity as the synthesis of multiple elements connected by well-precise processes. According to their intuitions, the corporate identity must be put in relationship both with the elements inside the enterprise - the business culture - both with the influence of the external context - the corporate image. The merit of the model proposed by Hatch and Schultz is to link the concepts of culture and identity of Mead’s theories concerning the individual identity to those used to describe a company: <<Mead’s ideas about the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ have yet to find their way into organizational identity theory.>> (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). In particular, the concept of 'Ego' according to the authors is similar to that of culture, as well as that of ‘Me’ is comparable to that of the image.

According to the proposed model, the three elements - culture, identity, and corporate image - define the three areas of research through which it is possible to acquire a holistic description of the enterprise. Even if the identity of the enterprise assumes a pivotal role, between them exists a mutual relationship, a mutual influence that must be made explicit.

Once made explicitly, it becomes possible to identify which parts of the identity are not reflected in the culture and image and in that case, intervene to align the three spheres pursuing the mission more effectively.

The complexity of these processes makes clear the need for a schematic reference to function as a guide for the business consultancy. Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz's studies (1997, 2000, 2002) on this subject can be synthesized in a dynamic model for the analysis of corporate identity. The model succeeds to achieve three objectives: considering all three macro-contexts necessary for the analysis, identifying each of the main elements, and relating them to each other.

Defining the culture and the image, it is possible to explain some characteristics of the company identity. The insights of the experts proposed previously on the concepts of culture, identity and image can be dropped inside the dynamic model reproduced in figure 6. In fact, following the model of Hatch and Schultz, the company culture defines material and symbolic context (think of the artifacts and the declared values). It is never totally manifested but is at least partly tacit and emerges from the observation of the behavior of the members of the organization. It is easy to guess that identity cannot consider all the elements of culture but must know how to select them, make them visible through elements of textual or graphic nature. It follows that the corporate identity must be explicit and become an instrument at the service management to govern culture. In summary, the main differences between culture and corporate identity may be defined by the following contrasts: contextual/textual, tacit/explicit, and emerging/instrumental.

As explained in the previous paragraph, the essence of the image of a corporate is the projection of identity towards its stakeholders and feedback that they give back. In the dynamic model [fig. 6], the image must consider the fact that it is always facing outwards and that the nature of the stakeholders is multiple (customers, suppliers, future employees, etc.). For this reason, the image will never be the exact transposition of identity. Corporate identity is a product of the individual company and consequently, the processes to define it must be internal to the perimeter of the corporate. The main distinctions between image and corporate identity are described by the contrasts: external/internal, other/itself, and multiple/singular. To properly analyze corporate identity, it is useful to consider the contrasts that make the identity other than culture and image.

Defined the three contexts and the constitutive and differentiating elements, the relationships between them define the framework for describing the enterprise as a dynamic model.

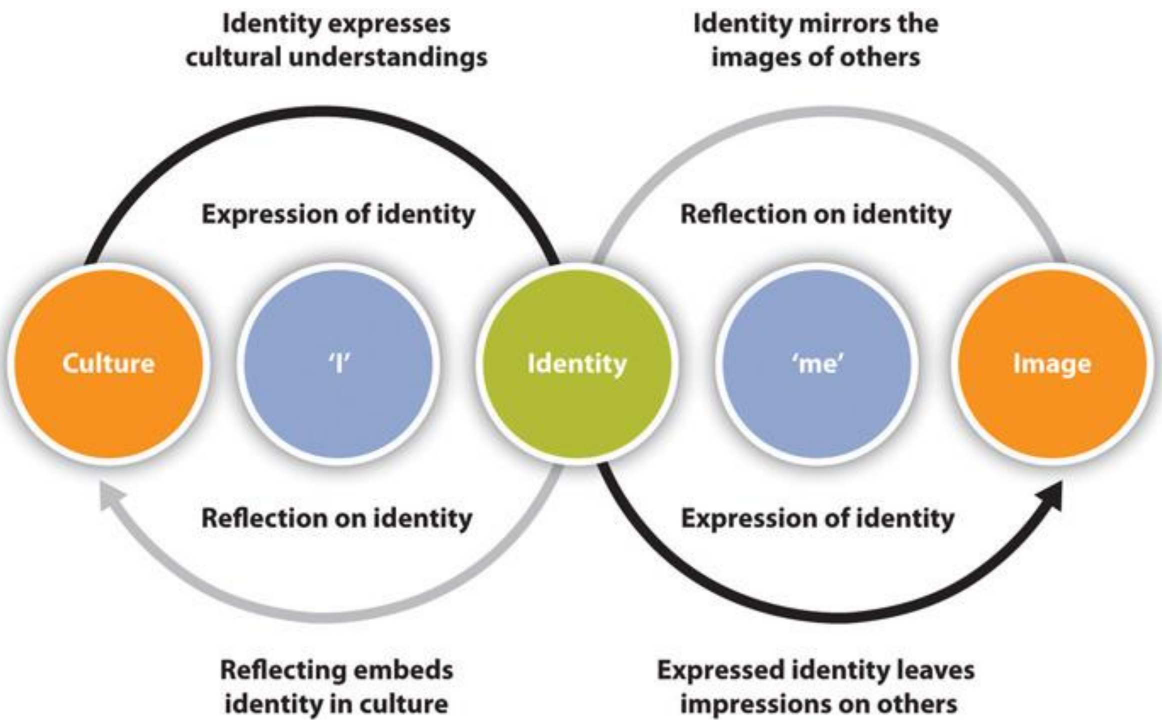


*Figure 6: Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz's model*

The corporate identity takes on the central role to impress both on culture and image. Its instrumental character emerges with force: once defined a strong and precise corporate identity, it is possible to act on employees, internal and external stakeholders, the market, or the society. In a logic of feedback, even identity is subject to the action of the other two elements. For example, the image that stakeholders have of the company is a force that acts on identity: identity could be redefined on this image. Equally, it is true that the pressures coming from the members of the organization influence the identity, since identity also expresses the culture that produces it. In summary, the processes to be considered are:

- Mirroring: how third-party images can influence the corporate identity;
- Reflecting: how identity is incorporated into culture organization;
- Expressing: the ability of identity to be the expression of culture;
- Impressing: how identity affects images that external subjects develop about the company.

The enterprise, through the four processes, must construct a virtuous circle between culture, identity, and image to pursue strategic coherence. To this end, the model can be taken as a compass to better define the corporate identity. A lack of harmonization of the three elements is likely to reveal some dysfunctions. The first dysfunction drives the organization to take a self-referential attitude without considering the external environment. In the contribution of Hatch and Schultz such an attitude is defined as 'organizational narcissism':

> [it] develops as the result of a solipsistic conversation between identity and culture in which feedback from the mirroring process is ignored, or never even encountered. No real effort is made to communicate with the full range of organizational stakeholders or else communication is strictly unidirectional (emanating from the organization). (Hatch & Schultz, 2002)

The second dysfunction, opposed to the first, sees the company too busy to follow the external stimuli risking subduing their identity to the image defined by the stakeholders. The two authors define it as ‘hyper-adaptation’, an opposite phenomenon to the precedent that leads to rejecting the culture:

> To give stakeholder images so much power over organizational self-definition that cultural heritage is ignored or abandoned. [...] organizations may risk paying too much attention to market research and external images and thereby lose the sense of who they are. (Hatch & Schultz, 2002)

Both cases demonstrate the need to define a precise identity that is able, through the decisions of the managers, to coordinate and maintain consistent and balanced relations between the inside and the outside and to guide it strategically so that it can prosper.

# Chapter 2: The Brand

## 2.1 Brand definition

Nowadays, brands are considered fundamental not only from the communication point of view but also for the profit aspect. Indeed, brands are considered part of the company’s capital and for this reason, they should be analyzed. There is not a unique definition, and the measurement process is not clear and defined. For this reason, the experts are divided into two sides: one, consumer-based, which is focused on the relationship between brands and customers; one focused on the financial revenues.

From the customer-based perspective, it is believed that the brand creates additional cashflows as a result of the customers' willingness to buy a brand more than the competitors’ brands. The customer’s choice is based on the bond that connects him/her to the brand. This bond is created over time by the marketing strategies. Keller says: << a brand is a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which adds to the perceived value of a product or service.>> (Keller, 1998) According to this definition, it can be said that there are some associations and emotions delivered by the brands that can influence the customers’ choices and so, provide higher profits to the company.

From the financial point of view, it has been discovered that brands have also financial value. Indeed, brands are intangible assets as they are posted in the balance sheet together with other intangible assets like patents or databases. Furthermore, brands are conditional assets because they are connected to other material assets like products or services to deliver their financial value. It is not possible to imagine a brand without the tangible asset associated with it. A good definition that sums up all these opinions is the one provided by Kapferer. He says that <<a brand is a name that influences buyers, becoming a purchase criterion.>> (Kapferer, 2008)

According to Kapferer, the characteristics that make a name become a brand are saliency, differentiability, intensity, and trust. In a world full of choices, people are overwhelmed by information, and it becomes difficult to select a specific brand through a comparison of benefits and disadvantages. It is for this reason that a brand must convey trust to the consumer to reduce selection time and risks. Consumers could perceive different kinds of risks: economic risks (about the price), functional (about the performances), social (about the social image), and experiential. If a brand is salient and trusted, consumers will prefer that brand without losing time in evaluating all the choices present in the market.

Furthermore, if a brand is powerful, it should rely on relationships and representations which is a system of mental association. These associations can also be called ‘brand image’ and it is connected to:

- What is the brand territory (perceived competence, typical products or services, specific know-how)?

- What is its level of quality (low, middle, premium, luxury)?
- What are its qualities?
- What is its most discriminating quality or benefit (also called perceived positioning)?
- What typical buyer does the brand evoke?
- What are the brand personality and brand imagery? (Kapferer, 2008)

Even the relationships should be emotional. The brand should be able to bond with the mind and the heart of the consumers. The relationship should become stronger and stronger: starting from a simple liking, passing through preference and attachments, ending with advocacy and fanaticism.

> What makes a name acquire the power of a brand is the product or service, together with the people at points of contact with the market, the price, the places, the communication – all the sources of cumulative brand experience. This is why one should speak of brands as living systems made up of three poles: products or services, name, and concept. (Kapferer, 2008)

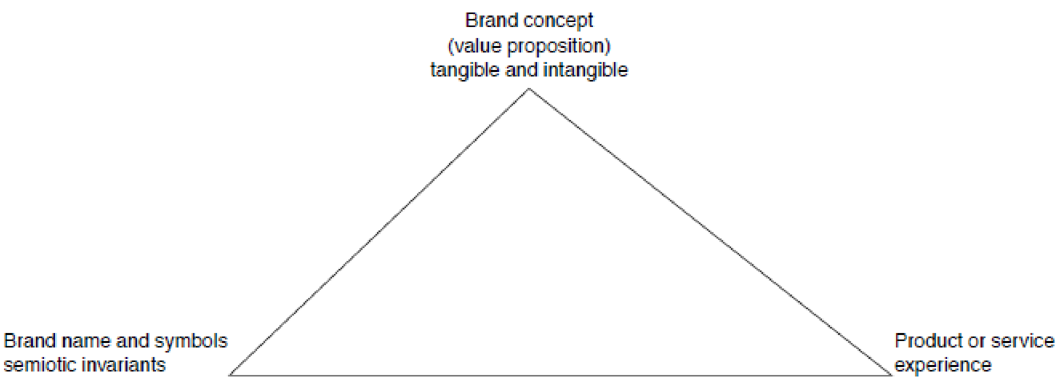


*Figure 7: The brand system*

According to this idea of the necessity of a brand system, it is fundamental to never forget that the product or the service is at the center, but they are nothing without all the experiences, values, and symbols connected to them.

### 2.1.1 Differentiating between brand assets, strength, and value

After having presented what is a brand and some definitions, it is important to clarify what are all components and measurements of brand equity.

First of all, the official *Marketing Science* definition of brand equity is <<the set of associations and behavior on the part of a brand’s customers, channel members, and parent corporation that permits the brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name>> (Leuthesser, 1988). This definition considers part of the brand equity not only the customers' emotions triggered by the brand but also all the actions and associations that the brands stimulate towards customers, clients, and other corporations. According to this, the brand can influence the whole market, and, in this way, it can provide huge revenues.

The concept of revenues continues to be unclear because it may refer to gross margin or financial revenues. To clarify, it is important to specify the three concepts of brand assets, brand strength, brand value:

1. Brand's assets are all the sources of influence of the brand (like saliency, image, or relationships) and patents.
2. Brand strength is the results provided by the assets in a specific moment and market. It is evaluated through market share, market leadership, loyalties, price premium, etc.
3. Brand value is the ability of the brand to provide profits. This aspect is the financial one and it should never be forgotten.

| **Brand assets** → | **Brand strength** → | **Brand value** |
|---|---|---|
| Brand awareness | Market share | Net discounted cashflow attributable to the brand after paying the cost of capital invested to produce and run the business and the cost of marketing |
| Brand reputation (attributes, benefits, competence, know-how, etc) | Market leadership | |
| | Market penetration | |
| | Share of requirements | |
| Perceived brand personality | Growth rate | |
| Perceived brand values | Loyalty rate | |
| Reflected customer imagery | Price premium | |
| Brand preference or attachment | Percentage of products the trade cannot delist | |
| Patents and rights | | |

*Figure 8: Brand value - from awareness to financial value*

According to figure 8, it is clear that the brand does not have only a psychological value but also a financial one. Indeed, when people think about the concept of the brand, they immediately think about the marketing aspect. The brand is something that can attract new consumers if it is well managed. But, instead, the brand value is not only about customers; it is a key factor also in the relationships between investors and companies or distributors and companies. The brand has the power to create goodwill towards the company and attract new investors, keeping financial stability. But also creating a strong relationship with resellers or distributors to have economic advantages.

Summing up some advantages that the brand provides to the customers:

- It reduces the perceived risk of making a wrong choice which is higher when the unite price is higher or the repercussions of a bad choice are severe, especially in some markets like food or beverage. If the brand has a strong value, the customer is less afraid of buying that product or service.
- It satisfies the customers' necessity to be informed about what they want to buy. The brand can show the features and qualities of a product without the necessity of trying it. Through an experience and a narrative approach, the consumer thinks to better know the product without having the trial.

As said before, the brand provides advantages also to companies. Here are some of them:

- It reduces the risk connected to financial stability. If the brand is strong, it benefits from a high degree of loyalty and the stability of future sales.
- It works as an entry barrier for competitors keeping the supremacy of the company in the market, but also it lets the company enter new markets as a strong symbol of quality.
- A strong brand provides high revenues that can be used in investments in R&D or production to improve the quality of the product, research and marketing to anticipate new trends, communication and trade marketing to promote the uniqueness of the brand.

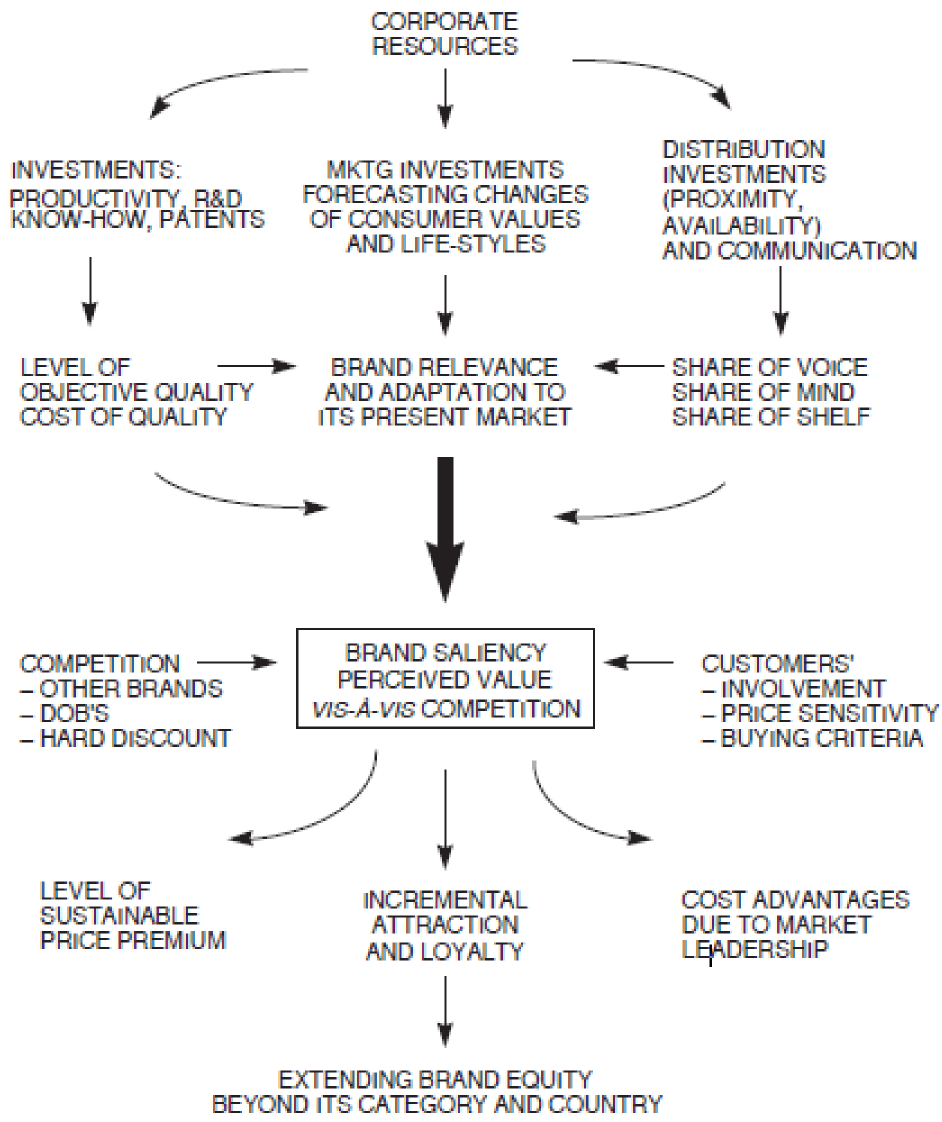


*Figure 9: brand profitability*

## 2.2 Strategic branding

Now, having clear in mind what does a brand is, it is important to underline that branding doesn't mean just providing a label on products or services. Indeed, branding means developing a corporate long-term involvement with a high level of resources and skills.

