



**CATÓLICA**  
UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA | PORTO  
Faculdade de Economia e Gestão

**DOCUMENTOS DE TRABALHO**

**WORKING PAPERS**

**GESTÃO**

**MANAGEMENT**

Nº 11/2009

**A BRAND TRIANGLE MODEL TO AVOID BRANDING  
MYOPIA**

**Paulo Lencastre**

**Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Porto)**

**Ana Côrte-Real**

**Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Porto)**

## **A BRAND TRIANGLE MODEL TO AVOID BRANDING MYOPIA**

Paulo Lencastre<sup>1</sup>  
Ana Côrte-Real<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This article takes the metaphor of myopia to explain the most limited vision of brand, understood as the identifying sign of a product. As brand is a sign, we turn to semiotics, the science of signs, in order to apply a model which broadens the concept of brand to three dimensions: that of the identity sign itself, that of the object the sign refers to and that of the response of the market to the sign.

### **Keywords**

Branding Semiotics, Brand Identity, Brand Marketing, Brand Response

---

<sup>1</sup> is Professor of Marketing at the Catholic University in Portugal. [plencastre@porto.ucp.pt](mailto:plencastre@porto.ucp.pt)

<sup>2</sup> is Professor of Marketing at the Catholic University in Portugal. [acortereal@porto.ucp.pt](mailto:acortereal@porto.ucp.pt)

## Introduction

Until the end of the 1980's, discussion of branding was merely an accessory to the literature of marketing, and it was only from the 90's (Low & Fullerton, 1994) onwards that it really became a central concept. Nowadays, there is a more than plentiful supply of books and articles about brand, but its incorporation into the conceptual structure of marketing has still been consolidated (Stern, 2006; Louro & Cunha, 2001).

By examining the conceptual framework of modern marketing (Fullerton, 1998), and based on Levitt's seminal work "Marketing Myopia" (Levitt, 1988), the aim of this article is to see how branding has been incorporated into marketing, and based on this analysis, to propose a model of brand which will contribute to the organisation of the concept and its real integration into this field of study.

## Branding Myopia

Let us take the case of Europe. In a European Union country, until very recently the legal definition of brand could have read something like this: "a sign or group of nominative, figurative or emblematic signs, which when applied in any way to a product or its packaging, cause it to be distinguishable from other identical or similar products" – example from Portugal, Industrial Property Law (Rocha, 1991).

In 1994, the European Union finally regulated the laws concerning brands, creating a law common to all member states. The definition of brand which was adopted was as follows: "any signs capable of being represented graphically, particularly words, including personal names, designs, letters, numerals, the shape of goods or of their packaging, provided that such signs are capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one undertaking from those of other undertakings" (European Union, 1994).

In this evolution of the legal definition there is a clear move from a vision of brand as an identifying sign of a single, tangible product – if it were not tangible it would not be possible to impose on it the sign of the brand – to a broader view of brand as the identifying sign of an offer - or of offers - of products and services.

It is undoubtedly true to say that in the field of marketing the vision of brand has never been as myopic as the early juridical definitions. Let us take as an example the most widely known definition of brand, proposed in 1960 by The American Marketing Association, which can still be found in the majority of text books on marketing "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Alexander, 1960).

It is curious to note that the 1988 alterations to the definition, which have remained in place until today, were more concerned with the idea of brand as a sign, yet paradoxically still emphasised the juridical tradition of brand as a label, associating it not to a plural offer but to a specific product: "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (Benett, 1988, 1995).

In an attempt to systematise the subject we will distinguish three forms of branding myopia: the first, most rudimentary form is looking at brand as the identifying label of a product (label branding myopia); the next, which is typical in the literature of marketing, is associating brand to a specific offer (product branding myopia); and

finally, the one which prevails in most of the literature on branding, which is considering brand as the difference perceived by clients (customer branding myopia).

### *Label Branding Myopia*

The concept of brand, applicable not only to products as the early brand laws stipulated, but also to services, corrects the earlier and most rudimentary type of brand myopia. For reasons of simplicity, let us call it label myopia. With it, branding was limited to the creation and management of graphic signs on the tangible product in order to clearly distinguish it from other similar products of competitors.

In the act of creating identity, label myopia means giving the new product or activity a name which is highly evocative of its technical characteristics (e.g. Coca-Cola: on the label the chemist wrote what the product contained: coca leaf and cola nut) and a very nicely written logotype (at the time, the accountant was the one with best handwriting!)

