

## **From the brand identity to the brand personality : conceptual analysis**

## **De l'identité de la marque à la personnalité de la marque : une analyse conceptuelle**

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## Abstract

We are all faced every day, whether through advertising or simply through use, with a multitude of "brands" and different products. It is a phenomenon that has invaded us and is currently part of our lives. Many companies rely on their brand as their primary competitive advantage, and it serves as an excellent representation of intangible assets. The main danger that a researcher incurs when wanting to venture into the field of brands, is the lack of clarity and the multiplication of the concepts used. It is now common to hear about capital, identity, personality, sensitivity...of brands. For this purpose, we examine the purely marketing definitions of the brand and create a synthesis based on the two built: identity and personality in order to contribute to the understanding of the concept.

**Keywords: Marketing; brand; identity; personality; brand image.**

## Résumé

Nous sommes tous confrontés au quotidien, que ce soit par la publicité ou simplement par l'usage, à une multitude de marques et de produits différents, c'est un phénomène qui nous a envahis et fait actuellement partie de notre vie. La marque est un excellent exemple d'actifs incorporels et pour de nombreuses entreprises, c'est leur principal avantage concurrentiel. En effet, le principal danger qu'un chercheur court lorsqu'il veut s'aventurer dans le domaine des marques est le manque de clarté et la multiplication des concepts utilisés. Cet article a pour but d'explorer les concepts de base de la marque et de créer une synthèse qui nous aidera à mieux la comprendre. Nous allons donc d'abord nous concentrer sur les définitions purement marketing du concept. Par la suite, il nous semble clair que le domaine des marques est souvent défini par un langage qui se renouvelle, s'approfondit ou s'élargit constamment. Il est maintenant courant d'entendre parler du capital, de l'identité, de la personnalité, de la sensibilité... des marques. A cet effet, nous présenterons dans cet article deux constructions liées à la marque : l'identité et la personnalité.

**Mots clés : Marketing ; marque ; identité ; personnalité ; image de marque.**

## Introduction

Nowadays, we consider the brand as part of our life, we can be confronted with it at any time of our day. What you need to know is that this concept goes back a long way in history, to the time of the exchange of goods.

Indeed, the Egyptians (5000 years BC) marked their pottery with signs to distinguish them. Archaeologists have discovered traces of marks on amphorae in which the Greeks (from 700 to 600 years before Christ) transported their products, olives, oil, wine... etc.). According to (Aaker, 1994), in the early 16th century, spirits manufacturers in North America used signs on barrels to avoid mixing with counterfeiting and especially to testify to the originality of the product. As a result, the brand, which was created essentially for the purpose of identification and differentiation, was a proof of originality and quality, which adds value to the product.

As for the designation of origin, it also comes from the exchange economy. It did not allow to distinguish products, but agricultural crops or manufacturers, which enjoy a good reputation and are known for their quality, and which can be identified by the places.

According to the dictionary of the French academy of 1694, the brand means « a trace left by something on another thing ».

Around the second half of the 19th century, we could observe the development of the modern brand that designates a certain product. For example, food products are packaged in small units to facilitate the distribution and dissemination system. As such, we can note the invention of the toothpaste tube (1890), the soda bottle (1892), the can (1898) and conservative packaging for cereals (1899).

Later, the appellation of origin became a trademark. This time, it is not the places that are highlighted, but rather the names of inventors, technicians, engineers, industrialists... During the second half of the 20th century, there was a significant increase in the number of brands entering the market. The increasing segmentation of the market is the main cause. Saturation then becomes inevitable, and we have to face a marketing that transforms. Formerly product-oriented, today we are moving into the era of positioning that allows each brand product to claim its qualities. It is then associated with a signature, and allows a certain stability and force of conviction.

The end of the 20th century is characterized by a considerable change in consumption habits. Indeed, a new type of consumer is born, it is endowed with a need for engagement.

It was not until the 1990s that the brand gained the interest of researchers, this was mainly because of the social and cultural economic upheaval that society experienced at the time.

To this end, we will ask the question of the definition of the brand in a marketing context, and through its different characteristics, namely that it is a means of differentiation, sign of ownership and added value and source of meaning.

