Model for the management of trade brands: a theoretical approach based on the General System’s Theory

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Abstract
This article presents a Systemic Model of management for trade brands based on the contributions derived from conceptual and empirical literature. The aim is to analyse the previous analyses and to propose a series of hypotheses that demonstrate the interrelationship between the considered essential elements in the process of brands’ building. Results have been obtained by means of a qualitative analysis that has led to the identification of four essential dimensions in the process of brands’ management: Identity, positioning, formal image and communication. The proposed model is a useful tool to manage in a rigorous way the processes of brands’ creation and audit.

Keywords: brand, identity, image, positioning, brand equity.

JEL codes: M31.
品牌管理模式：
以系统理论为基础的理论分析

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文章摘要
本文章以各理论性及实践性文献为基础，介绍有关品牌管理的系统模型，目的是要通过对多分文献进行分析，提出一系列的假设来表明在品牌建立的过程中，各种被视为基本元素之间的相互关系。研究结果通过定性分析取得，确定了在品牌管理过程中有四个基本范围：品牌识别、市场定位、品牌形象及品牌传播。结果显示本模型为可以严谨地处理品牌创建和品牌审核的工具。

关键词: 品牌、品牌识别、品牌形象、市场定位、品牌价值。

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1. Introduction

Brands and brand management are the centre of interest of the classic marketing subsystem that has been considered as part of a more general system that describes the firm as a whole.

However, far away from the conceptualization of the brand as an attribute of the product, brands present their own entity beyond the product they identify (Caro, 2007, 2012) becoming in a group of meanings, that can be investigated on their own (Aaker, 2002; Balmer, 2012). Numerous authors have shown interest in this phenomenon, so an integrated analysis considering these researches may be interesting.

A systemic model for brand's management is proposed to articulate the various concepts that literature has developed in an independent way, and that most recent publications have applied in concrete cases by paying attention more than to the concepts to the relationships amongst them.

First, the literature review centered on the brand concept from different perspectives has been considered. Different elements refer to identity (Aaker, 2002, 2005a; Balmer 2012; Keller, 2006; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Cho & Fiore, 2015; Coary & Poor, 2016; Bernabel, 2016), positioning (Balmer, 2012; Aaker & Alvarez del Blanco, 2012; Kachersky & Carnevale, 2015) and formal identity (Costa, 2006; Anwar, 2015; Hakala et al., 2015; Machado et al., 2015).

Second, the process of communication of these elements to different agents has also been considered (Costa, 2006; Balmer, 2012; Porcu et al., 2012; Veloutsou, 2015; Lane & Fastoso, 2016).

Lastly, multicultural factors in the process of brand’s creation and development have also been considered (Almierajati, 2013; Chan et al., 2016; Hegner and Jevons, 2016), the distinction amongst brand’s distributor and manufacturer is also taken into account (Galván, 2007; Ghose & Lowengart, 2013; Marín, 2015) as the impact of new technologies (Lozano, 2005; Vernuccio, 2014; Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2015).

The research offers a reference framework to audit and create, if it is the case, a brand in an orderly and rigorous way so that reliable and profitable economic results can be reached.

According to the objective, the article is structured as follows: after the presentation of the methodology applied, through the explanation of the proposed model and the explanation of main elements, the hypotheses are presented. To end, the presented model will be discussed, as limitations, conclusions and future developments.

2. Methodology: the model

The following methodological sequences have been applied:
First, main conceptual approaches that identify the elements that are part of the model have been selected.

Second, empirical approaches that sustain the relationships amongst those elements have been identified. Studies that can be adapted to general cases and showing more explicit contributions have been chosen.

But a system’s thinking serves to establish relationships amongst the different elements before considering cause-effect relationships and observe change processes instead of fixed images (Senge, 1998). So, consequently, “recurrent structures” in the model should be introduced (Senge, 1998) as feedback hypotheses that reveal how obtained results in the process of brand’s management reinforce (or counteract) decisions made when they have been raised.