First, branding means transforming the product category. Being brands a direct consequence of market segmentation and product differentiation, companies try to satisfy customers' expectations providing the ideal combination of attributes under viable economic conditions for the business. In this way, companies can make their products or services memorable inside a specific market. The first step consists in analyzing all that the brand injects into the product or service and how a brand transforms it. For example, what are the attributes connected to it, the advantages or the benefits that create, or what ideals represent? Thanks to the brand, it is possible to make the products attractive. Instead, generic products are worth less than labeled products. This is because products keep the intrinsic value of a brand and even if, the brand is not visible, people still choose that item instead of a generic one. A clear example of this is the fact that many brands end up disappearing within the product category like Polaroid, Kleenex, Scotch, and many others. Companies that are not strong enough to keep products and brands separated risk losing the power of the brand. A good company, instead, is Coca Cola which was able to transform the beverage industry without losing its brand power. Kapferer in his book says: <<A brand not only acts on the market, but it also organizes the market, driven by a vision, a calling, and a clear idea of what the category should become.>> (Kapferer, 2008)

A brand is not only this, but it is also a long-term vision. A brand should have a specific point of view on the category. It is not important to just dominate the position in the market, but also to have clear in mind the reason for being in that market. <<Specifying brand purpose consists in (re)defining its raison d'être, its absolute necessity.>> (Kapferer, 2008)

Therefore, to have a powerful brand, it is important to derive its energies from its specific niche, vision, and ideals. It is no more enough to satisfy your clients; it is necessary to embody a vision and emanate it through the brand over time. According to this point of view, it is possible to compare brands to a pyramid (figure 10) structured in this way:

- The upper part represents the brand vision, purpose, and values, that is what the brand what to create and in which direction it wants to go;
- The second level represents the brand style of communication, that is how the brand wants to express its personality;
- The third level represents the brand's image, that is through which actions the brand is communicated and what are the benefits and the attributes;
- The lower part is about the positioning in the segment.

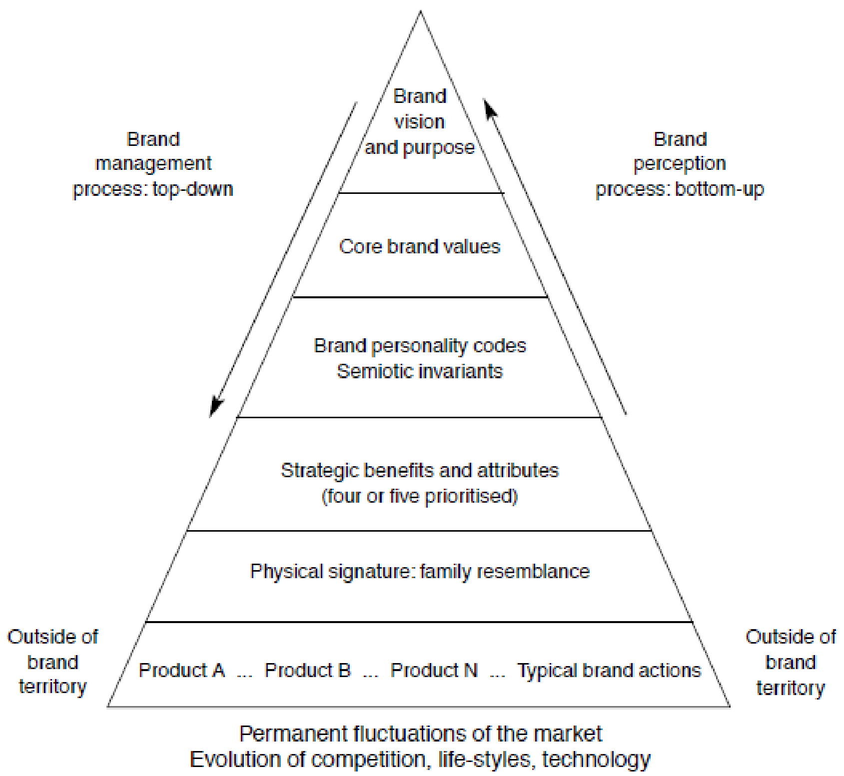


*Figure 10: Brand system by Kapferer*

Customers tend to look at the pyramid from the bottom and wider in the lower part, more difficult will be the choice. On the contrary, the company should start from the top of the pyramid to develop a strong brand with a clear vision.

To become a strong brand, it is necessary to permanently nurture the difference. In this world, any innovation creates new trends, and all brands must be aligned to avoid being out of the market. In this way, plagiarism happens every day. If a brand sets a new standard for a product, customers will be accustomed to it and competitors must imitate the innovation to be aligned to the customers' necessities. But, even if this happens, having a brand will protect the innovation through patents or simply keeping a high position in the mind of the consumers. It is fundamental for brands to be considered always as the innovators, the ones who set new trends. In this way, people will always choose the creative brand supporting it over time paying the premium price.

## 2.3 Brand identity and positioning

As said before, a brand is not a merely name of a product, but it requires a vision that drives the development of the product or service under that name. This concept of vision and core values is called identity. Modern studies say that there are two essentials of brand management: brand identity, that is the values and unique characteristics, and brand positioning, which is the difference of the products from the others in the market.

### 2.3.1 Brand identity

The necessity of brand identity is a contemporary concept because there are more complex problems nowadays that require more refined concepts.

First, we live in a world saturated in communication. People want to communicate everything and there is an overwhelming of concepts, that make it difficult to detect what is true and what is not. Furthermore, being dominated by fake news, people tend to be diffident of new information and they became critics about what they heard. Secondly, the brand has constantly pressure connected to innovation. When an innovation is introduced into the market, competitors accelerate their production to imitate the innovative product. Customers are surmounted by a huge number of products that are all similar and they are not able to understand what they want. Thirdly, thanks to technologies, companies grow in the same direction providing similar solutions and few interesting disruptions in the invention model.

Thanks to the brand, it is possible to differentiate products and attract customers. But there is a difference between brand identity and brand image. The brand image concept is on the receiver's side. It is about what customers perceive about a brand, product, or company. The image is developed by the individual based on the information that he/she receive thanks to the communication process. The brand identity concept, instead, is on the sender's side. It is about how the company perceives itself and how wants to show the products. The brand identity is about values and characteristics that the sender wants to share with the customers.

In figure 11, it is synthesized how the process works.

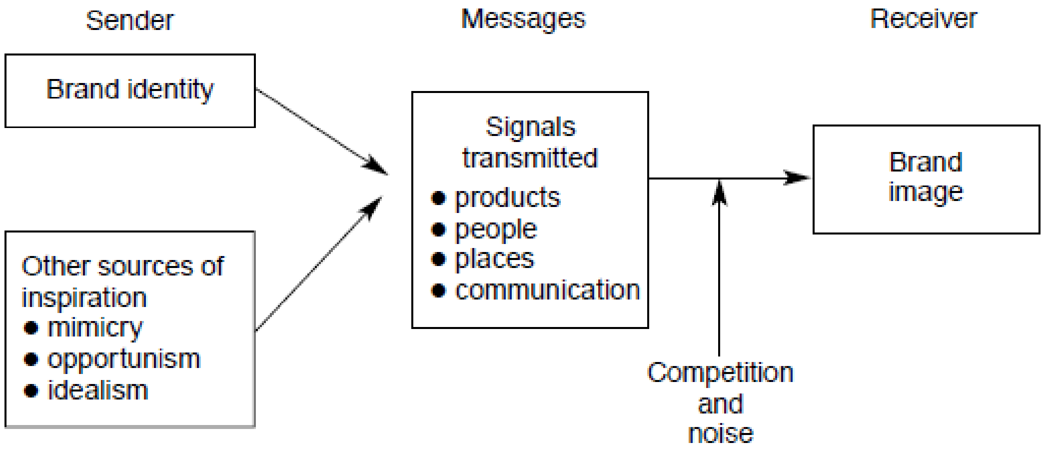


*Figure 11: Brand Identity and Image*

Looking at the figure, the sender can influence the content of the message in two ways: brand identity (the values of the brand) and other sources of inspiration. The other sources of inspiration are glitches that can be prevented through strong and well-defined brand identity. These three glitches are:

- Mimicry consists in totally imitating competitors without knowing what their brand is about.
- The opportunism consists in being obsessed with building an appealing image meeting all the expectations of customers losing the real identity. The result is that the brand becomes a mere cosmetic camouflage.
- Idealism consists in creating an idyllic image that is different from reality communicating in a disconnected way and creating confusion in the consumers' minds.

When a company can identify a strong brand identity, it will be easier to develop a coherent and well-structured communication strategy. Indeed, the second step consists in creating the right message and sending it to the receiver through the right channels at the right moment. Once this happens, the receiver will interpret the message and create an individual brand image that can be influenced not only by the company message but also by the noise created by competitors, external people, or society.

The communication steps are complicated and not always controllable. It is for this reason that the more the brand identity and the company reputation are strong, the more the receiver (the customer) will interpret the message in the right way and appreciate the brand.

### 2.3.2 Identity and positioning

The positioning process is a way to differentiate brands: << Positioning a brand means emphasizing the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors and appealing to the public.>> (Kapferer, 2008)

To differentiate brands through positioning, it is necessary to answer 4 questions:

- A brand for what benefit? This is about the brand promise and the customer benefit aspect.
- A brand for whom? It refers to the target of the brand.
- Reason? It refers to the elements that support the claimed benefit.
- A brand against whom? It is about the main competitors.

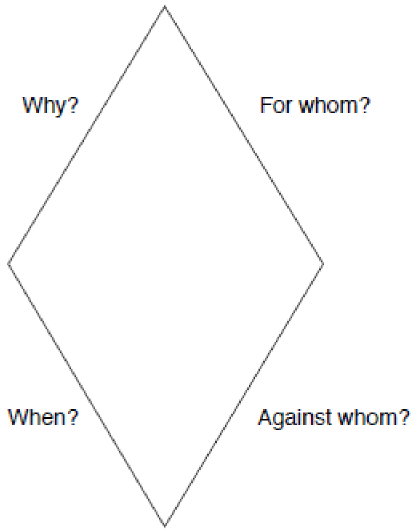


*Figure 12: Positioning a brand*

The positioning process is a crucial concept because it compares the brand to the others and shows clearly what is the brand position in the market and how the consumers are going to select it from a list of hundreds of brands. This process could be structured in a two-stage process:

- First, indicate to what 'competitive set' the brand should be associated with and compared.

- Second, indicate what the brand’s essential difference and raison d’être are in comparison to the other products and brands of that set. (Kapferer, 2008)

Following these steps will help the brand to position themselves into the market and adding to this the concept of brand identity, it is possible not only to find the right place in the market but also provide all the characteristics connected to the brand.

### 2.3.3 Sources of identity: Brand DNA

To discover the essence of a brand it is important to analyze in deep all the elements that compose and influence the brand: all the items that in some ways are the real components of the brand.

1. The brand’s typical products: the products of a brand should contain all the values and the vision of the brand. They are injected into the products starting from the production phase.
2. The power of brand names: the name is one of the most evident ways to communicate the brand's intentions. Through the name, the brand shows its program and its scope.
3. Brand characters: the emblem that symbolizes the brand identity through a visual figure. It helps to recognize the brand, guarantee the brand, to give the brand durability, and personalize.
4. Visual symbols and logotype
5. Geographical and historical roots
6. The brand’s creator
7. Advertising content and form: how the brand is presented, and what kind of messages is associated with.

### 2.3.4 Brand essence

The brand essence concept has a managerial utility because it summarizes the concept of identity. So, even if to better understand a brand it is necessary to understand all the small elements that are presented until now, to easily convey the brand identity it is better to simplify the elements into the brand essence. In the model previously presented, the brand essence can be introduced in the middle of the brand identity prism (figure 2) or on the top of the brand pyramid (figure 10).

The brand identity and the brand positioning can be summarized in the brand platform (figure 13). Answering all these elements will lead to a strong and well-defined brand.

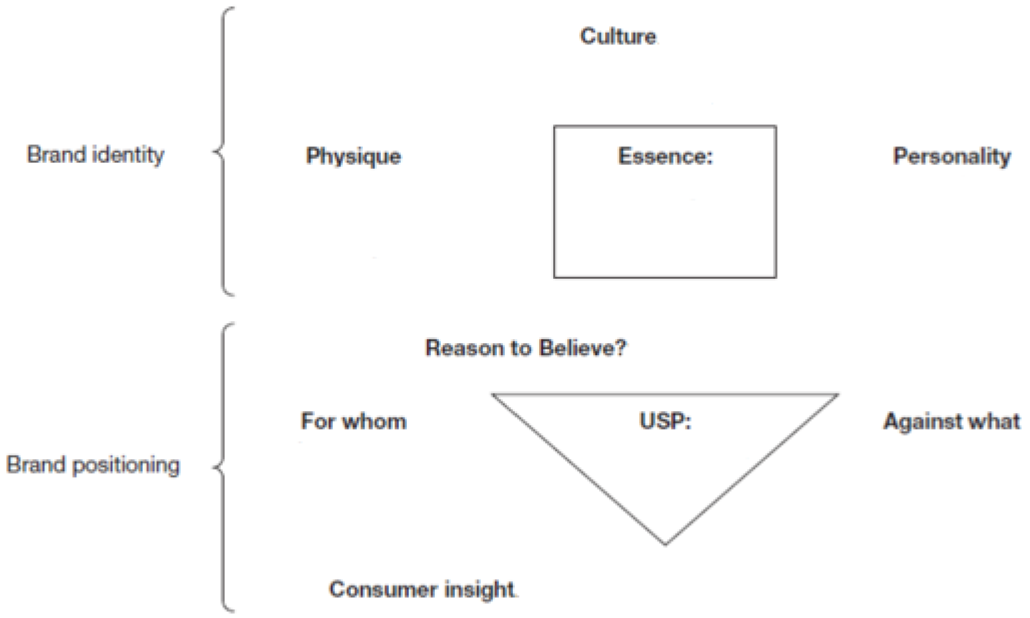


*Figure 13: Brand platform*

## 2.4 Identity and change

The only way for a brand to grow is to keep changing. Indeed, the market is changing day by day, and brands cannot stay fixed in a specific position. But the change should not be always a radical and disruptive innovation able to change the brand completely. The brand should be loyal to its own identity which should contain the key elements that are at the basis of a brand. Keeping fixed the purpose of the brand, it is important to keep the brand updated and in line with everyday needs.

The brand identity reflects the core values of a brand and represents a fixed condition. But being focused only on the identity doesn't mean to be predictable and repetitive. For this reason, modern brands should always stimulate their customers with new experiences. To do this, it is fundamental to predict what will be the future trends. In a fragmented market, full of dynamism and fragmentation, brand management should be able to balance the necessity of being loyal to the core values and being always innovative and different.