### *Product Branding Myopia*

However, the traditional definition of brand in the text books on marketing did not eradicate another type of myopia, which - in order to distinguish it from the previously mentioned type - we will call product myopia. Whether it concerns a product or a service, product myopia sees the label as part of the product, as one of the variables of the classic marketing mix (Kotler, 1967).

It should be remembered that the concept of product in marketing was revolutionised by Levitt (1988), inspired by the metaphor of myopia that we have applied here to branding. At that time, branding already appeared as the possibility of products having a symbolic dimension, in contrast to their manufactured condition (Gradner, 1955; Levy, 1959). After Levitt (1988), the product came to be seen first and foremost as what it represented in the way of a benefit, and only after that, as its tangible form in the technology which supported it; – let us not sell drills, let us sell holes! The technology goes but the benefits remain.

The enormity of product branding myopia is similar. The product goes, the brand remains. It is highly limiting to associate brand to a specific product and its life cycle, even if we do have a symbolic vision of the product – let us not forget Volkswagen and its founding product, the Beetle. Product branding myopia means that every time we create a new product we must give it a new identity. It is as if when Volkswagen wanted to offer a wider range of cars they believed that their name (people's car) was not suitable to identify and symbolise their aspirations to produce top of the range vehicles.

This concern to preserve an intangible asset long term - so important in the development of loyalty in buying behaviour (Webster, 1965; Morrisson, 1966; Frank, 1967)- led the seminal authors in the area of branding, such as Aaker (1970, 1972), to focus on the modelling of components and the measurement of brand equity ; and later Keller (1990) with his research on brand extension, i.e. the circumstances in which the value of the brand may be extrapolated from one to many products. The advent of modern branding arose in this way to correct product myopia.

### *Customer Branding Myopia*

And finally there is a third type of myopia, still dominant today in the main text books on branding (Keller, 2008), which we will call customer myopia. It has to do with

looking at brand from the perspective of seller versus customer, forgetting that the activity of the brand is not restricted to products and clients but to the plurality of relational exchanges between the organisation and its stakeholders (Balmer & Gray, 2003), starting with the most internal ones, the employees (Chernatony, 2001). And then, being aware that ultimately the life of a brand is consolidated in a network of relational exchanges carried out in its name by different actors.

When the aim of branding is not only products on sale but also all exchanges made by different stakeholders, we have a broader, less myopic vision of brand, a healthier one.

It is important to realise that rectifying customer branding myopia entails much more than looking at the brand as a distinguishing sign of the organisation, or worse still, as its graphic label. This would mean correcting one type of myopia and suffering from the other two types, being guilty of the grave error of limiting brand to the creative management of its visual identity, totally disconnected from the history and context of the brand. It is not the organisation which has a brand, but the brand which at all times has a company which supports it.

Brands such as Coca-Cola (medicine with cocaine!) or Volkswagen (Hitler's war vehicle) would have felt strong negative effects of customer branding myopia if at the moment of change in their history, they had decided to alter their identity because it was imperative to change their clients perception of them. It would have been a curious exercise in classical marketing, but most probably they would not now be in the league of honour in which they gained their place during the 20th century.

By considering branding from the point of view of semiotics, we are trying to find a descriptive model which represents a holistic vision, where brand is not just a label, not just a product or an organisation, not just its clients or stakeholders, but rather, the interaction of all of these. Like any sign, it creates a complex network of relations among its constituent components. This can be simplified if it is analysed in the light of the well-proven theory of signs.

## **Brand Semiotics**

Throughout its development, there have been two main approaches to the understanding and researching of semiotics:

- The Saussurean school – from the Swiss linguist Saussure (1857-1913) – who created the theoretical basis for a science of signs. For Saussure, semiotics was an extension of linguistics, since language is a system of signs which express ideas. Any sign, linguistic or otherwise, is thus a dyadic entity, composed of the signifier – the form of the sign, its expression – and by the signified - its content (Saussure, 1915-1966);
- The Peircean school – from the American philosopher Peirce (1839-1914) – who developed a positivist concept of the sign, looking at it from the perspective of its link to the real world. For Peirce, the sign is a triadic entity, including as the third term a referent to the real world, which allows the establishment of a relationship between the signifier and the signified (Peirce, 1931-1958).