A qualitative technique is used, from the systematization of approaches coming from different sources that offer consistency to the proposed constructs.

This way a graphical model with a typological structure has been designed. It remarks the interconnections amongst the different elements as shown in figure 1, that it is included in this place as a guiding text where results, in the way of hypotheses, are conducted.
Figure 1. Brand administration general model
3. Development of the model

3.1. System’s inputs

The common corporate declarations of brand product: mission, internal and external values of relation are considered inputs, and specially the vision that managers maintain on them, considered as elements of the brand identity (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Villagra & López, 2013) as driver for development (Davis, 2002) or as substantial elements of brand’s desired identity (Balmer, 2012). In addition, proper communication strategies to transmit concepts such as the institution, the difference, respectability, credibility and trust, with no connection with the nature of things and products, cannot be other things that those sustained in own values (Costa, 2006).

According to Balmer (2012), a clear defined strategy constitutes the main basis for corporate brand identity as convenient identity or ideal identity, in all referred to brand identity in terms of optimal positioning within a specific time horizon (Balmer, 2012). This agrees with the creation of non-ordinary brands to occupy a certain position in a concrete market or complete an offer (Aaker, 2005a).

These considerations allow formulating the following hypothesis:

\textit{H1: The mission, the values and the vision of the brand together with the strategy of development shape its identity and constitute, therefore, the inputs of the proposed brand’s management system.}

3.2. The subsystem for brand identity

This construct is composed by four elements: Brand’s identity, image, target audience, and value proposition. These elements, their relationships, and specific inputs are depicted in figure 2.
Figure 2. The subsystem of brand identity
3.2.1. Identity

To a first approach, brand identity is laid down on twelve dimensions grouped in four perspectives: Brand as product (product scope, attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin), brand as organizations (organizational attributes, local vs global), brand as person (brand personality, brand-customer relationships) and brand as symbol (visual imagination/metaphors, brand inheritance) (Aaker & Joachimstaler, 2001; Aaker 2002).

From other perspective, firm’s identity (or brand), would focus in its presentation to its groups of interest what it makes it unique by considering dimensions of communication, visual identity, structure, industry identity and firm’s strategy. These dimensions relate one each other in such a way that corporate culture determines the corporate conduct and firm’s strategy. These last one defines the suitable corporate structure, and determines at the same time the proper visual identity. Culture, conduct, strategy and visual identity allow to articulate corporate communications by maintaining industry’s identity as independent dimension (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

Lastly, for Balmer (2012), corporate brand identity is defined as a constellation of seven types of identity: Current, communicated, conceived (organization’s images), convenient (corporate strategy), cultural identity, ideal identity and desired identity (defined in terms of agreement with brand vision).

To the complex essence of this concept that would evidence different conceptions in the way a brand can be presented in international markets and how distributor’s brands evolve, considerations derived from the different identities that a brand can present on international markets and distributor’s brands (Ghose & Lowengart, 2013) must be added. On the contrary, to trust in a solid identity can offer advantages in global markets (Hegner & Jevons, 2016). Any case they indicate their involvement with other agents that are part of the proposed model.

3.2.2. Image

The image of a firm’s product is a mental representation in the collective imagination of different stakeholders of a group of attributes and values that work as a stereotype and determine the conduct and opinions of these groups of interest (Costa, 2006). It is raised as a structure of meanings that is never finished so that it is not a condition but a process (Costa, 2006).

Therefore, a brand develops a positive relationship with customers by establishing a positive brand image (Keller, 1993) that certain groups perceive over an organization through the accumulation of all messages received from it (Ind, 1992). Any case, the image must be a mirror of the identity where it intents add value, significance and reliability (Bernabel, 2016).

Figure 2 shows the building of the Brand image through associations and brand personality (Aaker, 2002) due to the fact that, on one hand, brands through their
names and symbols represent mental customer’s associations that imply how consumers perceive themselves and their own (Keller, 1993).