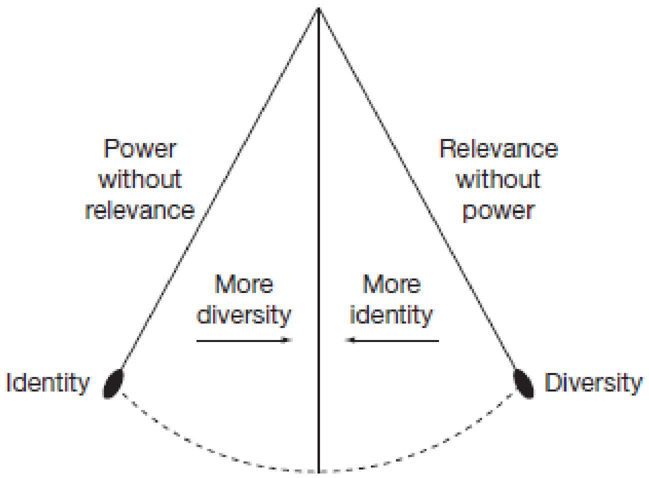


*Figure 14: the identity versus diversity dilemma*

The right approach to maintain the right balance between identity and diversity consists in having clear what are the core values and the identity. All these characteristics that are necessary to keep the brand the same are called 'kernel'. The kernel should be always fixed and unchanged. To evolve the brand, it is important to act on the peripheral traits that can change or be present in some products and not in others. Thanks to innovation it is also possible to introduce new peripheral traits that may become part of the kernel over time.

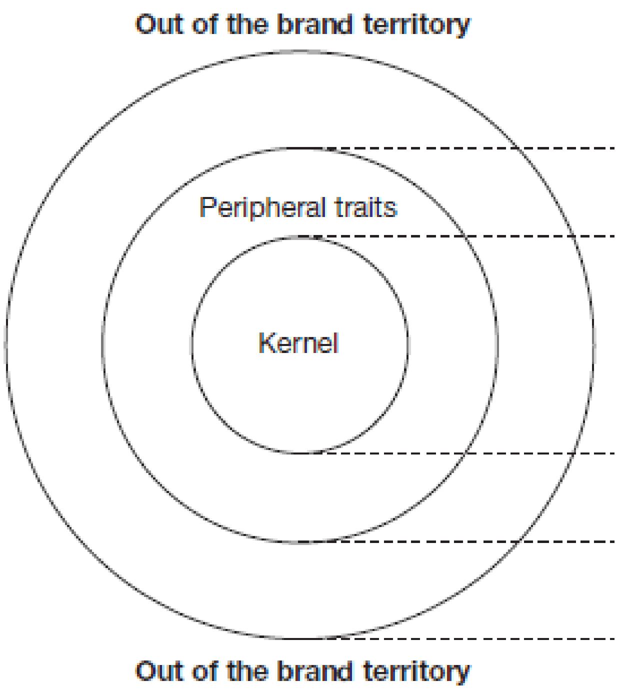


*Figure 15: kernel and peripheral traits*

Having now clear in mind which items of brands evolve, it is important to understand how to realize it over time. Management should develop a three-level vision: long, medium, and short term. The short term is about how the brand is doing in satisfying customers and comparing it to competitors. Medium-term is about understanding where the market is going and how to satisfy these new trends. The long term means to create a vision that includes innovative disruptions able to change completely the market.

### 2.4.1 Integration and differentiation: brand and products

Usually, a brand covers different products, and for this reason, is fundamental to understand how it interacts with each product.

First, a brand is a tool of integration because it brought together different products that should be aligned to the same values. In this way, even if products are different, they should promote the same values and purposes of the brand. Secondly, a brand is a tool of differentiation because it separates all its products from the others. Indeed, if products are associated with a brand, customers recognize them as a specific category. For example, an Apple product is recognizable and differentiated from the products of other brands.

Being the brand an umbrella that differentiates and integrates all the products under its name, it is important to protect the central values which should be limited and specific. The central values are not negotiable and should be present inside the product, but the peripheral values are different in each segment or product and through them, it is possible to have different products that satisfy customers' expectations.

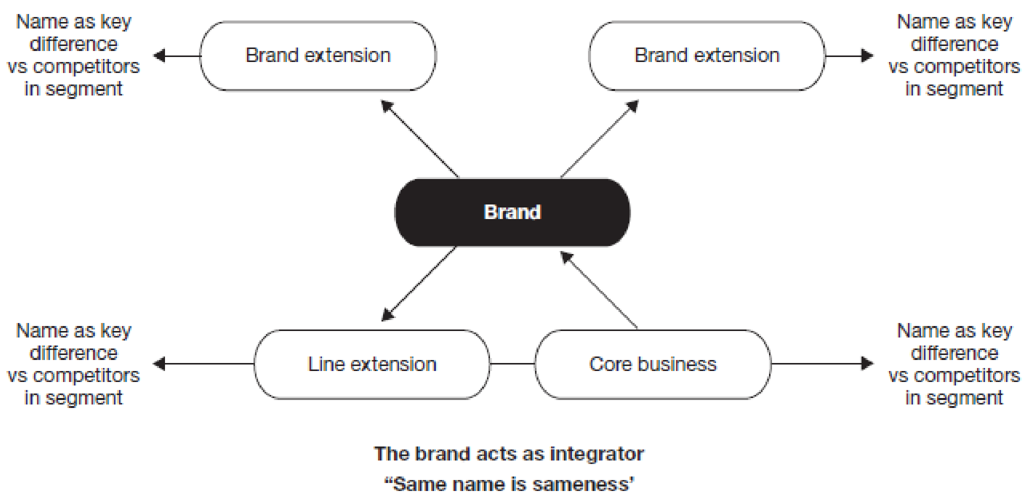


*Figure 16: Brand integration and differentiation*

To obtain this, it is fundamental to build up the brand with a coherent approach. It means that a brand should create a perception of differentiation between products through added values that are tangible and intangible. At the base of the coherence, there is the brand kernel with its fundamental values.

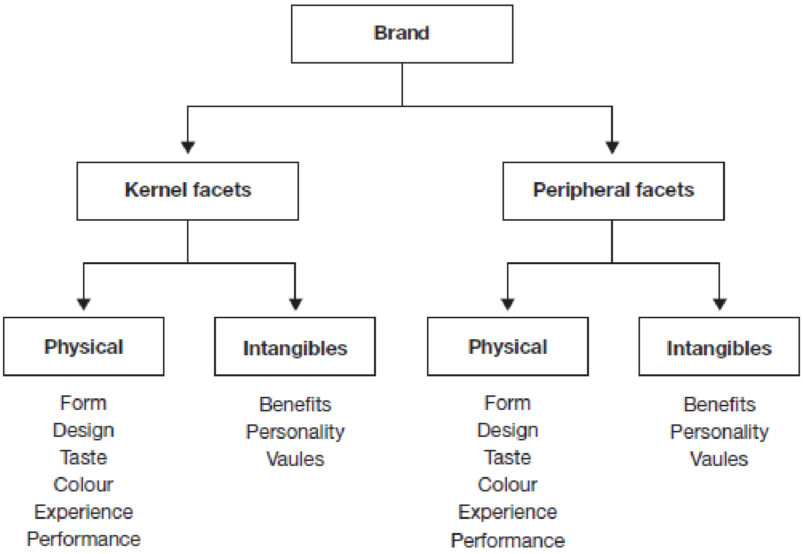


*Figure 17: Brand Identity elements*

Once the kernel values are defined and communicated, the peripheral facets should be provided. And it is at this point that each brand should be differentiated into generalist or specialist. A generalist brand offers a broad range of products under its name and covers different needs in the market sector. On the contrary, a specialist brand selects a specific target in the market segment and has a specific and limited range of products.

To develop the peripheral traits, generalist brands tend to develop general and weak brand values becoming just a label that covers all the products without aspirational power. For this reason, a generalist brand promotes its products highlighting their specific features and not the brand. For example, a generalist brand is Peugeot. Instead, a specialist brand is focused on its brand power, and it promotes the values connected to the brand name more than the specific product model. For example, a specialist brand is BMW.

### 2.4.2 Three layers of a brand

A brand is a vision because it provides a direction to its product category. For this reason, it needs a direction to help to understand where the brand is looking towards the future.

A brand helps to manage the future of products defining what drives it, what is its reason for existing. All these concepts can be represented by a three-tier pyramid that helps to balance change and identity:

- At the top of the pyramid, there is the brand kernel (core values) which imparts coherence and consistency.
- In the middle, there is the level that refers to the stylistic code of the brand.
- At the bottom there are the brand themes, acts, and products, that is the communication concepts and the product's positioning.

Inside this pyramid, it is possible to insert the identity prism. At the middle level (the brand style) is possible to associate the aspects of culture, personality, and self-projection. At the lower level are associated the aspects of physique, reflection, and relationship.

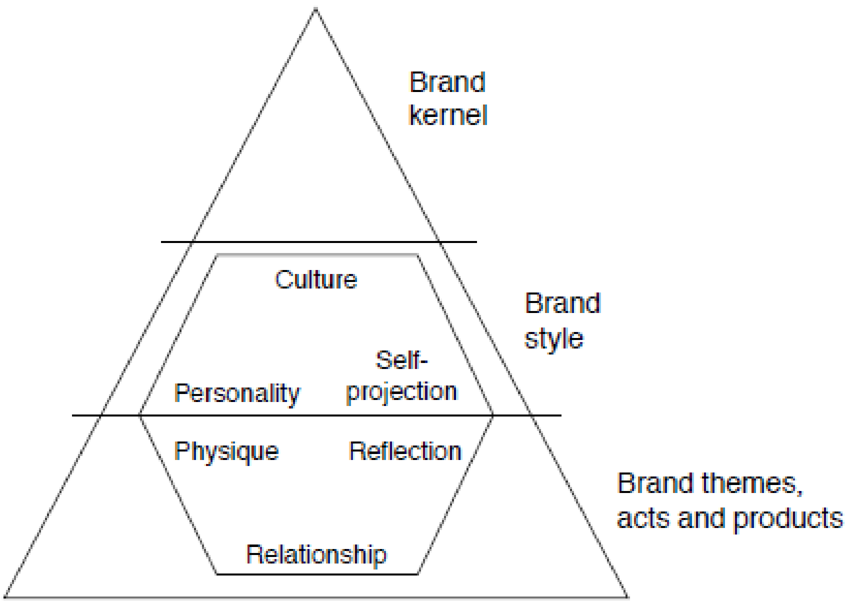


*Figure 18: Kapferer pyramid and Prism model*

Looking at this model, it can be said that a brand to be strong, but also attractive over time should develop two different aspects: first, a strong and fixed brand kernel that is going to guide the brand over years; secondly, brand themes and acts that are variable and adaptable to the market changes. If the brand is good at always creating a different experience or narrative through different actions that are connected to the physique, reflection, or relationship concepts, the customers will always be attracted by the brand. When something is going wrong and even the different actions are not solving it, it is possible to work on the style level, changing the personality, the culture, or the self-projection. Also in this way, it is possible to save a brand without changing the core elements. If the situation is terrible and requires a change in the core value, it is important to study again the brand and its purpose.

## 2.5 Archetypes

Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson developed a new way to analyze brands. Indeed, in their book 'The Hero and the Outlaw. Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes', they present a new method that is not based on the definitions of what composes a brand. Instead, based on the C. G. Jung definition of archetypes, they provide an analysis of the brand as an archetype.

Nowadays, brands are invading our everyday life. Brands are becoming icons not just for corporations but also for whole cultures. As said before, the brand is a repository of meanings and values. To have a strong brand identity, it is important to work on visual archetypes. It means that brands should create and nurture a unique meaning.

According to C.G. Jung, archetypes are <<forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as individual products of unconscious origin.>> (Jung, 1960)

Studying the works of C. G. Jung, Marie-Louise Von Franz says that:

> Jung to some extent took the opposite approach to that of the behaviorists, that is, he did not observe people from the outside, did not ask how we behave, how we greet one another, how we mate, how we take care of our young. Instead, he studied what we feel and what we fantasize while we are doing those things. For Jung, archetypes are not only elementary ideas, but just as much elementary feelings, elementary fantasies, elementary visions. (Von Franz, 1988)

Agreeing with these definitions, archetypes are elementary images that have been developed in our culture that represent a way of doing, acting, or thinking. During all life, people try to associate actions, personality, and others with archetypes. In this way, it is easy to express simply and clearly what it is fantasized about while acting in a certain way.

### 2.5.1 Marketing and Archetypes

Advertising has always been based on archetypes to sell products. Even if initially brands use archetypes to promote their products and position them inside the market, over time the brands themselves acquire a symbolic significance. For this reason, understanding the archetypal meaning is a prerequisite. Since competition is high in the markets, brands risk every day being imitated and losing their differentiation. The only key to solving this is to fulfill products and brands with meaning.

The meaning of a brand is its most valuable asset because it tells people if the product is for them, or if it feels right. The meaning talks to the emotional aspect of people creating an emotional affinity with customers. Archetypes are the link between customer motivation (I want to buy this type of product) and product sales (I choose this specific product). It is really difficult to understand exactly what happens in this gap between the interest and the action. And what happens is an unconscious activation of the customer's mind that creates a connection between the product and the customer's archetypes.

According to Mark and Pearson, the reason why archetypes are activated in our subconscious in the phase of choice is that

> either we are unconsciously reliving critical moments in our own lives, or we are anticipating them. These archetypal images and scenes call people to fulfill their basic human needs and motivations. In an ideal world, the product serves a mediating function between a need and its fulfillment. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)

Archetypes can be divided into four human desires that coexist and tend to pull in opposite directions.

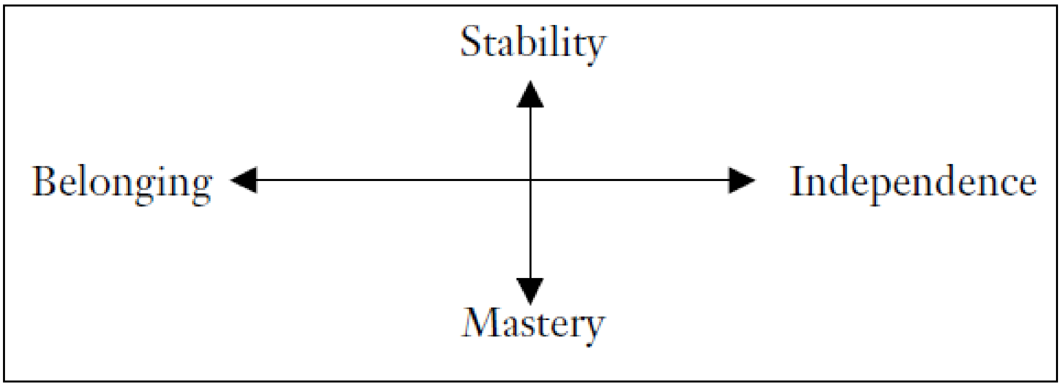


*Figure 19: Archetypes and human desires*

People want to belong to a group, but also be independent. In the first case, they try to please others and conform to be aligned with the group values. In the second case, people tend to spend time alone and act in some ways that are not comprehensible by others. At the same time, people need stability, but also the necessity of ambition and mastery. If people choose stability, they tend to protect themselves with routines, comfort, and familiar things. On the contrary, if people chose mastery, they tend to risk more and act ambitiously. In the everyday life, people should balance these four human desires.

Over the years, there have been numerous studies on human desires and their different facets. Based on the studies of Abraham Maslow, Robert Kegan, Eric Erickson, and Ken Wilbur, Pearson and Mark have developed a table that identifies 12 archetypes (figure 20). In the following figure are presented all the archetypes with their motivation and their fears.

**Archetypes and Motivation**

| Motivation: | Stability & control | Belonging & enjoyment | Risk & mastery | Independence & fulfillment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Creator | Jester | Hero | Innocent |
| | Caregiver | Regular Guy/ Gal | Outlaw | Explorer |
| | Ruler | Lover | Magician | Sage |
| Customer Fear | Financial ruin, ill heath, uncontrolled chaos | Exile, orphaning, abandonment, engulfment | Ineffectuality, impotence, powerlessness | Entrapment, selling out, emptiness |
| Helps People | Feel safe | Have love/ community | Achieve | Find happiness |

*Figure 20: Archetypes*

Based on these archetypes, it is possible to develop brands. Brands should be good in create a narrative, symbols, and images that empower their archetype. Once the brand is associated with a specific archetype, it is possible to transform the brand itself into the archetype.

For example, Nike is a brand that incorporates the characteristics of a hero. The hero is the character that triumphs over evil, inspiring us. It represents the concepts of energy, discipline, focus, and determination. A hero brand knows that is evaluated not only for its products' quality but also for the strength of its ethics and its convictions. Nike is good at doing this and its motto is 'just do it' which wants to empower people in doing everything they believe is important. Over the years, Nike developed its imagery around the concept of doing what you want against every prejudice. Nike's marketing was able to maintain during all these years a good positioning of the brand: they want to support people that are believed weak but that are strong. Nike is the hero of all of us despite gender, race, age, and personal conditions.