The application of semiotics to marketing – which dates back to the 80's (Mick, 1986) - has also been divided between these two approaches. We are of the opinion

that they are not mutually exclusive. In the case of branding, if we wished to analyse it merely as the sign itself, (a name, a logotype), divorced from the product and marketing underlying it, we would opt for a dyadic approach. This is what happens when we analyse the signifying competence of signs used as brands (Floch, 2001). If, as now, we are aiming at a broader notion of the concept of brand, which includes three aspects, that of the identifying sign, that of the object of marketing that the sign refers to and that of its interpretation by its public, we would opt for a triadic approach (Perez, 2004).

In the Peircean triadic approach, a sign is anything which stands in the place of anything, in order to be interpreted by someone. It is a relationship between three elements which Peirce calls: (1) the “representamen” (the sign, in the narrow sense of the word) (2) the “object” the sign refers to and (3) the “interpretant”, which is the effect the sign has on the mind of the receptor.

In this application of Peircean principles of semiotics to branding, we will attempt not to stray from the triadic categorisation, which in its purest and most universal form distinguishes between “firstness” (pure qualities, before any spatial or temporal interpretation) “secondness” (actualised qualities of a given object or happening) and “thirdness” (continuing interpretations in space and time of the relations between the qualities and the objects). Thus:

- At the level of the sign (firstness) we can distinguish between “qualisign” (a quality which is a sign: e.g. the abstract sound of the word Bic), “sinsign” (an object which is a sign: the presence of a ballpoint pen and a huge circle in the composition of the mascot of the logotype of Bic) and “legisign” (a convention which is a sign: the name or the logotype of Bic);
- At the level of the relationship between the sign and the object (secondness) it is important to consider the distinction between the immediate object (the part of the object which is present in the sign) the dynamic object (the part of the object which is exterior to the sign) in order to understand that the sign in relation to the object (dynamic) may be an “icon” (relationship of similarity: the pen and the circle), an “index” (relationship of connection: the mascot which writes), and a “symbol” (conventional relationship: the word Bic);
- The relationship between the sign and the interpretant (thirdness) can be seen as immediate (sensorial virtuality), dynamic, (realised in successive experiments) and final (the ideal limit of knowledge of all possible relationships); these distinctions lead us to consider that in its relationship with the interpretant (dynamic) the sign may be a “rema” (an actualised sensorial virtuality : the auditory and visual impressions caused by the word Bic) a “dicent” (its presence in successive experiences: Bic pens, lighters, razors, perfumes...writing, light, shave, perfume, all disposable) and an “argument” (rationalisation of happenings in space and time: incessant search for all the possible interpretations that the brand Bic may lead to in the furthest fields of ethics, and contemporary and future aesthetics); at the level of the interpretant (dynamic) it is also possible to distinguish more emotional aspects (for example the aesthetic aspect of the brand), functional aspects (for example the utilitarian aspect of the brand) or logical, rationalising behaviours and habits (for example the ethical aspect of the brand).

The ultimate dimension of a brand is always as a conventional sign, a legisign, giving rise to a symbolic relationship with its object, and an argumental relationship with its interpretant. It is this potential sign of the brand which we will attempt to turn into a triadic model in which the hermetic terminology of semiotics gives way to the more familiar language of marketing.

The advantage of a triadic vision in correcting branding myopia is that it allows us to locate not only the most obvious type of myopia but also the two other types, which are more dangerous because they are less frequently denounced, either in the practice or the literature of branding. Product branding myopia is myopia of the object, and customer branding myopia is myopia of the interpretant. As the elements of a sign are interrelated, to consider one is to consider the others – to see the object of a brand as a specific product is quite possibly to consider the typical consumer of this product its only interpretant.

## **Brand Model**

Based on the triadic concept of sign, and integrating in it the different areas that the practice of branding covers today, it is possible to conceive a model of branding which is founded on three basic pillars:

- The pillar of identity, which includes the sign or group of signs which identify the brand – as understood in the juridical definition – and the brands that are associated to it.
- The pillar of the object, which includes the different offers of the brand together with the organisation and the marketing which support them;
- The pillar of the market, which includes the target publics and their different responses to the brand.

### *The Pillar of Identity: Identity Mix and Brand Mix*

A brand, in the narrowest legal sense of the term, is a name expressed graphically, orthography. Other signs may be associated to the registered name which may warrant legal protection, for example, the logotype, understood as the visual identity associated to the name, or a slogan, a label, packaging, a character, a sound. All of these identity signs together constitute the juridical identity and we shall call this the “identity mix” of the brand.