Our question will also focus on the classification of the brand, knowing that the literature presents the brand in three main classifications: According to the form it takes, the needs it meets and the object it marks, and we will explain.

And finally our main question: what is the link between the two builds identity and personality with the brand?

### **1. Brand Definitions in a Marketing Context**

Knowing the history described above, we can say that the brand is a concept that can be described as recent, but that performs a function that is very old. We can see a semantic evolution of this term. Originally it indicated the trace left by one thing on another. Today, it is more related to economic markets. According to (Kapferer and Thoenig, 1994), this evolution is engendered by profound socio-cultural, institutional and legal changes.

According to (Keller and Lehmann, 2006), « brands are made, they are not born ». It is an intangible asset, if it is important in the mind of the consumer, and if it sells, then we can say that it has value.

The brand represents, in the mind of the consumer, a set of positive images compared to the product company. It is considered to be a set of emotions, attitudes and values representing the brand and its lifestyle. For (Lewi and Lacoëuilhe, 2007), "this is a mental benchmark in a market that relies on tangible and intangible values".

In commerce, the brand can designate products (tangible elements), or services (intangible elements), in both cases, it can only be considered relevant if it holds an exclusive and positive meaning in the mind of the consumer.

We all know that brands are omnipresent in the markets, so it has been very useful to set up a typology that distinguishes three main types of brands :

- The product brand : as its name indicates it associates a brand directly to its product or one of the products very close.
- The umbrella brand : refers to a set of different products.
- The family brand : also called declination brand, it has the same principle as an umbrella brand, except that it gives other products similar names by playing on suffixes or sound, to give a specific identity to its products.

From the definitions above, we see that the brand evokes several elements of different nature. We distinguish palpable and concrete elements, such as the product, signs, colors... and intangible and abstract elements, such as judgements, appraisals, perceptions... this is where the difficulty of this concept.

## **2. Features of brand**

To overcome the difficulty of the concept of the brand, we will try to present the brand according to its characteristics, with metaphors, this approach was adopted by (Davis and Chun, 2003), and distinguishes four categories : a means of differentiation, a sign of ownership, a source of added value and a source of meaning.

### **2.1 Brand as a means of differentiation**

Brand can be considered as "unique" and "exclusive", for this reason it plays the role of identification and differentiation (Lewi and Lacoëuilhe, 2007). There are several identical products on the market, this is very common, yet it is impossible to find two identical brands. (Kotler, 1997), on the other hand, defines the brand as "a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a design, or any other combination of those elements used to identify the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors."

Some authors find this definition incomplete, and stipulate that indeed these elements are part of the composition of the brand but do not fully represent it.

Note that in this definition, Kotler emphasizes two brand functions : differentiation and identification. According to him, it holds a major place in marketing strategy, because it has an important role to distinguish the company from its competitors and make it known.

From the definitions of (Lewi and Lacoëuilhe, 2007) and (Kotler, 1997), we can then argue that the brand is composed of immaterial elements, in this case the brand image, and material elements such as symbols, shapes, signs... this proves the differentiating power that characterizes the brand.

### **2.2 Brand as a sign of ownership :**

In this point, we will discuss the legal aspect of the brand. We have retained that the brand is a sign that allows an economic or social actor to distinguish the products or services it owns, from those identical or similar to its competitors. Each country differs, but this right may arise from the mere use of a sign (trademark not registered or <sup>TM</sup>), or from the filing of the sign as a trademark with a specialized body (trademark or <sup>®</sup>).

In Morocco, the Moroccan Office of Industrial and Commercial Property (MOICP) is responsible for the protection of industrial properties and the maintenance of the central commercial register. It is a public institution with legal personality and financial autonomy. It is under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Its role is to be a vehicle for supporting the company in the development of its intangible assets (trademarks, patents, industrial designs, trade names). To do this, it acts upstream of the process by raising awareness and training economic operators, and intervenes downstream in the areas of valuation and respect for protected rights.

This office maintains the national registers of industrial property titles, including trademarks, trade or service brands, patents, industrial designs, geographical indications and designations of origin.