All brands should study their positioning inside the market, decide which are the core values, and then develop the right narrative based on symbols, images, and archetypes. Once all these aspects are aligned, the brand is strong and well appreciated by people.

# Chapter 3: A new model

In the previous chapters, I have presented some of the methodologies that are used nowadays to understand and analyze what corporate identity and brands are. In my opinion, it is possible to create a new approach that can combine various elements of existing methodologies to obtain a complete and dynamic brand vision.

The analysis of the brand focuses on considering the brand as a dynamic element, consisting of several aspects, some concrete and others abstract, which allow it to be a concept of connection between the internal corporate identity and the external context. I believe that a well-structured brand can best represent a company to its audience and minimize the communication gaps that could create misunderstandings about the company's work.

This thesis aims to show how to follow a hierarchical and functional path to understand a brand in its entirety. Thanks to the methods already presented, I will structure a path that integrates the interesting elements of each in a new vision of the brand.

## 3.1 The reference models

First of all, I describe the three models I relied on to develop the new one. The choice is based on two academic models, Kapferer and Aaker, and a practical one, Neumeier.

The first academic model is the brand system proposed by Jean N. Kapferer. This model is hierarchically structured as a pyramid with different levels. It tries to give a direction to the brand evolution helping balance change with consistency. At the top of the pyramid is the kernel, which is the source of its identity. At the center is the brand style, or style, how the brand speaks, and what images it uses. At the base are the themes: it is the level of communicative concepts and product positioning.

There is also a close relationship between the prism of identity and the three-tiered pyramid as is shown in figure 21. At the middle level (the brand style) is possible to associate the aspects of culture, personality, and self-projection. At the lower level are associated the aspects of physique, reflection, and relationship.

The interesting aspects of this model are the possibility to analyze the brand dynamically through a hierarchical approach. It is interesting the concept that brand management should work from the upper part towards the lower levels, and the brand perception is structured in the opposite direction. These aspects will be also used in the new model. However, some aspects are not satisfactory: the analysis includes elements that are not always an integral part of the brand but are more inherent to the culture or the external image. I believe that the brand analysis should be specifically focused on the brand.

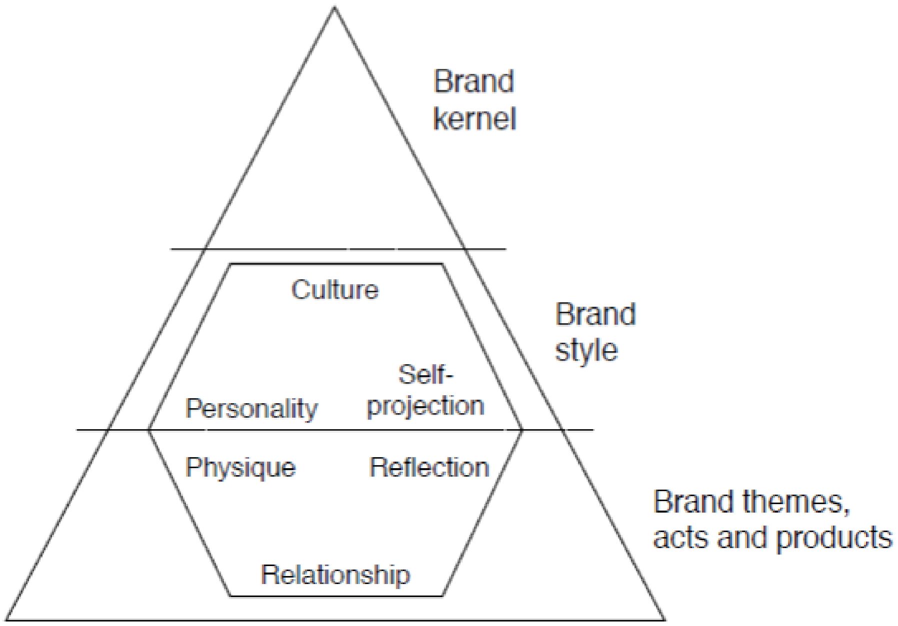


*Figure 21: Kapferer model*

The second academic model is the one provided by David A. Aaker. In his book, the author develops a well-structured model that represents a brand in detail. He wrote: <<I thought brands—certainly B2B brands, but any brand—have got multiple dimensions. (…) You must allow a brand to stand for more than one thing—maybe six or twelve things.>> (Aaker D. , Building Strong Brands, 1995)

According to this model (figure 22), the analysis of a brand should start from the strategic brand analysis. It is important to develop an overview of the environment that surrounds the brand. First, customer analysis is required to understand which are the trends, the segmentation, their motivation, and unmet needs. Secondly, competitor analysis will provide information about others' brand identity, image, strengths, strategies, and vulnerabilities. Thirdly, a self-analysis of the brand will evaluate the existing image, heritage, strengths, capabilities, and organization values. Once the environment that surrounds the brand is clear, it is possible to move on to develop a brand identity system.

Subsequently, there is the brand identity system. The brand identity is made of core elements that are few relevant and differentiating elements and extended elements which are more interesting but not so differentiating. Through extended elements, it is possible to differentiate the brand as a product (product scope, product attributes, quality, uses, users, country of origin), as the organization (organization attributes, local vs global), as the person (personality, brand-customer relationship), as the symbol (visual imagery, metaphors, brand heritage). In 2014, Aaker implemented this analysis adding the brand essence (the central theme of a brand vision) because << in my first version of the brand identity model, I didn't even have a brand essence because I was so attuned to the fact I didn't want a three-word phrase to appear anywhere. I later added a brand essence because it turns out for a large percentage of the cases, that's helpful. It's not always helpful, but in a large percentage of the cases, it is.>> (Aaker D. , Aaker on Branding: 20 Principles That Drive Success, 2014)

Keeping on the analysis, it is necessary to evaluate the value proposition and the credibility that leads to the relationship between brands and customers. Concluded this phase, it is possible to proceed with the brand identity implementation system. At this point, having decided all the characteristics of the brand, the necessity is to implement the right strategy to position the brand in the right way. The communication strategy is critical in this phase: it is important to understand what to communicate, how, and where. To have the right approach, the management should communicate what is different from the competitors (to differentiate themselves) and only the important things that are attractive for the customers.

In the end, a track of all the actions should be implemented because the management should always know what is working and if there are any problems.

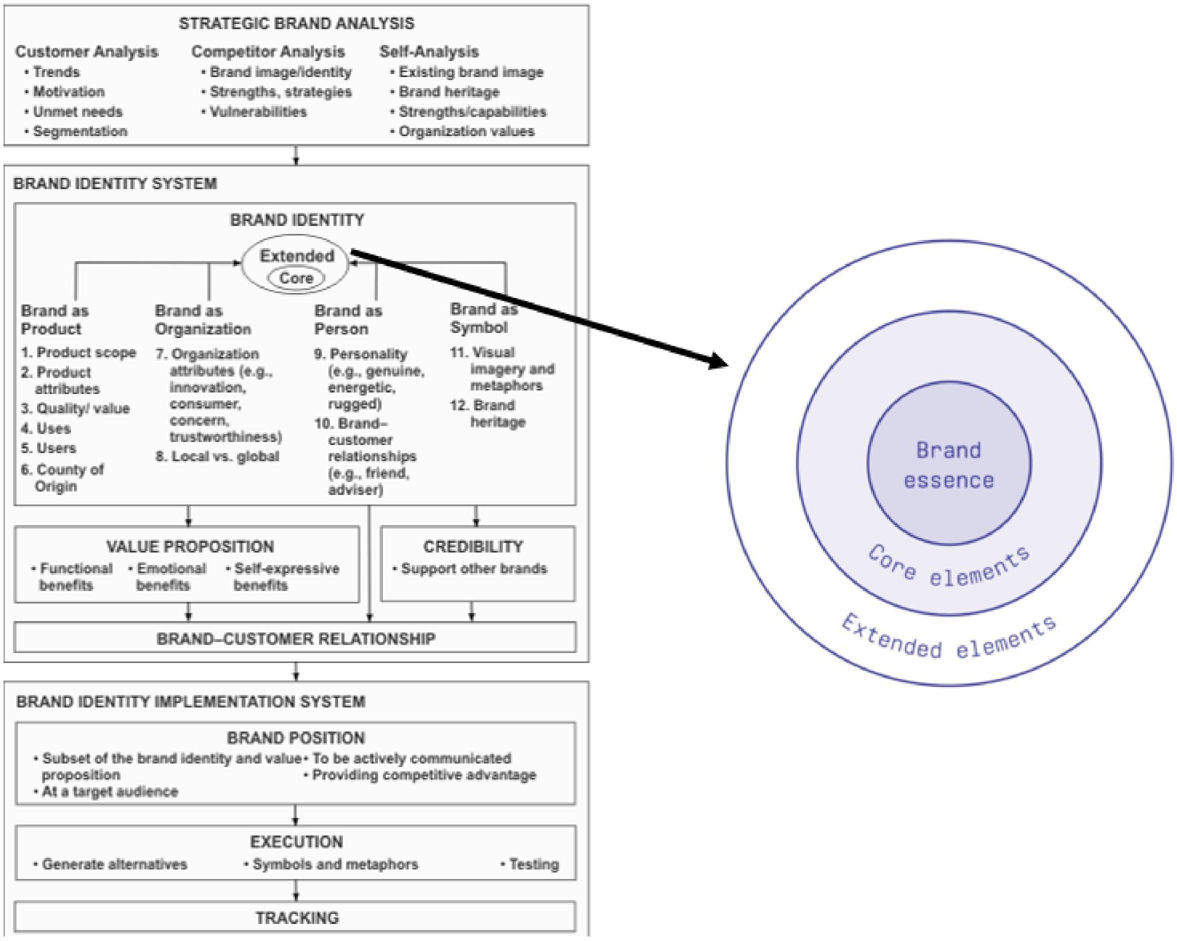


*Figure 22: Aaker model*

Concerning this model, I find it flexible, accurate, and rational. It is really interesting the approach of evaluating all the environments around the brand to understand what is happening in the reference market. Also, the idea of analyzing the essence is a good methodology to understand the brand hierarchically. A limitation of this method, however, is the lack of connection with the corporate identity. The starting point is the strategic analysis and from there a reconstruction of the brand takes place. There are no references to identity and its influence on the brand.

The third interesting model is the one provided by Marty Neumeier. This approach was developed by a designer to build a simple and practical model that would have been immediately applicable. The main focus is on the receiver, the external environment.

The model explains the relationship between the company perspective and the customers' one. According to him:

Keep it simple. Start with a document that maps out the basic contract between you and your customer. Then build it out element by element, move by move. With each new element or move, go back to the original contract, and make sure you haven't violated its terms. If your brand effort gets off course (and it probably will), go right back to the basics. (Neumeier, 2015)

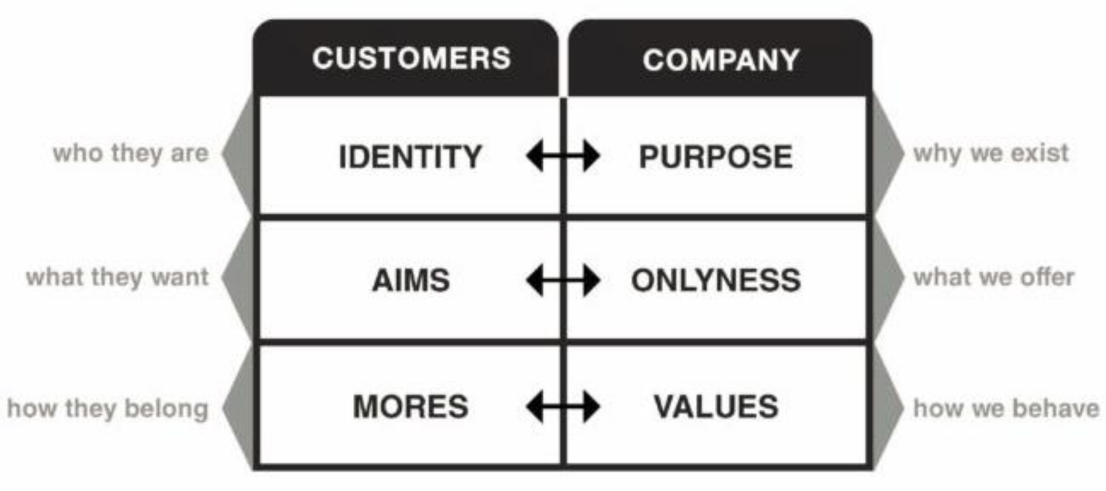


*Figure 23: Neumeier - Brand Commitment Matrix*

According to the model, there are two different columns. The left one represents what is important for customers and the right one is about the company or the brand. About the customers, it is important to know the identity (who they are), the aims (what they want), and the mores (how they belong). At the same time, brands should ask themselves the purpose (why we exist), the onlyness (what we offer), and the values (how we behave). Both the columns are set up so that the statements in each row are aligned. So, for example, the purpose of a brand should be aligned to the customer's identity, and so on.

Through a deeper analysis it is possible to say that the customers 'column is about:

- Identity is about the conceptual description of the audience (characteristics, desires, objectives, etc.).
- Aims, which is about the needs of customers, what they want to solve.
- Mores, which is about the true values shared inside the group (customers in our case).

Instead, the brand's column is based on:

- Purpose, which is about the core values of a brand, why the brands exist except for making profits.

- Onlyness, which is about the benefits offered by the company/product. It must fill the phrase “Our (offering) is the only (category) that (benefit)”.
- Values are about the way a brand behaves.

This model is useful to evaluate both the company and the customers. It keeps both sides in parallel because it is important to remember that the brand’s way to communicate is always connected to the customers’ counterparts. This model will be taken into consideration for these aspects to never forget that what you communicate as a brand should be listened to by someone. A limit of this approach is the general description of each level because it doesn’t express in a detailed way what a brand is and how to define it.

After presenting these three models, which in my opinion are the most interesting ones to start from because they show different points of view (academic and practical) and different interpretations of the brand concept, I proceed to present the new model.

## 3.2 The new model: a completed approach to analyze the brand

From this point forward, the thesis will be focalized on the new approach to present all its characteristics and how it works. In conclusion, there will be an example that will explain step by step the process to apply it in a real situation case.

The model considers the brand as a dynamic element that can change according to the identity of the company, the external context, and time evolution. The structure of analysis will be hierarchical, complete, and rational, but will also show the connection between brand, corporate identity, and culture. The brand analysis will start from the internal and abstract elements and then move towards strategic analysis. The model is visually structured as the pyramid of the brand system model by Kapferer.

The idea behind this model is that developed by the book *Alla ricerca dell’impresa totale: uno sguardo comparativo su arti, psicoanalisi, management* by Bagnoli, Mirisola, Tabaglio. The pyramid of brand analysis fits into the context of the pyramids of culture and identity. The model becomes the third pyramid and acts as a link with the analysis of the image, which will not be dealt with in this thesis.

In the first chapter of this thesis, the origin of the pyramids of culture and identity was discussed in-depth, which I briefly take to introduce the brand pyramid.

The culture pyramid is about:

- The founding myth is the story behind the organizational culture. It explains the foundation of the organization.
- Basic assumptions are kinds of beliefs that are taken for granted as a fact and so never challenged. A pattern of basic assumptions evolves among the members of a social group and makes the core of the culture in any organization.
- Values, that reflect the members shared opinion on how things should be.
- Artifacts are the physical symbols that make culture explicit like traditions, stories, language, physical artifacts, etc.

The identity pyramid is about:

- Leadership is about the kind of leadership approach that is adopted. It is a kind of psychological approach that influences all the choices inside the organization. It is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) model.
- The mission of the brand is about where the company wants to go, and it is influenced by the leadership.
- Strategies that are implemented to achieve the results.
- Business Model that is applied, which is about all the real actions implemented to succeed.