The concept of identity mix was first used by Olins (1989), not to designate the identity signs of the brand in the strictest meaning of the term, but to refer to four aspects of the management of its corporate identity, which originally (Pilditch, 1970) had a very visible dimension: the installations, the products, the (graphic) communication, and the people. Designers were careful to escape from label branding myopia, or the consideration of a brand as merely the name and the logotype of a product, disconnected from all the other contents of the brand. This concern to take identity beyond the signs that in the eyes of the law are, or could be, considered the brand, has meant that the literature has successively broadened the concept of corporate identity (Riel & Balmer,

1997; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006) to mean the intangible dimension of the actual mission, values, and culture of the organisation, which may sometimes be confused with the perception the most internal publics have of the brand (Simões & Fisk, 2005).

Aware of the other semiotic pillars of brand (Christensen & Askegaard, 2001), we have chosen to reserve this first pillar for the most common meaning of brand identity, for the practical reason of defining the limits of competence and involvement of the specialists in design who are normally responsible for its development (Mollerup, 1997).

Thus, we have attempted to identify three levels of identity mix:

- core identity, or the sign that the brand represents first and which is normally (at least chronologically) the name (e.g. Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Nike, the Red Cross...);
- actual identity, or the graphic expression or expressions, of the name of the brand which have been or can be registered, namely its style(s) of lettering, and its logotype(s) (e.g. the name and logotype Red Cross changed to Red Crescent in Muslim countries); with regard to the brand name we can distinguish between the name in the narrow sense of the word, which is the identifying element par excellence (e.g. Coca and Pepsi, Chanel and Dior), to the kind of thing or product associated to the name, which includes to some extent the brand object (type of product, location of organisation ... e.g. Cola, Paris); with regard to the logotype we should distinguish the lettering (in the strictest sense of logotype, the written part: e.g. the wavy lettering of Coca-Cola, the N covering the other letters in Nestlé), the drawing (any drawing which accompanies the lettering: e.g. the nest in Nestlé) the coloring (chromatic code/choice of colours of the logotype: e.g. red and white for Coca-Cola);
- the broader identity, or all other identifying signs of the brand which can be protected by law (a slogan such as “Just do it”, a bottle with a different shape, a character such as the Ronald McDonald clown, a sound such as the call of the Famous Grouse...) together with the way in which the brand regulates its use (manual of corporate identity).

“Brand mix” is a term we will use to refer to brands that are in any way associated when the organisation creates more than one brand, or brands that are associated to the brand in cobranding.

Brand mix is no longer single when at the level of identity a total or partial variation of the original name can be detected ( and not just the general name: eg. Nescafé and Nescau instead of Nestlé Café and Nestlé Cocoa) and/or the logotype ( with regard to lettering, drawing, and/or coloring: e.g. Nestlé’s different logotypes for dairy products and for chocolates) which refers to specific products and targets a specific public). On a continuum, we could make a distinction between monolithic structural identities – those of one brand only - and structures which are less or more differentiated, with less or more brands included, which are more or less dependent on the umbrella brand (Olins, 1989; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).



*The Pillar of the Object: Marketing Mix and Product Mix*

The brand object is first and foremost the physical or juridical undertaking which is holder of the brand name (of its identifying signs) at any given moment. Then, it is the way in which it is organised and extended into different products (here product is understood in its broad meaning as being a relationship of exchange proposed in its name to an individual and by extension to a market). And finally for each of these products it is the group of actions which favour its sales/exchange in its target markets.

Kotler modelled the action of marketing around four variables, the classic 4P's of marketing mix – product, price, place, promotion. And following on from Levitt, he corrected marketing myopia by presenting the variable product in three concentric circles, where the central one is core benefit or service. Then there is the actual product, where the benefit is made tangible through variables such as technology, the range of variations, the design, the quality, the packaging... and guilty of product branding myopia - the brand. The third level, which he calls enlarged product, corresponds to additional services which normally accompany the offer, with ramifications to other variables of marketing mix: he refers, for example, to delivery, installation, after sales service, which are all linked to the variable “place”; or terms and conditions of payment which are an integral part of the variable “price”.