According to this organization, the brand is a wealth for the company. It cannot be summed up simply in names or symbols, but it crystallizes consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product, and represents everything it means to them.

It is important to remember that a brand owner must protect it inside the country where his company is based, and possibly also outside the borders if he wishes to expand his activities knowing that the World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO) which is responsible for international trademark protection.

Brand can therefore be protected by law once its ownership is proven. As such, we distinguish :

- Nominal brands : words, assemblies of words, letters, numbers...
- Figurative brands : graphic images.
- Mixed brands : verbal signs and figures.
- Sound brands : graphic form like a musical notation.
- Olfactory brands : smell, fragrances...
- Three-dimensional brands : a three-dimensional figurative sign

In general, for a brand to be approved and able to play its role, it must meet three conditions : available, lawful and distinctive.

- ✓ Being available stipulates that a brand should not infringe another registered trademark, and therefore the legislation in force, to avoid creating confusion in the minds of the public.

- ✓ Being lawful means that it must not contain signs prohibited by law or that undermine morality, or contain erroneous or misleading elements that can distort the public.
- ✓ Being distinctive means that the brand must not consist only of an element that describes the product.

### **2.3 Brand as a sign of added value**

If one holds a strong and well-known brand, then the company's offer is not only different from that of competitors, but better in the eyes of consumers. We can then say that the brand plays an important role in the company's value chain. In addition, companies with strong brands enjoy a competitive advantage that is demonstrated by their stable revenues.

Indeed, a brand makes the consumer pay repeatedly, and for the same basic product, additional costs, this is applicable in all sectors. A recognized brand reassures the customer about the quality of the product purchased.

So it's the purchasing decision-making process that explains how the brand creates value for the consumer, because it's that brand that informs the customer about the characteristics of the product or service, and allows them to make their choice.

According to (Swait, and al., 1993), the brand can be compared to a signal on the market. This signal is identified by the consumer in order to avoid the cost or waste of time in searching for information. In this sense (Quelch, 1997), states that « brands exist because of consumers who seek quality, even when there is neither the possibility nor the time to sort out the choices offered to them at the point of sale. It therefore simplifies the choice in crowded markets ».

Indeed, the brand enriches the product with sensory and cultural emotional elements, so it bypasses what is palpable is objective. « It is the brand that reflects on the product its own values » (Lewi, Laoeuilhe, 2007).

### **2.4 Brand as a source of meaning**

(Kapferer, 1996) states that the brand is not the product, but its the meaning. We can then say that it clearly differs from the product or service it represents, and constitutes an independent entity, but its role and to give a certain meaning to the consumer. As a result, a product can be easily integrated into a society thanks to all its characteristics. According to (Heilbrunn and Hetzel, 2003), the brand has three levels: surface, narrative and axiological. Everything that is palpable, such as shape or color, are integrated into the first level (of the surface). As for the second, narrative, it contains the deep values of the brand. And as for the third, axiological, it reflects the founding values of the brand.

According to (Sicard, 2001) brands surround products and services with speech that makes them emerge out of the crowd of anonymous objects. This is where the distinguishing quality of the brand comes from. (Kozinets, 2001), stipulates that the brand is manipulated by the consumer, he can either enrich it, alter it or appropriate the resources it provides. So the sense of the brand is particularly influenced by the environment in which it operates. In this sense, the brand is a semiotic instance, it consists of all the discourses addressed by the totality of the subjects involved in its creation, whether collective or individual.

At this stage of our research on the brand concept, we can already say that it is difficult to identify. According to (Tybout et al, 2003), as consumers and competition change, the brand in turn evolves. In this point, we will show that even if the brand concept seems simple at first glance, it is quite complex. In addition, the brand has a financial dimension not to be overlooked, and on which we will focus.

Development of brand research since the 1980s has led to the assertion that the brand concept is falsely simple. It is a construct that is difficult to dissociate from its components, and must be seen from a broad perspective that shows a classification of the brand.

### 3. Brand classification

The literature presents the brand in three main classifications. Depending on the form it takes, the needs it meets and the object it marks.