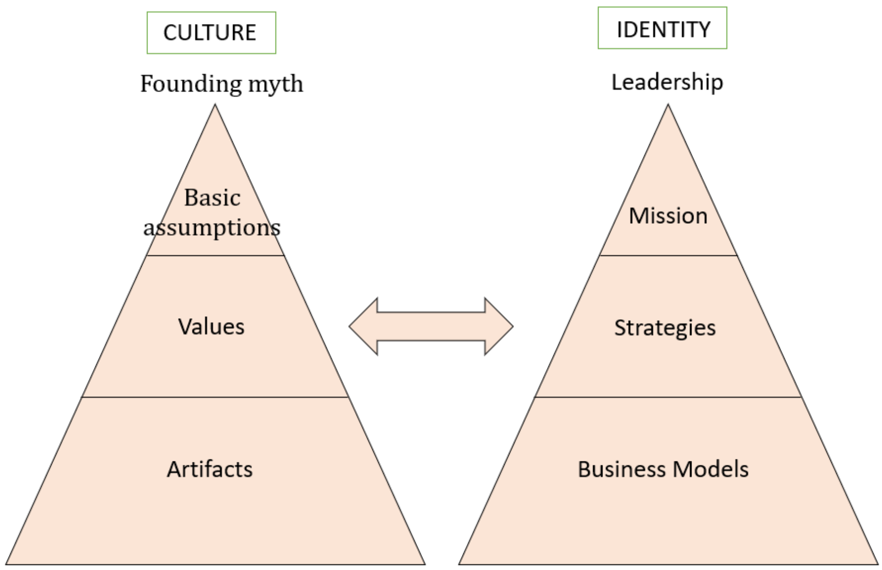


*Figure 24: Culture and Identity pyramids*

The pyramid of identity is the one that has the most direct influence on the definition of a brand and its core values. However, culture also plays an important role in the definition of the communicative act, as I will explain later.

The brand pyramid is structured in the following way: brand essence, brand promise, brand position, and brand design. In the following figure, there is the complete structure, showing the relationships between the three pyramids.

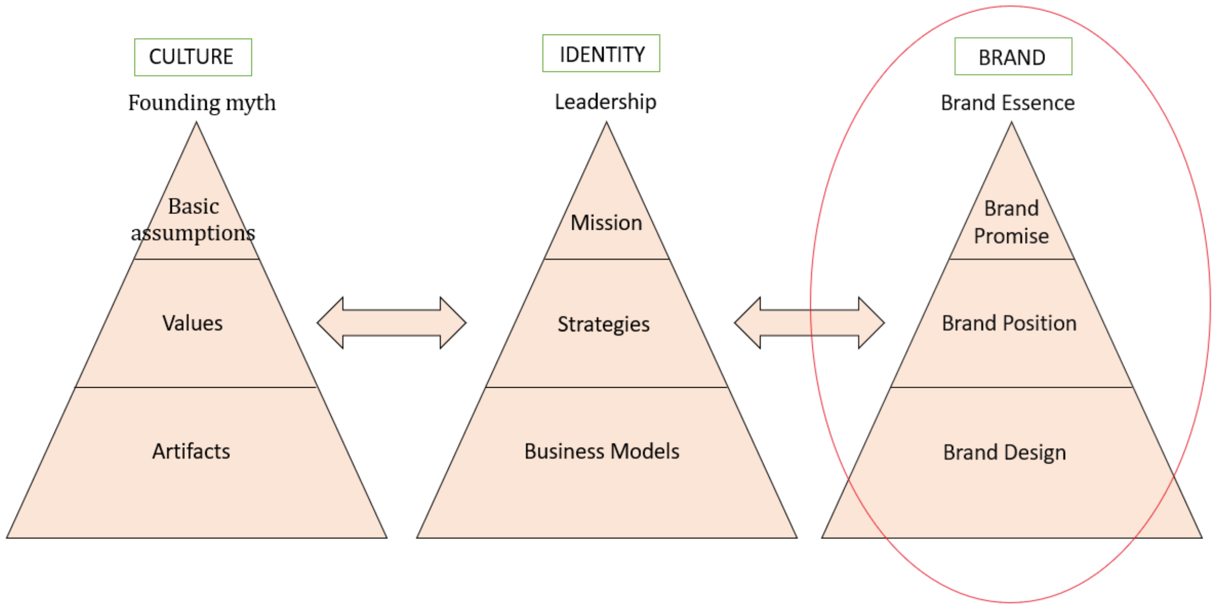


*Figure 25: Culture, Identity, and Brand pyramids*

### 3.2.1 Brand Essence

The top of the brand's pyramid is associated with an abstract element that can guide and influence the true value of the brand: the brand essence. According to Aaker, it is <<a single thought that reflects the core of the brand vision>>. (Aaker D. , Building Strong Brands, 1995)

The brand essence can not be easily seen from the outside. Being an abstract concept, it can be associated with an archetype. The concept of archetype and the Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson's analysis related to this topic were presented in chapter 2, Section 2.5. Because archetypes are rooted in our culture and are the personification of specific characteristics, at the top of the brand pyramid there is an archetype. If a company is associated with a specific archetype, also its communication will be developed following the imagery connected to that specific archetype. For example, Nike is associated with a hero archetype. The personification of the brand image into a hero is the key element that will guide the way the brand approaches the external world. Nike has developed a communication strategy that is focused on empowering people that is also aligned with the identity of the brand. By doing this, also the customer can build an image connected to the brand that is focused on power, success, and support. For this reason, the element in the upper part of the pyramid should be an archetype able to collect on itself the key elements of a brand and characterize it.

In this new model, the concept of archetype is central, but Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson's analysis has some limits. Indeed, they missed Jung's analysis that considered also the non-human archetypes like the Shadow, and the possibility that a brand can embed more than one archetype. Furthermore, this interpretation of archetypes focuses only on the positive aspects, creating limits at the level of narrative. All archetypes face difficulties and obstacles because by doing so, they can achieve growth. Also for the narration of a brand, it is fundamental to highlight the obstacles to overcome or already overcome to make the story dynamic and interesting. The proposed analysis considers the archetype very close to the interpretation of C. G. Jung. To be explicit at the narrative level it can be associated with a symbol, such as a totem or an animal, that guides and inspires the brand.

Being the upper part of the brand pyramid, the archetype should be the result of the previous steps: the culture pyramid and the identity one. Indeed, culture and identity influence the brand and how it is communicated. For this reason, to develop the brand pyramid it's important to understand the influences of the key elements of the previous pyramids. Unfortunately in reality there is a discrepancy between the identified archetype and the corporate identity because a correct brand analysis has not been structured.

To develop a proper analysis of the archetype two possible paths can be followed. If there is already a clear definition of the culture (the founding myth) and identity elements (governance, leadership, etc.), a deep analysis of the narrative and the lights and shadows will provide a correct elaboration of a possible archetype. Instead, if no analysis has been conducted, it is important to make a bottom-up analysis of the communication elements and the corporate history. After that, the archetype can be identified and if necessary, realigned to the corporate identity. The goal is to achieve a strong and sustainable brand in the long term, which is recognizable and appreciable, as defined by D. A. Aaker.

### 3.2.2 Brand Promise

After having identified the archetype, the first level of the pyramid is the Brand Promise. It is about what in the previous brand models it is called kernel (Kapferer), core (Aaker), or purpose (Neumeier). In other words, at this level, the most intangible essence of the brand begins to take shape in some elements - always immaterial, but well-determined - that is responsible for conveying the nature, values, and purpose of the brand. These represent the key identity traits of the brand, as well as the necessary and invariable elements for its definition. The definition of these traits helps to ensure the coherence and cohesion of the brand over time.

According to Rob Meyerson writing about the Aaker model, there are

> about six to twelve vision elements, prioritized into core elements—usually the two to five most central to the brand's relevance and differentiation—and extended elements, which add texture but may be less important or less differentiating. Over time, a brand's extended elements may become core, and vice-versa. (Meyerson, 2019)

Even in Kapferer's model, there is not a clear and precise definition of how these elements can be defined or selected, it seems to be a subjective choice. At this point, the problem was to find a clear guideline that helps to define what these elements are.

Investigating different methodologies, even outside the brand analysis, I found that the semiotic square, a model used mostly in the communicative field could be successfully applied to the brand analysis, helping to define these core elements.

#### 3.2.2.1 Semiotic Square

A semiotic square is an analysis tool used in semiotics to analyze texts and understand their deepest meanings. The first semiotic square model was developed by Greimas. This model was presented in *Semantique Structurale* (1966), a book which was later published as *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (1983). Furthermore, it was developed with Francois Rastier in *The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints* (1968).

According to Greimas' analysis, the text appears to be divided into several interconnected levels: the most superficial includes the words with which people come into contact during the reading, while the deepest is that relating to the narrative scheme and the values it wants to transmit. Greimas reorganizes the structure starting from the deepest values to reach the superficial ones, creating a generative trajectory.

Greimas argues that the human intellect follows a specific path to develop a narrative: we start from the simplest elements, those known to us, and then we move to the more complicated elements. The deepest level is therefore associated with the fundamental values well known to us as life or death, which will be represented by more concrete elements later. At this level, we find the narrative skeleton. Here we have the semiotic and narrative structures and they can be of two types: deep level and surface level. The deep level structures are related to the fundamental values of the narrative and at this level, the semiotic square is positioned. Instead, the superficial structures are those elements that begin to represent the values to build the narrative scheme (subject, object, action). Going to a higher level on the surface, we encounter the discursive structures that represent deep values in a concrete structure like the characters, the setting, etc. The last level is that of the form of representation of the narrative, from the linguistic choice, to format (film, book, theatre, etc.)

| **Generative Trajectory** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Syntactic Component** | **Semantic Component** |
| **Semiotic and Narrative Structures** | *Deep Level* | *Fundamental Syntax*<br>Operations and relations in the semiotic square | *Fundamental Semantics*<br>Semantic investment of the semiotic square |
| | *Surface Level* | *Narrative Syntax*<br>Narrative schema: actants and modalities | *Narrative Semantics*<br>Semantic investment of the actants and the modalities |
| **Discoursive Structures** | | *Discoursive Syntax*<br>Discoursivisation<br>*actorialisation*<br>*temporalisation*<br>*spatialisation* | *Discoursive Semantics*<br>Thematisation<br>Figurativisation |

*Figure 26: Generative Trajectory*

The semiotic square represents the fundamental values that are at the base of a narrative (semantic aspect) and the transformations that concern them (syntactic aspect). It is the representation of a semantic category. The semantic category is a piece of our semantic system that organizes some meanings that define each other (structuralist lesson). For example, the meaning of Life is also defined (and for structuralists especially) by its opposition to the content Death (and vice versa). The presence of Life automatically invokes its opposite, Death. Greimas introduces, in addition to the two opposite elements (Life/Death), two other elements: the so-called Contradictory. S1 (ex: Life) is defined not only with the opposite S2 (Death) but also to the contradictory, not S1 (not Life).

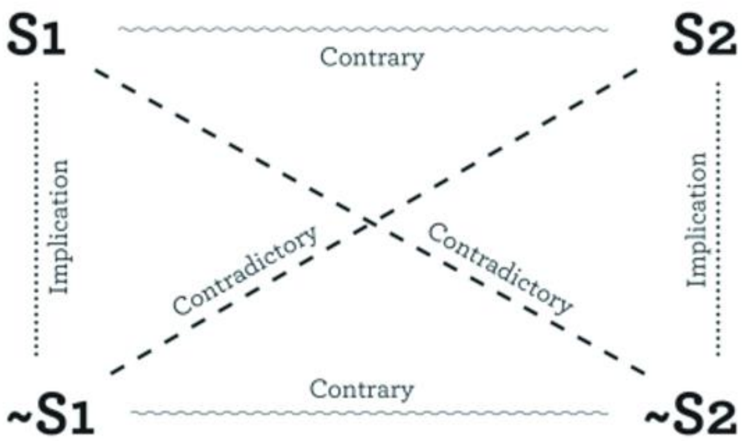


*Figure 27: Semiotic Square*

The difference between opposite and contradictory is that the opposite S2 is opposed to S1 from a qualitative, positive point of view: it represents the other pole of that semantic category. The contradictory S1, on the other hand, represents the negation of S1. It is "all that is not S1". S2 implies not-S1. S2 and not-S1 are complementary.

Understood in this way (in its static, semantic aspect) the semiotic square represents the fundamental relations that exist within a semantic category. They are the poles around which the elements of the world that are considered according to that category are aggregated.

In the 1990s, the semiotic square is taken up again to be applied to the advertising world, assuming a different structure and function. The advertising philosophies scheme is one of the best-known theorizations presented in the book *Semiotics, marketing, and communication: beneath the signs, the strategies* by the french semiologist and consultant Jean-Marie Floch.

Based on a careful analysis of advertising techniques, Floch identifies four types of approaches and places them in the structure of the semiotic square. The four advertising philosophies identified by Floch are:

- referential advertising (linked to the representational function of language) involves realistic and realistic situations which the reader/spectator can easily recognize as his own (called also Practical);
- oblique advertising (linked to the negation of the representational function of language) which aims to stimulate the user's intelligence. It is advertising that exploits and stimulates lateral thinking, that stages the unexpected, and that often makes use of paradox and irony (called also Ludic);
- mythical advertising (linked to the constructive function of language) aims to provide the product with a sense deeply disconnected from its function and its context of use. It is a spectacular advertisement, full of magical elements, sometimes mysterious, often fantastic, whose goal is to equip the product with a personality, a soul (called also Utopic);
- substantial advertising (linked to the negation of the constructive function of language) that focuses on the details, on the most intimate aspects of the product. Its goal is to bring out the essence of things starting with their sensitive qualities (called also Critical).

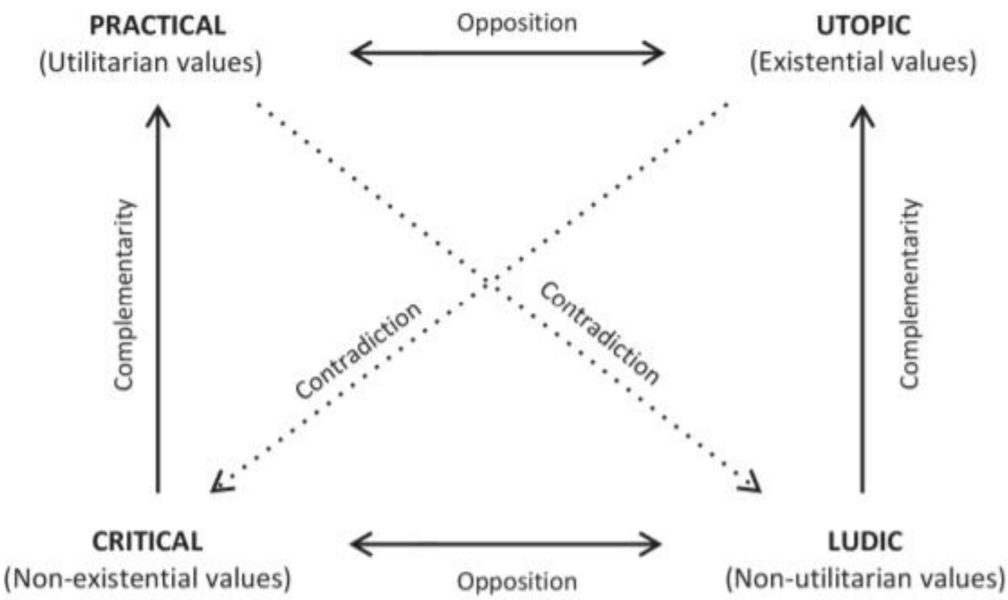


*Figure 2822: Floch's model*

With Floch's analysis, the semiotic square changes its function. It no longer helps to understand the deep values of a narrative scheme, but it turns into a static scheme able to analyze the positioning of a brand and its communication.

Now, I'm going to present some examples in which the semiotic square is used for the positioning of brands, based on their communication strategy, according to Floch's model.

The first example is about the new communication strategy adopted by Valtur in the 2000s[1]. Valtur, a historical tour operator, is proposed to the market as an "Italian village for families", characterized by a service of Italian cuisine of excellent quality and animation of excellent level. In 2000 Valtur decided to present himself with a new, renewed image, through images of beautiful models on different beaches or couples, completely excluding the image of the family on holiday and the animators with children. Through a field analysis (carried out with a focus group with regular customers and travel agents resellers of the Valtur brand) it was found that the new image created disorientation.

The comparison with competitors showed the following result:

- Valtur, which represents a brand where customers know and recognize each other (utopian);
- Club Med expresses a free organization, flexible schedules, international opening, entertainment, transgression, values that refer to gratification (ludic);
- Alpitour represents the solution for those who need to have a holiday without thoughts, does not have a strong identity, does not ask for membership (practical);
- Club Vacanze presents itself in the area of Valtur but on the border with the playful (gratification more evident than Valtur);
- Viaggi al Ventaglio represents the contradictory of Valtur, the new, the different, open to the outside, good value for money (critical).

[1] Rolle L., (2014), *Semiotica in pratica. Strumenti per governare le strategie di brand*, Franco Angeli Edizioni.