Over the years, this model was enlarged upon, with the creation of other P's adapted to the specific marketing conditions. This is the case of services marketing (Kotler& Keller, 2006) and the development of its quality assessment (Bateson, 1979; Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988), where additional P's rightly appear, such as Process and particularly People given the importance of the means of action and whoever undertakes this action in making an intangible product tangible.

Marketing mix of a product can thus be presented in a series of concentric levels of marketing actions, built up around a central product, which is always a benefit, with the aim of making it tangible and placing it on the market.

Based on this historical view, and moving on to the triadic semiotic register which underlies this descriptive analysis of brand, we propose here to point out three levels of marketing mix:

- core product, or the part of the object which is presented in first place, which may be one of its installations, one of its products, or a benefit aimed at a specific target public ( normally the clients, which was Levitt's way of escaping marketing myopia) or a person, or a particular mission which covers all our offers (in order to correct branding myopia e.g. Volkswagen: strength; Bic: disposable);
- actual product corresponds to the activities which the brand is involved in, which in the literature of marketing is normally referred to as product , the first P of marketing mix (Volkswagen: cars; Bic: pens, lighters, razors...);
- enlarged product corresponds to all the actions which support the exchange of the brand, from the organisation, the processes, the people...the other P's of the marketing mix, which vary according to whether we are dealing with marketing of clients (Kotler's classic marketing of P's), suppliers, associates, shareholders... the management of the relationships with each target public has a specific marketing mix.

So all brands have a product mix for their actualised product, which corresponds to the group of exchange relationships they establish with each of their different publics. Normally, when we speak of brands with only one product (in contrast to brands with a number of products) it means that we are looking at the brand only from the perspective of the client ( a symptom of customer branding myopia) and we are not taking into consideration the exchange relationships that the brand has with other publics. What is in fact happening is that for each public the brand's product mix may be more or less extensive, depending on the number of offers the brand makes.

The natural (we could use the term anatomical) plurality of the product mix of any brand raises the question of the unity of its object, and the concern of some brands to concentrate on one mission, on one reason for their existence, on one agglutinating concept which is transformed into the common culture of the organisation (Seiders, Voss, Godfrey & Grewal, 2007; Kapferer, 1992). This may be expressed in very different ways in the brand's communication, from long speeches on values or condensed in one phrase or word. This differentiation itself and its perennial nature may be transformed into a sign of identity, which is the case of very distinctive and long-lasting slogans (Nike's "Just do it") are sometimes incorporated into the name of the brand (Benetton which became United Colors of Benetton) or even names and logos which are in themselves and from their beginnings evocative of the brand mission (Red Cross, the Christian charity in the bloody battlefields).

#### *The Pillar of the market: Response mix and Public mix*

To simplify, we can distinguish two aspects of the concept of interpretant: the interpreter and the interpretation. If we apply this to brand, the interpretant is the market – from its narrowest to its broadest sense – or in other words, the response (interpretation) that the brand receives from a particular individual, and by extension, from a particular public, understood as a physical or juridical group of people which have some relevance for the brand due to the exchange relationships they represent. Different publics (clients, personnel, shareholders, and suppliers..., the brand's public mix) will have different reactions to the brand because they all have different exchange relationships with the organisation, and thus have different expectations with regard to it.

It is also true that at the level of each individual and statistically at the level of the group, the concept of response has multiple meanings , including reactions which in the traditional language of marketing (and in a curious parallel with the functional, emotional and logical facets of Peirce's dynamic interpretant) are classified as cognitive, affective and conative (Hofsted, 1998; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). Keller (1993) applies this to the market, making a distinction between perceptions, preferences and behaviours. In his pioneering concept of brand equity, Aaker (1996) includes aspects ranging from awareness to the desired / so much sought after brand loyalty (Aaker, 1997; Oliver, 1999). These and other concepts, such as associations and image (Lambin, 2000), perceived quality (Keller, 1993), personality and reputation (Aaker, 1997), to name only the most traditional (Fombum, Gardberg & Sever, 2000) and most frequent in modern-day branding research (Martineau, 1959), are different responses to brand in the broadest meaning of the term.