#### 3.1 Form classification:

According to (Botton, and Cegarra, 1990), the brand consists of three types of elements: nominal, figurative and sound elements. The following table develops this classification.

Table 1: Composition of a brand

Nature of the elements	Forms
Nominal elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- word</li> <li>- abbreviation</li> <li>- patronym</li> <li>- fancy name</li> <li>- place name</li> </ul>
Figurative elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- design</li> <li>- form</li> <li>- color</li> </ul>



Sound elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- musical phase</li> <li>- song</li> <li>- special sound effect</li> </ul>
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Source: Botton M and Cegarra J-J, 1990

### 3.2 Classification as required

This type of classification is based on the perception of consumers, this is because it is consumers who contribute to this classification thanks to their knowledge of the brand in question. (Solomon and al., 2005).

In this sense, (Park and al., 1986) have made a classification based on the needs of consumers, we quote: symbolic needs, functional needs, experiential needs.

- Brand based on a symbolic concept: car brands for example are included in this category, because they meet an internal need, such as belonging to a social group or the enhancement of one's self-image.
- Brand based on a functional concept: for example a razor brand that fills the need to shave, or a brand of lawn mower. These products meet an external need.
- Brand based on a concept of experiential type: is included in this category everything that refers to sensory needs, such as taste, look, smell, hearing... etc.)

### 3.3 Classification as a branded object

There are many types of brands. (Botton and Cegarra, 1990) has summarized this typology in the table above, according to the branded object.

Table 2: Classification of brands by branded object

Branded object	Type of brand
Company	Brand-name
Products	Range brand Line brand Umbrella brand Brand-product
Skill	Claw

Source: Botton M and Cegarra J-J, 1990

Brand, therefore, can either represent a product or service, or just a category of product or service, as it can represent the entire company, or the distributor. This depends on the strategy of each company.

#### **4. Brand identity**

Concept of identity has been dealt with by a multitude of theorists, and after years of research they all come to the same point: 'no one really knows what identity is' (Sicard, 2001).

Indeed, philosophers, after twenty-five centuries of work, are at the starting point. Aristotle, Hegel and Locke all raised this question in vain.

This sense is problematic in the humanities and every specialist writes to try to clarify it. This gives an excess of publications, illustrations and definitions of the concept.

Therefore, when we talk about the concept of identity, we are faced with a construct that is not completely defined, add to the brand, which is even less so. We obtain "the brand identity", a concept less clear than what it seems at first glance (Sicard, 2001).

However, marketing researchers have come to some rather interesting conclusions.

Before we look at it, we must know that the concept of "brand identity" did not appear until the 2000s. According to (Sicard, 2001), it was not spoken of before, and nothing says that it will be spoken of again in twenty or thirty years. But here and today, this concept appears to us as indispensable, and its reality, indisputable.

Indeed, current marketing views this concept as follows: "before knowing how one is received, one must know who one is (...) it is not the consumer to define the brand and its future, it is the company" (Kapferer, 2007). By these words we can argue that the identity of the brand must be controlled by the company, so this is what it suggests to its consumers, and not what they perceive.

Now, it is important to distinguish between identity and image, for this purpose, we can advance one of the most cited definitions in marketing literature, we quote (Kotler et al, 2012) as an example: "the identity reflects how the company (issuer) wishes to present itself to the market. The image corresponds to the associations maintained by the public (Receiver)". We note that to define this concept, the authors are forced to distinguish between brand identity and brand image, to better understand the principle.

Kapferer considers the brand identity to be an entity with six facets :

**Physic:** Brand is therefore imagined as a prism that gives rise to the physical support that represents its concrete base. It constitutes all the tangible characteristics of the brand, such as its graphic design, its name, its signature, etc.

**Relation:** suggests that the brand most often gives rise to an exchange between people. So it's the relationship between the brand and the customers or vice versa.

**Reflection:** refers to the external image of the brand in relation to its customers, or the buyer to whom it seems to address. But do not confuse reflection with target; the target refers to the description of the potential customers of the brand. On the other hand, the reflection is not the target but the image that the brand gives to this target.