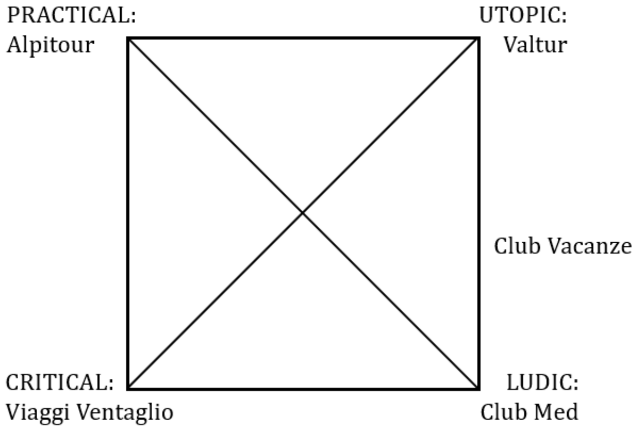


*Figure 29: Valtur positioning*

Thanks to the use of the semiotic square it was possible to understand why the new communication was confusing: Valtur was not associated with the playful values communicated but was still anchored to the utopian values.

The second example is a case study that examines the way cultural codes and myths influence both perception of masculinity and the attitudes of male consumers towards the men's cosmetics category[2].

> Respondents were asked to respond to questions ranging from the choice and purchase of personal care products to the importance of beauty and physical appearance in their own lives and to express their feelings about the word 'cosmetics' generated by projective tasks such as free association. The authors found that the use and perception of cosmetics among men divide along the lines of a central paradigmatic opposition, the masculine and feminine, each of which can be further articulated by means of lifestyle and psychological dimensions, including the degree to which self-care was subordinated to caring about or impressing others, men's emotional investment in cosmetics and their need or ability to deviate from the norm or stand out from the crowd. (Belk, 2006)

The semiotic square created about these results is the following.

[2] Belk, R.W. (2006) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing*, p. 49-51, Edward Elgar Pub.

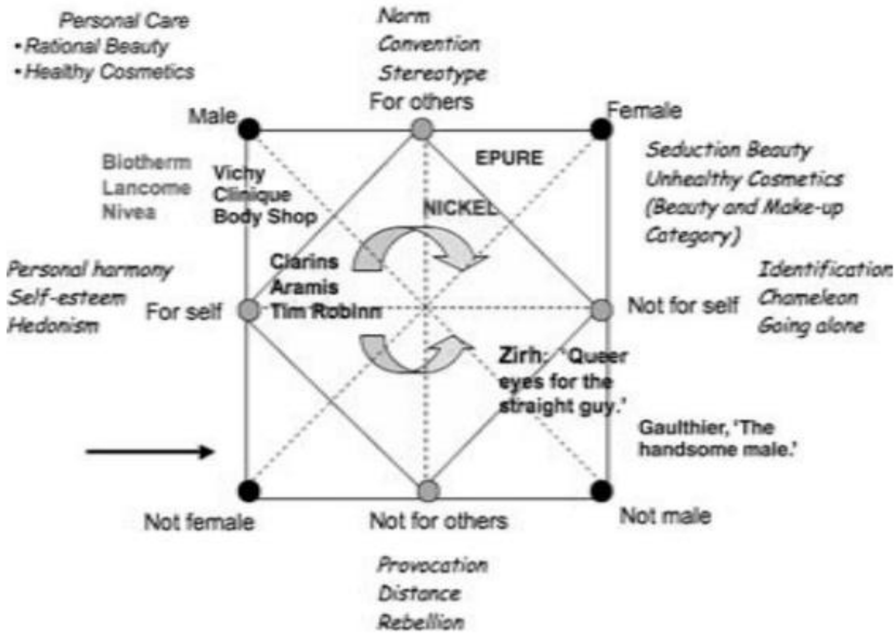


*Figure 30: Men's cosmetics*

Thanks to this case study, it was possible not only to understand how the various brands are positioned concerning the men's cosmetics market, but also what are the areas that have not yet been explored, but that in the future could become market trends in which to invest.

The third example concerns a study carried out on the company Compaq in the 1990s[3]. The aim was to understand how to best position the brand within the market already controlled by Apple and IBM.

> Apple appealed to the insecurities of the amateur computer user and adopted an intimate, consumer-friendly identity. IBM, on the other hand, targeted business users who identified with the more professional and aloof identity of Big Blue. The researcher plots the cultural data on a double binary grid. The dialectical opposition of "Man" and "Machine" frames the dominant paradigm for the personal computer category in the early 1990s, as represented by the solid arrows joining the contrasting terms of [S1] Man versus S2 Machine and [-S1] Not-Man versus [-S2] Not-Machine on the inner square. We deconstructed the dominant binary by applying the operations of negation and

[3] Oswald, L.R. (2015), *The Structural Semiotics Paradigm for Marketing Research: Theory, Methodology, and Case Analysis*.

implication, creating secondary binaries. The Man/Machine binary is implicated in a series of paradigmatic associations, such as brand intimacy and consumers' technical expertise. For this reason, we superimposed a second binary system Emotional/Logical, over the first binary, and deconstructed it by means of the same process of negation and implication. We then traced relationships between these two binary systems, tracing intersections between the two by means of negation and implication. (Oswald, 2015)

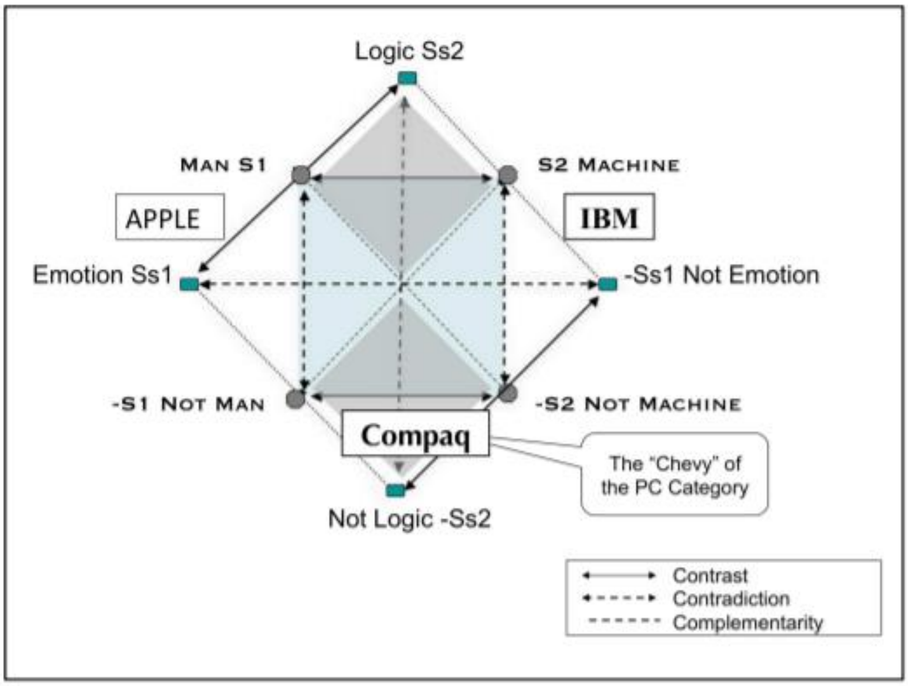


*Figure 31: Apple, IBM, and Compaq positioning*

In this example, two semiotic squares are superimposed to understand what the most suitable positioning of Compaq could be. There is an empty area at the bottom that would allow Compaq to satisfy the unmet consumer need for a windows-based operating system that is also easy to use.

Once I have clarified the evolution of the semiotic square and its application, I now explain how this model can be useful to define the brand promise.

First of all, it is important to make a distinction between Floch's approach and the one of Greimas. As seen from the previous examples, thanks to the Floch method it is possible to analyze the brand's communicative styles to understand its positioning compared to competitors. The semiotic square understood in this way turns out to be a static scheme suitable for positioning. For this reason, being almost like a positioning matrix, it is not considered suitable for the analysis because it does not evaluate the deepest values of a brand. On the contrary, the approach proposed by Greimas appears to be suitable for the purpose. The possibility of analyzing through the semiotic square the deep values through an analysis of opposites and contradictions allows going into the core values of a brand and defining a precise method that previous studies had not been able to offer.

At the brand promise level, as said earlier, the goal is to identify the core values of the brand, describe its essence, and provide complexity and narrative power to the brand making it more credible.  The elements identified through the semantic square are dynamic and transform the archetype into a story to be transmitted. For this reason, it is not possible to identify them with a simple static diagram or a list of adjectives.

The brand promise is made up of many facets, deriving from various aspects of the identity and culture of a company. Companies that do this, implement strategies that are not credible and often with negative effects on their brand image, like cases of Green Washing or Pink Washing. In these situations, the companies involved have based their communication on stereotypes and have adapted it to the demands of consumers, without ever questioning their identity and whether it reflects the values communicated. The semiotic square of Greimas helps to develop a more detailed and precise analysis of values derived from the archetype, taking into consideration not only the positive aspects but also the negative ones. Thanks to the study of contrasts and contradictions, it is possible to enhance the lights, but without forgetting the shadows that are part of the brand. Indeed, for effective communication, it is essential to understand the shadows and uncertainties of a brand.

Thanks to the semiotic square it is possible to define the core values of a brand in a dynamic, functional, and complete approach. Moreover, since the brand promise is located under the brand essence, the semiotic square is the point of connection between these two levels. The brand essence can define the reference area for the identification of keywords to be inserted in the semiotic square.

The concrete elements that communicate the brand promise to the people are two: the motto under which the brand undertakes to declare its promise to customers and/or the company; the personality which expresses how the brand intends to embody the promise, declining its nuances in precise attitudes. Unlike the motto, which can be part of the messages communicated by the company outside, the definition of the personality should be shared internally, between the members of the organization and with those who eventually help the organization to tell its story. It can be described in a more or less detailed document - ranging from the list of individual adjectives to an entire manual or manifesto - useful to translate the distinctive character of the brand into a series of distinctive features, that is, by explaining the characteristics implicit in the motto and logo.

An example of a brand's motto and personality is that of the pharmaceutical company Bayer. The motto has been defined << Science for a better life >> (Bayer, s.d.). This simple sentence expresses Bayer's brand promise: use science to create a better life. This motto is linked to the archetype of the magician/scientist. The archetype of the magician is expressed through the transformation of his consciousness to change himself and the outside world. It is a very powerful archetype that gives personal power to the individual, who can express it in various forms and degrees. The personality of the company is detailed on their website through the definition of their motto, <<At Bayer, we want to make lives better. And we believe science is the key.>> (Bayer, s.d.),  and a series of adjectives associated with the brand such as optimism, passion, and vision. Thanks to the personality are made explicit the direction that the brand wants to follow, opposing everything that is not science. With the semiotic square in which science and magic are the opposition, it can be outlined the personality of the brand. Bayer stands on the side of science and stands as a spokesman for all that science can offer to human life. With a motto and a clear personality, Bayer has no problem creating a proper positioning in the market even at a time of confusion like that of the pandemic. The brand's answer to not knowing will always be science.

### 3.2.3 Brand Position

The second level of the pyramid defines Brand Positioning. It describes the brand's position in many different areas:

- age, concerning its life cycle;
- the relationship with other brands or products (Brand Architecture);
- the positioning proper about competitors and markets.

In identifying the positioning of the brand, the semiotic square will return in support, but in this case with the static interpretation of Floch.

Analysis of the positioning is essential to understand and evaluate the degree of development and consistency of the brand, in particular thanks to the comparison with the outside (competitors, customers, stakeholders, and context in general). It is thus possible to bring out not only the identity traits (Essence and Promise) but also those that uniquely differentiate the brand and that can be used strategically to create a competitive advantage, remaining more impressed in the consumer's perception.

At this level, begin the movement from abstract concepts, to get closer to more concrete elements that begin to be visible even outside. At this point, it is possible to compare brand identity and brand image, showing the differences between the company point of view and the customers' one.

#### 3.2.3.1 Life Cycle

First of all, it is important to study the positioning of a brand evaluating its life cycle. Indeed, there is an analogy between the brand life cycle and the product life cycle that allows describing the evolution of brands through four fundamental phases: introduction, growth, maturity, decline (Levitt, 1965). The first stage, introduction, is focused on developing the product and making it known to the customers. Once this happens, the growth stage starts. At this point, the product sellings are increasing and the position in the market is reached, but competitors start to develop similar competitive products. At the maturity level, the product is well established in the marketplace and there is market saturation. It is at this point that the decline phase appears. If the product is not able to keep its positioning in the market through innovation and customer satisfaction, there is a decline that leads to the elimination of the product in the market.

As for the products, this life cycle is similar for brands. Once the maturity phase is reached, there are only two possibilities: the decline or the relaunch, through the rebranding or the extension of the brand. Every brand must have a clear position on the curve to be able to properly evaluate its strategies.

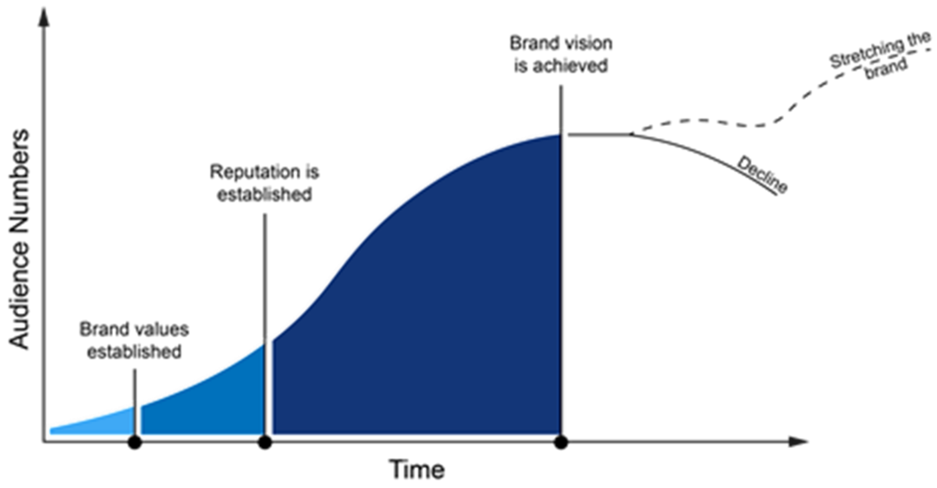


*Figure 32: Brand life cycle*

As it is shown in the previous figure, it is important to know the stage of the brand to develop the right strategies. Indeed, each stage has its opportunities and approaches to analyze and communicate the brand in the right way. A method to estimate the phase in which the brand is registered can be the power grid of the BAV (Brand Asset Valuator) model.

According to the Bav Group definition, the evaluation is based on four pillars (BAV GROUP, s.d.):

1. Differentiation: a brand's ability to capture attention in the cultural landscape. A powerful driver of curiosity, advocacy and pricing power.
2. Relevance: How appropriate and meaningful a brand is to consumers. Drives brand consideration and trial.
3. Esteem: A measure of how highly regarded a brand is and how well it delivers on its promises. Leads to trial and commitment.
4. Knowledge: The depth of understanding people have of a brand – both its positive and negative information.

Brands are plotted in two dimensions on the power grid: Stature and Strength. The two dimensions capture the relationship of the four Brand Pillars.

In the following figure, it is shown how the positioning works.

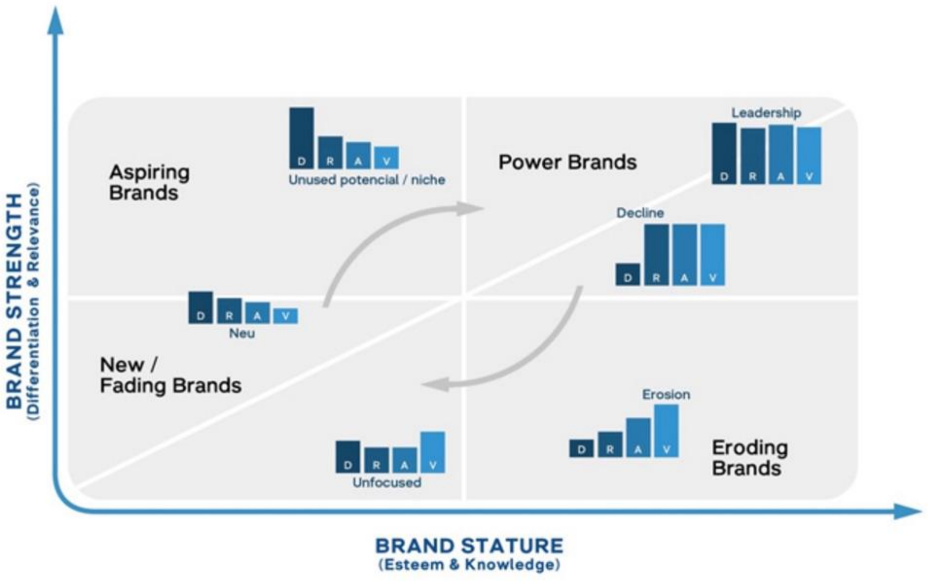


*Figure 33: BAV model*

### 3.2.3.2 Brand Architecture

The brand positioning strategy is also based on brand architecture (Aaker D. A., 2004). There are different types of brands:

- Branded House when all sub-brands use the same master brand name, differentiating only the descriptions;
- House of Brands when brands operate separately with different names;
- Hybrid when some sub-brands have the master brand name and others are autonomous.