In an attempt to conceptually organise this response pillar based on the triadic perspective which has guided us, we propose to make a distinction between the following levels in the response mix to brand:

- core response is the immediate response on the part of an individual when exposed to a brand sign; in market research, this would be the top of mind of brand associations, the most elementary response variable, which we could call brand positioning
- actual response is a more structured response the individual has to the brand, his/her discourse with regard to it, including the rival brands which appear associated to it because there are some points of similarity between them and the ways in which it is different from them; in market research, this is the field of qualitative study of brand associations, which we could call brand image.
- enlarged response corresponds to all the possible reactions that an individual could theoretically have because they are detectable, to a greater or lesser extent, at the level of actual response of people from the same brand public; in market research this is the area of quantitative market study, and it aims at output results such as share of mind, share of esteem, share of market, and even, at its limit, the quantification of brand equity

In all of the three levels we can distinguish cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions: a person's top of mind reaction may reveal a characteristic (even total unawareness), it may be a more or less favourable or unfavourable opinion or it may express an attitude of more or less acceptance or rejection in the affective relationship to the brand<sup>44</sup>; the same may be said of the analysis of his/her discourse and in the observations of his/her behaviour; it is also the traditional segmentation that is seen when the results of the qualitative phase are subject to quantitative analysis, using associations of the cognitive type (products: which brands of product X are you familiar with?) affective (qualities: which brands do you associate quality Y with?) or behavioural (effective relations: which brands do you purchase/supply/invest in/belong to) to assess a brand with regard to one particular individual and using statistics, with a particular population (Erden & Swart, 2004). And finally, by looking at the response to marketing mix (Park & Srinivason, 1994) actions, this means being able to establish the financial and accounting value of the brand for the companies which own them (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000).

### **The Brand Triangle**

Figure 1 (Brand Triangle) summarises what has been said using a straightforward model, using Peirce's triangle to illustrate his triadic concept of sign.

Although the model may be looked at in a number of ways, the semiologist's perspective is "to use signs to detect strategies (Floch, 2001)". And thus we propose that it may be used to analyse brand in three ways.

#### *Identity analysis*

Starting from the multitude of signs that the company uses, it is possible to see if one or more of them refers to specific products or specific publics, making it clear whether we are dealing with a single or plural corporate brand identity and the way in which it is structured (brand mix)

By grouping the identity signs of each brand (identity mix) it is possible to discover the name of the most immediate brand (core identity), the way in which it is expressed graphically (actual identity), the other signs associated to it and the ways in which they connect (enlarged identity).

### *Object Analysis*

For each brand, the second step is to establish what it presents as the main object of its activity (core product), how this object extends into multiple exchange relationships covered by the brand, defining, on one hand, how far it extends (product mix) and on the other its segmentation by publics and target segments within each public (public mix).

On closer analysis, in each exchange relationship it is possible to identify the actions of the offer which support it (marketing mix), differentiating between the actualisation of the brand object into a specific product (actual product) and all the actions which accompany it (enlarged product)

### *Market Analysis*

As the brand's target publics and segments (public mix) have been identified through looking at exchange relationships, we now turn our attention to the different types of response (response mix).

Response to brand is above all the top of mind association which defines its place in a person's mind and by extension in a public or target segment (core response). Then there are all the spontaneous associations detected in qualitative studies, which are quantified in surveys and expressed graphically in perceptual maps, obtaining an image of the brand in comparison to that of its competitors (actual response). And finally there are all the quantified cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to the brand arising from this image which, when gathered together in brand assessment models, establish the value of the brand (enlarged response).

## **Conclusions**

The proposed model is a descriptive model of brand. It purposely avoids prescription, and thus fits into the more recent historical-cultural approaches to brand, which in relational (Keller & Lehmann, 2006 and community (Fournier, 1998; Muniz & Guinn, 2001) logic remove branding from the rigid separation of sender versus receiver and from the idea of strict control of the former over the latter (McAlexander, 2002). With a balance between the conceptual inflexibility of semiotics and the simple, generalised terminology of the literature of marketing the aim of the model is to contribute to for an anatomy of branding, incorporating the various aspects of it which have been brought to light by research and practise

With regard to its application to management, first and foremost the model allows us to look at brand as a concept which brings together all the marketing actions of the organisation. And it demonstrates how limiting it is to consider a brand as simply one more tangible asset of the organisation, instead of looking at the organisation as a tangible asset of the brand. For this reason, regardless of his/her leadership and delegation style, the ultimate brand manager is by definition the CEO, the one with the most management power in his/her hands at all times, who counts on stakeholders of

various sorts (different exchange relationships with the organisation) to keep the brand alive (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006) . The CEO and his closest colleagues are stakeholders of the brand, with transitory power. Power vanishes, the organisation changes, but the brand remains. (One is led to wonder if some of the great dictators of the past and present suffered - or are currently suffering - from branding myopia!)