**Personality:** represents the character of the brand, it expresses itself by its way of communicating. The idea behind this association is that the brand would have traits similar to those found in humans. In this way we can afford to judge it in the same way as we can with a man. The most effective way to customize the brand is to personify it, whether it is a fictional or real character.

**Culture:** embodies the brand, it represents a value system, or a source of inspiration. In this sense, the country of origin represents the cultural universe of the brand. According to (Merabet and Benhabib 2012)" it is clear that brands direct and stimulate consumption, because through the advertising message it promotes values that promote a type and pace of consumption ".

**Mentalization:** represents a certain relationship with ourselves that arises from consumption. This means that the brand allocates to the consumer to express the way he sees himself.

This vision has been criticized by Sicard, and presents it in seven poles:

**Physical pole:** This category considers the mark as a body, and includes any tangible object or element that bears the name of the mark (including the name itself), or represents it. All that is palpable and seizable, like (color, shape, taste, touch, gesture). However this pole is not exclusively material, for example a person looking for tablets for headache, in reality does not buy the product for himself but for the benefit it provides. Price is also part of physics, because it is ultimately a number, and it is a tangible factor.

**Spatial pole:** The brand is a piece of space" (Sicard, 2001). Indeed the only way for a brand to communicate is to use a material space. But there are many ways to use space for a brand. Either it refers to an "elsewhere," here," or "nowhere/everywhere."

Elsewhere: A brand needs to appropriate an identity related to a particular place of origin, whether a country, a city or a neighborhood. The important thing is that it must have roots.

Here: Where you can find a brand says a lot about it.

Nowhere and everywhere: Many brands today aim to escape the concept of location. Especially luxury brands, cosmetics, or ready-to-wear. These brands put the same advertising visual wherever they are located.

**Temporal pole:** «Time - and long time - is an unavoidable fact of the life of brands, with all due respect to the heads of companies always in a hurry to win the race, or to repair in a few weeks the damage caused by years of negligence. » (Sicard, 2001). Indeed, the brand is recognized only after a certain time. The temporal pole refers to the past, present and future, these categories are part of the brand identity and are not independent of each other.

**Norms pole:** Every brand aims for continuity and change, and it is through standards that it can achieve its goal. It is the deviation from the norm that drives change. These standards can be either supported, respected, modulated or violated. As such, we distinguish between advertising standards, business, product, brand and social or cultural norms.

-The advertising standards: it is the easiest to transgress, it can be done by distinguishing itself from existing ads in the sector or simply change the target audience through advertising.

-The standards of the trade: It's the brand that respects its field of trade.

-The standards of the product: when we talk about product, we think logically about the physical composition. However, what we are aiming for in this point is colour, material, design, packaging.

-The standards of the brand: when a brand initially made itself known by offering the market something new, innovation is part of its history-that is, its identity. Once the brand abandons this habit of innovation, it loses notoriety.

-The social or cultural standards: a brand that aims to target a large number of people must be accepted. It is therefore not possible to miss social or cultural standards. It's the brand that can adapt to the culture of each country through its advertisements.

**Pole of positions:** This pole simply defines what a brand is. It is to ask the question "what is the position of the brand?"

**Pole of relations:** This pole includes all the links that exist between a brand and these consumers in particular, the public in general. This relationship is very important because it is what gives meaning to communication. The author mentions the notion of "rituals" which aims to bring a product closer to its user.

**Pole of projects:** The identity of the brand exists only if it is in motion, which translates into projects. This pole is articulated around three times: the first is that of positions, the second is that of motivations, and finally that of the development of the project itself.

This literature review allows us to argue that the concept of brand identity occupies a primordial place in the notion of brand. Therefore, without an identity, the brand can in no case exceed the status of a sign. We remember then, that the identity of the brand is a co-creation of the company and consumers. Indeed, it is thanks to the positioning that the company contributes to it, and develops it through the communication strategy. As for consumers, it is simply because of what they say, and what they think of the brand.

According to (Kapferer, 2007), brand personality is a component of brand identity. This assertion is supported by (Ferrandi and Valette-Florence, 2002), who consider that the personality of the brand allows the consumer to satisfy the need to identify himself through the act of consuming: «the association of personality traits with brands finally allows the consumer to express the conception he has of himself ». Given this close relationship, the next point will deal with the notion of brand personality.