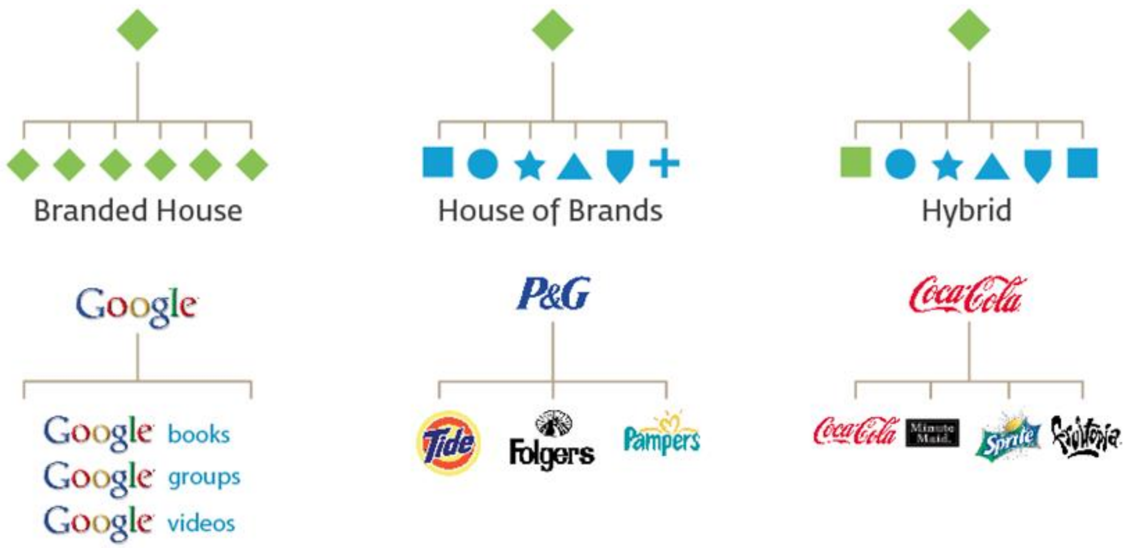


*Figure 34: types of brands*

To understand how to act on the architecture of the brand, each organization should analyze different aspects through some questions, such as: what degree of freedom should the brand have concerning the organization? In how many sub-levels should the relationship between enterprise and brand be articulated? How much visibility has the name of the company? Does the same architecture strategy work on foreign markets?

There are different advantages in choosing both strategies (keeping the corporate brand or having a different brand connected to each product). If the corporate brand is the distinctive image of all products some benefits are reassuring the customers about the products, easy welcoming of new products, less cost of communication, and stronger total image. Instead, if there are different product brands some advantages are identification in the product, coherent and isolated image, different positioning, and different values of the brand.

Thanks to a careful analysis of the brand, its values, and its positioning, it is possible to choose the best strategy and the best brand architecture.

#### 3.2.3.3 Market Positioning

Once it is understood the position of the brand in the cycle of life and its architecture, the following step is about understanding how it is positioned in the reference market and how it is positioned in the consumers' minds compared to competitors.

The reflection on the target model (the imaginary consumer to whom the brand is aimed) is an integral part of the strategic formulation: without the proper evaluation of its recipient, the issuer cannot reach it with a special proposal of value, failing in his communicative intent. Firstly, there must be segmentation, that is, the subdivision of consumers into significant and distinct groups. The most basic form of segmentation is based on demographic or psychographic criteria (age, gender, religion, income, lifestyle, etc.). Other criteria are value-based (motivations that drive behavior), behavioral (users, non-users, former users, etc.), or needs-based (responsiveness of products to material or intangible needs). Variables can be combined to create more effective and realistic segmentation.

Segmentation must also be carried out on the markets of companies, as well as of consumers. The main criteria include (Dibb & Simkin, 1991):

- demography (size of holding and sector);

- geography (regional, national, etc.);
- benefits sought (after-sales service, financial conditions, etc.);
- fidelity (share of total purchases);
- usage rates (quantity and frequency of purchases);
- operational characteristics of the customer;
- approach to purchasing;
- situational factors (magnitude and urgency of orders);
- personal characteristics (loyalty, risk aversion, etc.).

Clarifying the possibilities of segmentation, it is important to choose the target models to achieve a competitive advantage. To do this, the firm must consider internal criteria, including the ability to meet customer requirements, the total costs of meeting such requests, the potential profitability of serving multiple customer segments, above all, consistency with the brand promised.

These are accompanied by the general factors like the attractiveness or level of competition in a given segment, the size and potential for growth, namely the variability and viability of the segment (technological and legislative changes), the resources of the brand, that is the competitive base (budget, portfolio products, etc.).

The type of positioning based on these variables can be of three types (Casarin, 1990):

- Undifferentiated marketing: effective in a market with little competition, or fast-growing, or if the product has a lot of appeals;
- Differentiated marketing: higher sales potential and consumer loyalty, higher costs;
- Concentrated marketing: effective for companies with limited resources or an exclusive product.

As for the positioning concerning competitors, there are two interesting tools: the perceptual map, which represents the perceptions of the consumer relative to a set of brands, evaluating characteristics of category as quality, performance, tangible appearance, etc., and the preference map, which describes the market based on the preferences expressed by the consumer segments about specific characteristics. By overlapping the two maps, it is possible to define the actual positioning map, thus comparing the distance between the brand position currently perceived by the consumer segments and the «ideal» one. In addition to being a useful tool to assess the alignment of brand identity (perceived by the company) with the brand image, the positioning map also indicates the direction in which the brand must move to get closer to the ideal description in the minds of consumers or to radically rethink its positioning or brand. Both models are inspired by the semiotic square identified by Semprini.

An example is the positioning of mineral waters and their way of communicating, implemented by Acqua Sant'Anna[4]. In 2008 Fonti di Vinadio launched on the market a biodegradable bottle (Bio-Bottle) to direct the brand towards values of environmental sustainability, but the market seemed to express some resistance to the purchase of the product. The company decided to investigate how customers interpret the product, implementing field research through focus groups. Two different modes of representation of the water product are immediately recognized: water of doing (they are told as a promise to act on the body, such as diuretics, slimming, then with a beneficial effect-performance) and water of being (refer to the purity of the source, the naturalness, and simplicity of the product).

Here is the positioning map about the water's brand:

- The functional waters (waters of doing) are described as healing waters (Uliveto and Rocchetta), and use known testimonials.
- The authentic waters (waters of being) refer to the naturalness of the product, using evocative images of glaciers, mountains, springs (Acqua Vera, Levissima).
- The euphoric waters (water of the "do not do") explicitly deny the healing qualities of the functional (Panna, San Pellegrino): the emotions and lifestyles of those who choose these waters are privileged. It's about taste, pleasure, style.
- The distinctive waters (waters of "not being") want to tell their internal composition, they try to affirm a qualitative superiority of the product, showing themselves as excellence (Sant'Anna).

[4] Rolle L., (2014), *Semiotica in pratica. Strumenti per governare le strategie di brand*, Franco Angeli Edizioni.

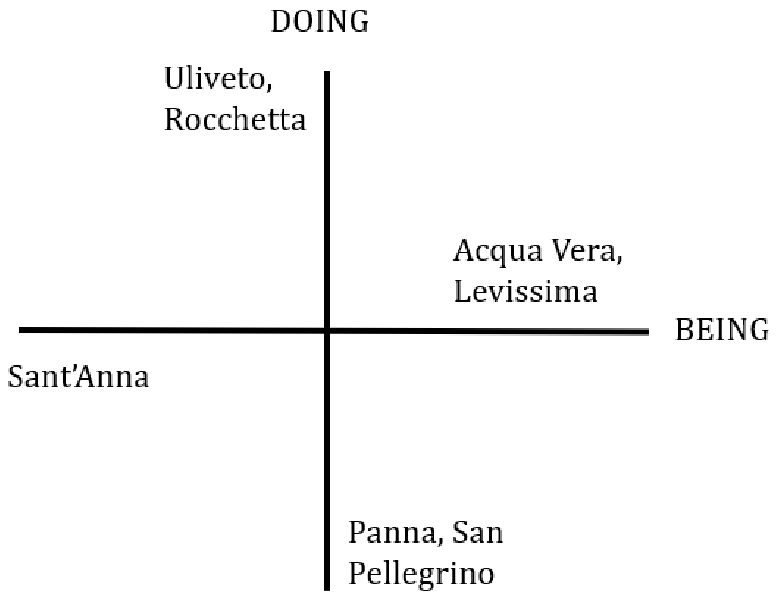


*Figure 35: Sant'Anna Positioning*

From this analysis, it was possible to understand that the problem of the Bio-Bottle was linked to the association that consumers made to the term bio, understood by all as organic. Their communication confused consumers who could no longer associate Sant'Anna with the excellence and quality values and with the brand positioning. The solution adopted was to change the communicative method, informing the consumer of the benefits of this new type of bottle on the water contained.

Once the analyses are ready, it is possible to define the strategies that are more in line with the Brand Essence and the Brand Promise to differentiate and be present in the perception of consumers. Of these, mention should be made of:

- co-branding, the collaboration of multiple brands in the marketing of a particular product. It is based on the belief that the characteristics of each brand can be merged and consumer loyalty can be extended. In the perspective of the individual brand, it can also be read as an extension strategy;
- ingredient branding, a form of brand alliance based on collaboration for the design and delivery of the product, with particular emphasis on the ability to recognize and identify the components used in the final product. Ingredient branding occurs when a component or service of the end product is promoted to the end-user;
- the extension of the brand, bringing an existing brand into a new product category. The benefits are a better brand image, a reduction in the risks perceived by the

consumer, an increase in the probability of distribution, and greater efficiency in promotional costs. The disadvantages, however, are the risk of confusion, the strength of the retailer, the cannibalization of sales, and the weakening of the meaning of the brand;

- employer branding, the enhancement of culture and organizational philosophies, the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the company, as a distinctive element concerning the market;
- rebranding, the re-presentation in the market of a product or service with a different identity or with a "restructured" identity on a visual level to renew its image. It can be revolutionary, in the event of changes in distinctive signs such as the logo, the name, image management, marketing, and sales strategies, the advertising policies it adopts, or evolutionary, in the event of minor changes.

At this point, the core values of the brand are defined, and also the positioning strategy. The last step is to understand how all this information is communicated to all the people that are outside the company.

### 3.2.4 Brand Design

The last level of the pyramid is linked to the most concrete aspect of a brand: brand design. The most operational level corresponds to the business model and the artifacts and it is translated into the concrete communication activities of the company, in the products and actions that the brand undertakes. Brand consistency must be maintained at every level and in every aspect. The link with the organizational identity and culture is here just as strong as that with the context: both the internal front and the external one are precious basins of contents to be selected, reformulated, and transmitted, intercepting what may be relevant for the customers. In this process, it is necessary to consider adequately the sources of noise that can hinder communication.

First of all, it is important to analyze the communication process. It starts with the sender (the company) who develops a message. The message is characterized by well-defined concepts and words that express what the company wants to communicate. Once the content has been defined, a form of communication and then the channels should be chosen. Depending on the choice made, consumers (the target) will be reached by the message and will decode it according to their knowledge. Once the message has been received, the receiver gives feedback, relative to what has been understood of the message. Effective communication has a huge reduction of discrepancy between the communicated message and the received one.

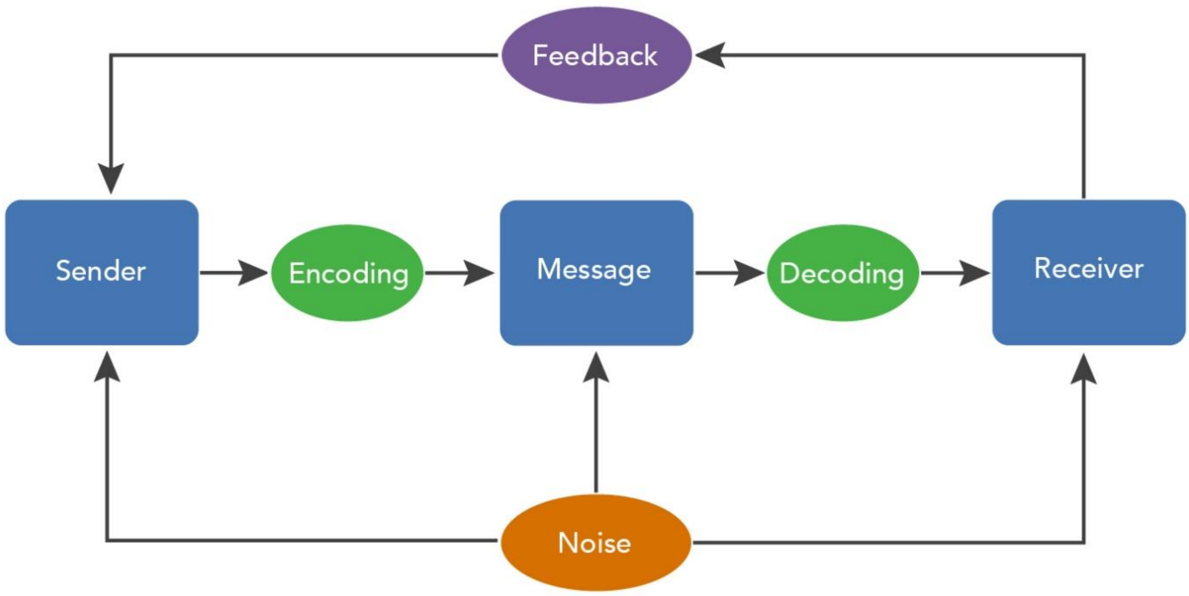


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*Figure 36: communication process*

The most important step is the one of encoding because the brand needs to select the right content and develop the clearest way to share it with the audience. In this phase, the content is influenced by the key elements of the company and of the brand. The message will be the result of the elements analyzed in the previous steps. The organizational culture analysis will provide the founding myth (history, tradition, inheritance, etc.), the basic assumptions (fundamental attributes of the organization), the orientation (philosophy, business policies, etc.), and the artifacts (locations, benefits, shared practices, etc.). The identity analysis will provide the keywords of the mission, the relationship with the suppliers, the valorization of the resources (human and not), the valorization of the processes (to es. certifications), the products (scopes, tangible and intangible attributes, uses), the relationships with the customers (brand-customer relationship), the proposal of value (corporate or of product, symbolic dimension, etc.), and the society (engagement in firsthand, participation on topics of actuality, etc.). Brand

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[5] Donnelly, M. (2020), Communication Is Complex: How The Feedback Loop Changes The Game, https://www.fwdcollective.io/news/feedback

identity analysis offers the motto and the strategic choices of interest for stakeholders (co-branding, rebranding, etc.), and the brand image offers answers to the feedback of users, and answers to the competition.

To help choose the content to be conveyed according to brand values and brand identity can be used a matrix. The scheme provides a certain dynamism so that even content in doubt could be promoted to elements to be communicated if their form makes up for the lack of one of the missing traits. If an element for example is not connected to the identity but respects the other two characteristics must be examined very carefully: the effort to make it proper of the brand could be greater than the advantage that could be derived from it.