## References

Aaker, D.A. & Joachimsthaler, E. (2000) 'The Brand Relationship Spectrum: the Key to the Brand Architecture Challenge', *California Management Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 8-23.

Aaker, D.A. & Keller, K.L. (1990) 'Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 27-41.

Aaker, D.A. (1970) 'A New Method for Evaluating Stochastic Models of Brand Choice', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 300-306.

Aaker, D.A. (1972) 'A Measure of Brand Acceptance', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 160-167.

Aaker, D.A. (1991) *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name*, The Free Press, New York.

Aaker, D.A. (1996) 'Measuring Brand Equity Across Products and Markets', *California Management Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 102-120.

Aaker, J.L. (1997) 'Dimensions of Brand Personality', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp.347-356.

Alexander, R.S. (1960) *Marketing Definitions: a Glossary of Marketing Terms*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, p.8.

Ambler, T. & Barwise, P. (1998) 'The Trouble with Brand Valuation', *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 5, No. 5, pp. 367-377.

Balmer J.M.T. & Gray E.R. (2003) 'Corporate Brands: What Are They? What of Them?', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 37, No. 7-8, pp. 972-997.

Bateson, J.E.G. (1979) 'Why We Need Service Marketing', in Ferrell, O.C., Brown S.W. & Lamb C.W. (Eds.), *Conceptual and Theoretical Developments in Marketing*, American Marketing Association, Chicago.

Benett, P.D. (1988, 1995 2nd. ed.) *Marketing Definitions: a Glossary of Marketing Terms*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, p.18.

Chernatony, L. de (2001) 'A Model for Strategically Building Brands', *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 32-44.

Christensen, L.T. & Askegaard, S. (2001) 'Corporate Identity and Corporate Image Revisited: a Semiotic Perspective', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35, No. 3/4, pp. 292-308.

Erdem, T. & Swait, J. (2004) 'Brand Credibility, Brand Consideration, and Choice', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 191-198.

European Union (1994) 'Council Regulation (EC) N° 40/94 of 20 December 1993, on the Community Trade Mark', Article 4, *Official Journal*, Vol. L 011 (14.1.1994), pp. 1-36.

Floch, J.M. (2001) *Semiotics, Marketing and Communication: Beneath the Signs, the Strategies*, Palgrave, Houdmills.

Fombrun, C., Gardberg, N.A. & Sever J.M. (2000) 'The Reputation Quotient: a Multi-stakeholder Measure of Corporate Reputation', *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 241-255.

Fournier, S. (1998) 'Consumers and their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 343-373.

Frank, R.A. (1967) 'Is Brand Loyalty a Useful Basis for Marketing Segmentation?', *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 27-33.

Fullerton, R.A. (1988) 'How Modern is Modern Marketing? Marketing Evolution and the Myth of "Production Era"', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 108-125.

Gao, Y. & Bradley, F. (2007) 'Engendering a Market Orientation: Exploring the Invisible Role of Leaders' Personal Values', *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 15, No. 2-3, pp. 79-89.

Gardner, B.B., and Levy, S.J. (1955) 'The Product and the Brand', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 33-39.

Hofstede, G. (1998) 'Identifying Organizational Subcultures: an Empirical Approach', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 6, pp. 947-952.

Hollenbeck, C. R. & Zinkhan, G. M. (2006) 'Consumer Activism on the Internet: the Role of Anti-brand Communities', *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 479-485.

Kapferer, J.N. (1992) *Strategic Brand Management*, Koogan Page, London.

Keller, K.L. & Lehmann, D.R. (2006) 'Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities', *Marketing Science*, Vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 740-759.

Keller, K.L. (1993) 'Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 1-22.

Keller, K.L. (2008) *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. (2006) *Marketing Management*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River.