## 5. Brand personality

The source of the work on the personality of the brand is the human personality. It is therefore legitimate to take a brief interest in this field of research to better understand this concept that has migrated to marketing.

Virtually all personality psychologists have their own definition, each one is interested in one or more different aspects. For (Block, 2001), the personality is a set of affective, emotional, dynamic, relatively stable and general characteristics of the way of being a person, in his way of reacting to the situations in which he finds himself. (Byrne, 1996), considers personality to be the combination of all the relatively durable dimensions of individual differences that can be measured.

In the light of the different definitions proposed, (Ambroise, 2006), emerges notions that seem to be fundamental to the concept of personality:

- Notion of «Totality», or «Globality», is the idea that personality is represented by a set of attitudes, habits, and traits of an individual.
- Notion of "Differentiation" and "Individuality": the existence of systematic differences from one individual to another.
- Notion of "Stability": refers to the idea that there is a coherence of an individual's behaviour through situations.
- Notion of "Evolution": despite the existence of the notion of stability, personality also evolves according to the environment, but also experiences.

- Non-cognitive: early definitions of personality focus only on non-cognitive aspects, such as emotional or affective. However, other more cognitive aspects such as abilities, knowledge, skills, or intelligence are incorporated into personality theories.

A large number of psychologists attest that the best way to represent personality traits is the five-factor model « Big Five model » (Goldberg, 1992). According to this model personality traits are described by five main dimensions, which can be abbreviated in OCEAN:

- O: Openness: is about intellectual curiosity, originality, creativity, imagination and culture...
- C: Conscientious: character is to be thorough, disciplined, ordered, scrupulous...
- E: Extraversion: the person is energetic sociable enthusiastic expressive ...
- A: Agreeable: the tendency to be gentle, affective, altruistic, cooperative, forgiving...
- N: Neurotism: describes the emotional stability of the individual, the associated traits are embarrassment, worry, depression, anxiety, irritability ...

According to (Hirschman 1986), the personality of brands results from two main sources of meaning: brand owners and consumers. Consumers who can be considered an informal source, receive signs from the brand and then interpret them with a certain meaning: they are active contributors to the symbolism of products and brands, and are not mere receivers.

(Aaker, 2011), is the author who provided the simplest definition « all the human characteristics associated with a brand », However, this definition was much criticized later. Indeed, Aaker interprets the personality of the brand as a global construct that may cause confusion with the brand identity (Azoulay and Kepferer, 2003), it is therefore advisable to adopt a more precise definition. As their own definition which states that the personality of the brand is « the set of human personality traits that are both applicable and relevant to the brands». Finally, formulated in a simpler way, (Ambroise, 2006) defines this concept as all the human personality traits associated with a brand.

## Conclusion

This article allowed us to clarify the brand concept in a purely marketing context. We can add that in addition to the characteristics and classification of the brand, it is necessary to focus on its symbolic aspect because consumers use this side of the brand to express, build and maintain their self identity, and their personal and social world. Thus, through the consumption of these branded products, they succeed in expressing their self, and consider that their possession is an

extension. From a metaphorical point of view, we can imagine that the brand is a tree trunk giving rise to a multitude of branches, in the form of adjacent concepts.

To conclude, managers attach great importance to the personality of the brand, since it allows to modify the relationship between brand and consumer, and especially to understand its behavior. Moreover, according to (Louis and Lombart, 2010), the brand personality and identity are defined as the three most important concepts that relate to the brand. According to the same author, the personality of the brand makes it possible to better understand how are created, then are maintained the relations between a brand and its consumers. It has become a contemporary tool, part of the brand strategies, with an undeniable role, which is to build and maintain brand capital. As such several studies have confirmed that there is a certain effect of the personality of the brand on the brand capital.

Indeed, there is a close relationship between brand capital and brand personality, the latter is considered a cluster of non-physical knowledge related to the brand and plays a very important role for the consumer in choosing the brand. Moreover, the personality of the brand represents one of the associations to the brand and a determinant of the brand capital.



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