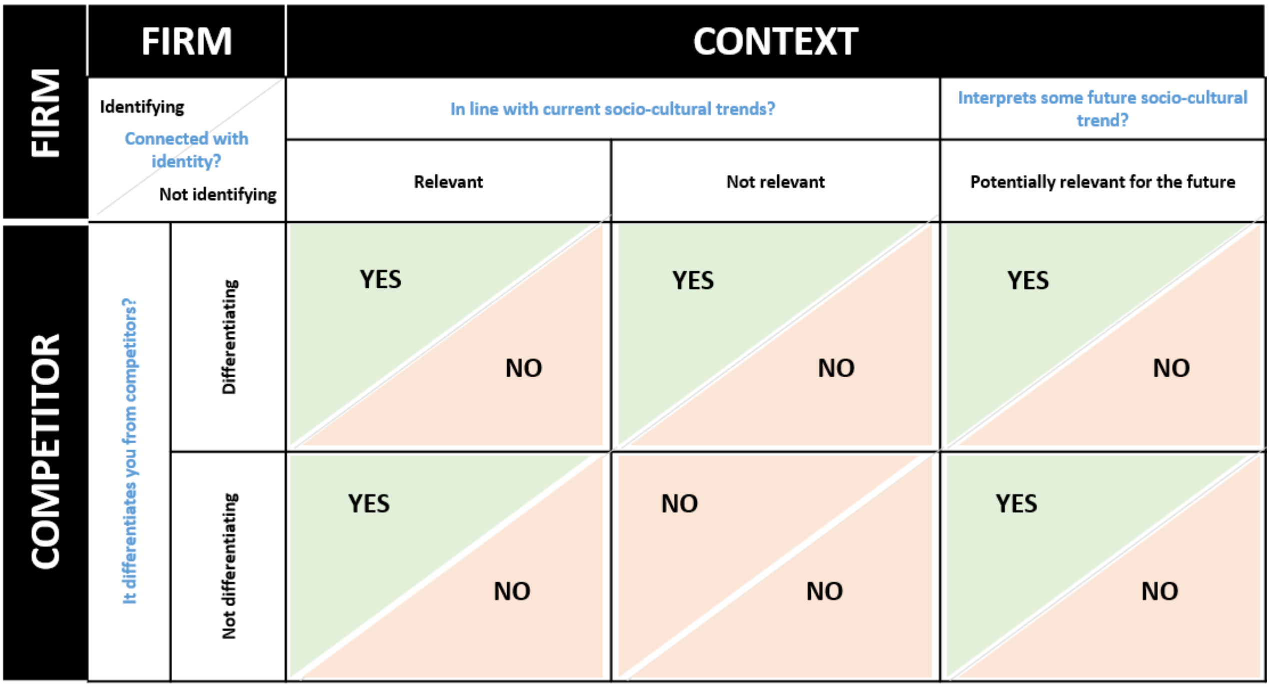
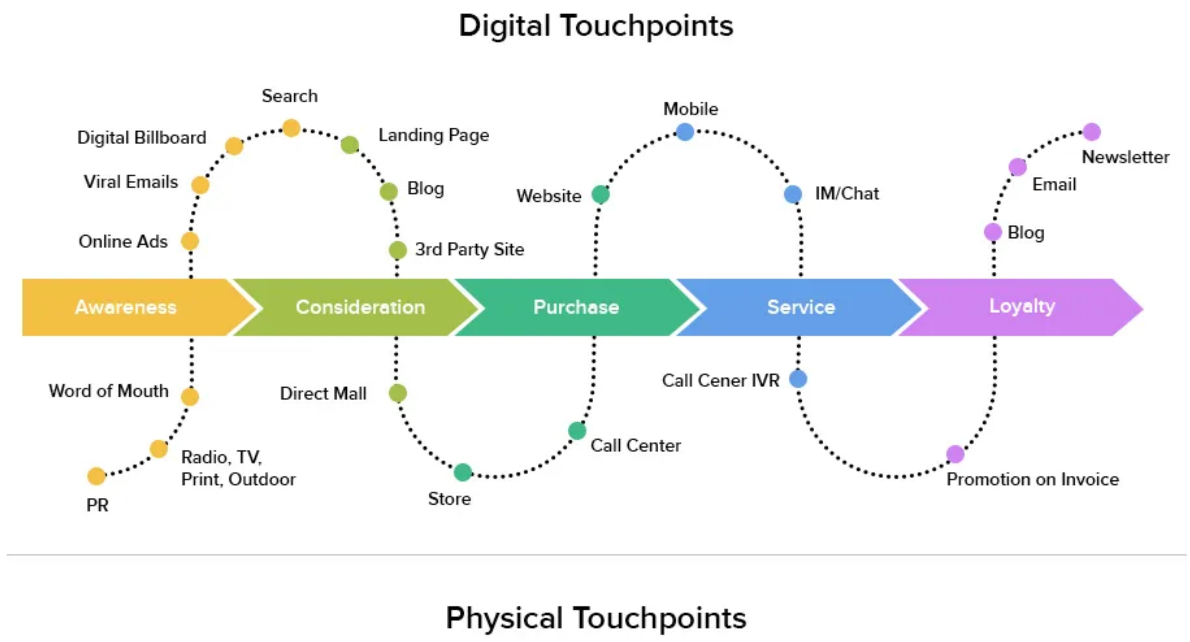



*Figure 37: content matrix*

Once the message is structured, the choice of channels will be a crucial step to achieve effective and direct communication to the right target. Indeed, many online and offline touchpoints allow communicating the same message differently based on the customer journey and the choice must be made with care.




[6]

*Figure 38: touchpoints*

Once the message has been communicated and the feedback provided by the recipients analyzed, the brand analysis is concluded. The next step is to analyze the elements external to a brand and their influence but to do this other methods and approaches need to be followed. For example, focus groups, sampling of the population, and sentiment analysis.

To sum up, the brand must be considered as a dynamic element composed of different facets, some more concrete and others more abstract. First of all, the archetype that inspires and guides the brand needs to be understood. Then the brand promise must be analyzed, composed of motto and personality, to understand the core values. The next step is the analysis of the positioning concerning the target, the competitors, and the reference market. Finally, the construction of a good communicative method that clearly and directly reaches the external context allows the brand to be known and understood.

When all these elements are aligned and follow a single clear direction, the brand succeeds. Through the analysis presented, it is possible to understand at which points any discrepancies exist to improve them. The ultimate goal is to structure a solid brand, well

[6] The traffic company (2020), *Touch-Point Marketing Explained*, https://thetrafficcompany.net/blog/what-is-touch-point-marketing

connected with corporate identity and culture. In agreement with Aaker, a brand is solid when it can stand out and capture the attention of the target. The three main characteristics are the ability to be identity, differentiating, and relevant. These characteristics are obtained by following the model presented: identity through the brand promise, differentiating through the brand positioning, and relevant through the brand design.

# Chapter 4: An example

At this point, an example to make clearer the application of the model presented so far will be shown. For this analysis, I had access to non-public and unpublishable materials about the company's strategy and for this reason, I cannot name the company I will use as an example. Having clear these premises, I chose to test the model not starting from an analysis of the communication and public data of the company going back to the pyramid, but rather to start from private information on the corporate identity to build the ideal brand to associate with this company thanks to the model. In the end, I will compare the ideal result with what is the reality of the current brand. The aim will be to understand if the proposed model can provide more value to the brand.

## 4.1 Company introduction

For more than 50 years, the company has been one of the main players in the production of synthetic fibers, especially those made of polyamide 6. The company is a point of reference for quality, innovation, and new models of sustainable development. A strategic choice that is realized through the constant renewal of processes and products, thanks to continuous investments of capital and know-how. The group is present, with over 2,600 employees and 19 plants, in three continents and eight countries. It operates through 2 product areas: carpet thread - BCF (Bulk Continuous Filament) - synthetic carpet thread used in the contract, automotive and residential sectors, and clothing thread - NTF (Nylon Textile Filaments) - synthetic threads for the clothing and sports sectors. The company has constantly expanded its leadership in the sector thanks to the following factors: its acquisition and investment policy and the creation of new companies and production facilities internationally, its 3 dedicated divisions - BCF, NTF, and Energy & Recycling - which support the Group's growth in all sectors in a diversified market, and a central division responsible for the strategic management, coordination, and control of the group's growth policies. The company's values are:

- Recognizing the needs of all those who contribute to achieving their objectives: employees, suppliers, and local communities;
- Strengthening the international presence with a focus on the emerging countries;
- Establishing new market standards through research and innovation;
- Play a key role in the development of new sustainable models to defend the future of future generations.

The business model of the company can be defined as 'hybrid', as it has both linear and circular characteristics. Linear options are given by the production and sale of some traditional products. The circular option is instead given by the production of an innovative material, through a regeneration process from waste. This product is also the strength of the company for the issue of sustainability. The company is one of the leaders in its b2b sector, with a focus on the circular economy, but they are evaluating to move to the b2c market thanks to the new innovative and sustainable product. Although it is geared towards change, it still appears to have directional structures focused on tradition. Moreover, there is little clear communication of values internally, therefore lacking an alignment between culture and identity.

## 4.2 Model application

At this point, based on information provided to me, I begin to define the brand essence, the brand promise, the brand positioning, and the brand design.

As for the brand essence, it is necessary to analyze the values, the mission, and the corporate culture to understand which archetype is best suited to the brand. In this example, it is possible to associate to the brand the archetype of the warrior. The Jungian archetype of the warrior represents the normative parent. He is brave, intact, strong. Able to set goals for oneself and others and reach them. He tends to be a leader to make the world better. Its Shadow is the competition, the desire to appear a superhero. For him, everything is a challenge, and he is constantly defending himself from external threats. The brand can be inspired by the warrior characteristics: brave, strong, intact, and always ready to make the world better. Comparing this to the company, even if the business model is focused on the circular economy, providing innovative products that are changing the world, there is less identification in the warrior and less solid and shared values. The company is too much linked to traditions, and this prevents them from excelling completely in what they do, remaining in a continuous tension between what it is and what it wants to become.

Thanks to the identification of the archetype I can analyze the brand promise: the core values of the brand that are in line with its identity. As I explained in the previous chapter, the tool that supports this analysis is the semiotic square, which must be built on the values shown by the archetype. In this case, the semiotic square I'm going to structure will be based on the concepts of struggle/war and balance since the warrior has as fundamental values the fight and change.

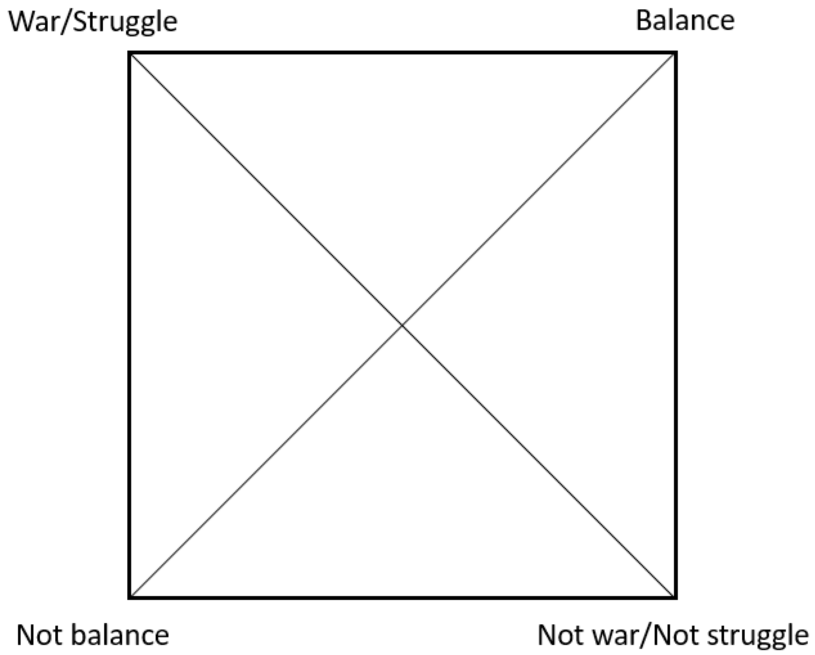



*Figure 39: Semiotic Square of the reference brand*

Looking at the semiotic square, the two values that are positioned as contrary are the struggle and the balance. These two values are part of the warrior in equal measure because although war/struggle is the means that the archetype uses to create change, balance is the condition to which it aspires as the result. Thanks to the semiotic square it is possible to understand what the narrative of the brand is: an initial struggle that leads to a maturation that will lead to balance.

Finding the brand in a position of rebellion from what has been the tradition, in such a high-tech and high-quality sector, it will have to undertake a communication based on the challenge, involving also the clients and the stakeholders, to create a new way of communicating the sustainable production. Thanks to this approach, it will have the possibility to differentiate itself from the competitors and to emerge in the reference market. However, it is essential that the brand does not forget its purpose, otherwise it risks getting lost in the shadows, and in all that is not-balance, struggling for its own sake or chaos. At this point, having clarified the fundamental values and having understood what is the path that the brand must follow to succeed, it will be fundamental to structure a motto and personality, to communicate to the external environment and their employees the path they want to take. A motto that can be associated with this brand, based on the semiotic square is endless possibilities. With two simple and direct words, it is possible to summarize the brand promise: create endless new possibilities with a sustainable and recyclable product. This concept can be expanded thanks to the personality, which in this case could be 'create endless possibilities for a revolutionary future.' In this way, it will be possible to communicate the brand promise to employees and to those who want to understand the aspirations of the brand. It will become even more evident that the direction of the brand will be that of the warrior within the market of innovative textile products. Comparing the brand promise defined by the model with that of the current brand, it is possible to notice a less clear and defined transmission of the values of change. The company today has not yet clear what direction to take, but it is starting to assess possible avenues. The real situation of the brand is therefore still at a defining stage and the model could provide great support in this process.

When this phase is completed, it is possible to proceed to a more practical analysis, which consists in understanding the brand architecture, its target audience, its life cycle, and the structure of the reference market. These brand positioning activities are conducted regularly by companies to understand their performance and comparison with competitors. Being the company a B2B, their direct target is made of other companies that deal with using yarns for their products. Tendentially the target audience are fashion houses, interior design companies, or those who produce garments that require specific performance such as the sports sector. The brand's architecture is hybrid, the main brand is associated with more traditional and historical products, while a new brand has been created for innovative products related to sustainability and the circular economy. Regarding the life cycle, two different situations are depending on the type of product. Traditional products are well established in the market and are in a state of maturity due to their high quality and reliability. On the contrary, the brand linked to sustainable products is growing: it has yet to establish itself on the market and has yet to be known and appreciated by many customers. Thanks to the evolution of the new sustainable brand, it will be possible for the company to move the target audience also towards B2C. Thanks to an ingredient branding strategy, it would be possible to make the sustainable brand known to increase its knowledge in the market. Moreover, it would be possible to gain more credibility to be a competitive brand with greater bargaining power. Although this strategy takes time, I think this period is very conducive to strategies to strengthen sustainable brands. Today, the public is ready to discover innovative, sustainable, and highly recyclable brands through the circular economy.

Finally, it is possible to work on the communication process through the type of message communicated and the channels through which to convey it. At this final stage, there is contact with the image and everything that the company can not control. To prevent the brand from detaching from the image, it is necessary to carefully conduct all previous analyses. At the brand design level, the brand focuses on two types of communication: one aimed at direct customers and one towards a wider audience to make their innovations known. The communication aimed at the target is focused on showing the benefits of the products at the level of quality and yield. It is often conveyed through industry events, sector newspapers, and collaborations with major industry leaders. On the contrary, concerning the sustainable brand, the communication aims to make the product known through social pages, speeches during conferences, and collaborations with influencers and brands known to the public. This type of communication aims to attract new customers who are sustainability experts but also to show how a new approach to circular production is possible, showing how the brand can be an inspiration.

As far as current business activities are concerned, communication in the B2B sector is correct and well structured. For the communication of the new brand towards the B2C sector, correct strategies have not yet been activated. Since the goal is to make known the credibility of the brand to a wide audience, it is necessary to correctly select all the communication steps to avoid greenwashing and devaluing the brand. First, we need to get the message conveyed to influencers with a solid credibility and then structure a rebellious communication, in line with the archetype of the warrior. A brand to be inspired by is Patagonia, considered by all as a leader in sustainability, yet in their communication, the word sustainable is never used because as much as a brand strives to minimize waste and pollution, a company that has profits will never be 100% sustainable. A communication that is based on truth will have a revolutionary impact and will attract an audience that seeks high-quality products. Indeed, sometimes the simple statement of truth can be considered a revolution in the world of marketing.

The company reality currently insists on the communication of sustainability and circular economics less clearly and directly than would be necessary. The new sustainable brand has independent communication compared to that of the company and its core business, so much so that the product brand is better known than the corporate brand.

In conclusion, although the communication path taken is correct and truthful, there is a lack of unification between products and corporate brands dispersing the added value that a union could bring to the entire company. Thanks to the use of the proposed model, I demonstrated how it would be possible to transform the corporate brand to make it strong and durable over time, attracting a greater engagement of the community.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to create a model that could demonstrate how a brand cannot be considered a static element, but rather is dynamic, composed of many facets. To better understand its characteristics, it is essential to study the identity and corporate culture, the values, and the relationship that exists between these two aspects. Once this phase is clear, it is possible to start talking about brands. The brand is positioned in an intermediate condition between identity (internal element of the company) and image (external element of the company). If the analysis and structure of the brand have been carried out correctly, it is possible to reduce the distance between what the company communicates and what the external environment perceives. I think, therefore, that this analysis is a fundamental approach for every company: to help this process I developed a pyramid-shaped model that, starting from the most abstract elements, allows the definition of brands in all its facets. The analysis starts from the brand essence, the archetype that inspires the brand, passes through the brand promise that is identified through the semiotic square and arrives at the concrete analysis of the market, competitors, target, and communicative method. When all this is done in detail, the company can understand the lights and shadows related to the brand, to create a true and correct narrative capable of involving the target and transforming the brand into an identity element, differentiating and relevant. I hope that this research can be of help to companies that want to ask themselves about their identity and their brand, to better understand who they are, what they want to achieve, and what path to follow.

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