Kotler, P. (1967) *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, and Control*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

- Lambin, J.J. (2000) *Market-Driven Management: Strategic and Operational Marketing*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Lavidge, R.J. & Steiner, G.A. (1961) 'A Model for Predictive Measurements of Advertising Effectiveness', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 59-62.
- Lencastre, P. de (1997) 'L'Identification de la Marque, un Outil de Stratégie Marketing: le Nom, le Logotype et la Mémorisation' (Brand Identity, a Marketing Strategic Tool: the Name, the Logo and the Memory), Doctoral Dissertation, Université Catholique de Louvain.
- Lencastre, P. de (2007) 'A Marca: o Sinal, a Missão e a Imagem' (The Brand: the Sign, the Mission and the Image), in Lencastre, P. de (Ed.), *O Livro da Marca (The Brand Book)*, Dom Quixote, Lisboa.
- Levitt, T. (1960) 'Marketing Myopia', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 45-56.
- Levy, S.J. (1959) 'Symbols for Sale', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 117-119.
- Louro, M.J. & Cunha, P.V. (2001) 'Brand Management Paradigms', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 17, No. 7-8, pp. 849-875.
- Low, G.S. & Fullerton, R.A. (1994) 'Brands, Brand Management and the Brand Manager System: a Critical Historical Evaluation', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 173-190.
- Macdonald, E.K. & Sharp, B.M. (2000) 'Brand Awareness Effects on Consumer Decision Making for a Common, Repeat Purchase Product: a Replication', *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 48, pp. 5-15.
- Martineau, P. (1959) 'Sharper Focus for the Corporate Image', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp 49-58.
- McAlexander, J.H., Schouten, J.W., & Koenig, H. (2002) 'Building Brand Community', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 38-54.
- Melewar, T.C. & Karaosmanoglu, E. (2006) 'Seven Dimensions of Corporate Identity: a Categorisation from the Practicioners' Perspectives', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40, No. 7/8, pp. 846-869.
- Mick, D.G. (1986) 'Consumer Research and Semiotics: Exploring the Morphology of Signs, Symbols and Significance', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 196-213.
- Mollerup, P. (1997) *Marks of Excellence: the History and Taxonomy of Trademarks*, Phaidon Press, London.



Morrisson, D.G. (1966) 'Testing Brand-Switching Models', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 401-409.

Muñiz, A. & O'Guinn, T.C. (2001) 'Brand Communities', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 413-432.

Olins, W. (1989) *Corporate Identity: Making Business Strategy Visible through Design*, Thames and Hudson, London.

Oliver, R.L. (1999) 'Whence Consumer Loyalty', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63, Special Issue, pp. 33-44.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. & Berry L.L. (1988) 'SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Customer Perceptions of Service Quality', *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 12-40.

Park, C.S. & Srinivasan, V.A. (1994) 'Survey-Based Method for Measuring and Understanding Brand Equity and its Extendibility', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 31, No. 5, pp. 271-88.

Peirce, C.S. (1931-1958) *Collected Papers (1931-1958)*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Perez, C. (2004) 'Análise Semiótica das Expressividades da Marca' (Semiotic Analysis of Brand Expressions), Doctoral Dissertation, PUC-Pontifícia Universidade Católica, São Paulo.

Pilditch, J. (1970) *Communication by Design: a Study in Corporate Identity*, McGraw-Hill, London.

Pringle, H. & Gordon, W. (2001) *Brand Manners*, John Wiley, Chichester.

Riel, C.B.M. van & Balmer, J.M.T. (1997) 'Corporate Identity: the Concept, its Measurement and Management', *European Journal of Marketing* Vol. 31, No. 5, pp. 340-255.

Rocha, E. (1991) 'Aspectos Processuais do Registo das Marcas' (Precessual Aspects of Brands Registration), in *Seminário Marca: Aspectos Jurídico-Económicos (Brand Seminar: Law and Economic Aspects)*, IMPI, Lisboa, p. 8.

Saussure, F. de (1915-1966) *Cours de Linguistique Générale (Course in General Linguistics)*, trans. W. Baskin, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Seiders, K., Voss, G.B., Godfrey, A.L. & Grewal, D. (2007) 'SERVCON: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Service Convenience', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 144-156.

Simões, C., Dibb, S. & Fisk, R.P. (2005) 'Managing Corporate Identity: an Internal Perspective', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 153-168.

Stern, B.B. (2006) 'What Does Brand Mean? Historical-analysis Method Construct Definition', *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 216-223.

Webster, F.E. (1965) 'The Deal-Prone Consumer', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 186-189.

Yoo B., Donthu, N. & Lee S. (2000) 'An Examination of Selected Marketing Mix Elements and Brand Equity', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 195-211.

Figure 1: The Brand Triangle