Aaker (2002) proposes supporting the brand identity in the organization according to the adoption of a particular group of values, culture, people, active plans and capabilities. It would become the basis for the differentiation facing competitors, of a value proposition and a specific way of relation with customers and other stakeholders. Organizational associations directly face the product as the central brand’s axis, since the organization, conceived with a proper visibility, can, according to its perspective promote associations such as environmental concern, community orientation, perceived quality, innovation capability, customer’s attention, presence, and local and/or global success.

These linkages will allow contributing to brand equity proposition to allow implementing customer’s relationships, provide brand reliability and contribute in a decisive way to the internal culture of the organization in all related to manifested clarity and compromise.

Brand personality highlights, defined in terms of a group of human characteristics that can be linked to a brand and that would refer to 42 personality characteristics grouped in 15 aspects and 5 dimensions: Sincerity, excitation, competition, satisfaction and hardiness (Aaker, 1997). This model has been criticized since it is thought not to apply in an equal way in different countries and especially when it is used to measure differences of personality in a specific category (Austin, Signaw & Mattila, 2003). It has also been said that it does not consider other personality aspects (i.e. androgynous, masculine or feminism) in which different industries promote that the androgynous character provides higher values than exclusively feminine or masculine brands (Lieven & Hildebrand, 2016).

Apart from this, Keller (2006) differentiates between the concepts of brand personality. Brand product that would refer to consumers and user’s images, and corporate brand’s personality, that would refer to employees’ values, words and actions.

Lastly, Costa (2006) warns that, as products and services become more undifferentiated, the alone consumer manages to differ those that possess a singular personality and support its own speech.

The previous arguments explained on identity and images allow establishing the following hypotheses:

\[ H2a: \text{Brand identity must be reflected in the brand image so that it determines it (or it tries to determine) as way of constructing a perception adapted in the mind of its stakeholders, especially in its target audience.} \]

\[ H2b: \text{Brand image can, across the associations that its personality evokes in its target audience, specially its personality, become a constituent element of brand identity.} \]
3.2.3. Definition of target audience

Brand identity and brand image can allow approaching the definition of target audience as an entity that describes the set of royal and potential clients to whom the brand will be oriented to (Martín, 2005). For it, beliefs and attitudes will be observed in all concerning to brand, the behavior of the industry and competitors that agree with the market according to its supply (Davis, 2002).

As main elements for this concept, as it has been shown in figure 2, the form of purchase, adoption or experimentation of the presented offer and the offers presented by the competitors, good in direct relation with the aforesaid offer, as well as alternative offers will be considered.

This process is built by social rules, sense of security and instant satisfaction (Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2016), the connection with brand and the influence of reference groups with a special attention to the influx of social networks (Hammerl et al., 2016; Ruane & Wallace, 2015), and supported by the evolution of customer’s tastes, preferences or standard of living (up or down) from the group of targeted customers and its segmentation according to generational categories, even though these elements have been studied for very concrete societies (Gobé, 2005).

Apart from this, the analysis of the competition comes out of the local markets depending on the nature of the brand (Aaker & Joachinstaler, 2002; Aaker, 2005b) since the position of global brand and the multicultural condition will oblige to develop very concrete analyses in all concerning to these extremes. Hence the following hypotheses have been proposed:

\[ H3a: \text{Brand identity will determine where the target audience is directed to.} \]

\[ H3b: \text{The Brand's target audience as its change, evolution or the ascription to new audiences can imply changes in the brand identity or brand's extended identity.} \]

3.2.4. Value proposition

This concept is defined as an exposure to functional, emotional and self-expression benefits, provided by the brand that would make sense as extra value for target audiences (Aaker, 2002).

Davis (2002) uses the term trade mark by taking the concept to an extreme formalism since the value proposition must be conceived as a group of expectations related to product, services and experiences established by the brand and that will be considered as promises that will satisfy today’s customers and can attract new ones.

Under this view, as it is indicated in the Figure 2, a double perspective of this concept from the point of view of the type of proposed characteristics (functional, emotional or self-expression) and the sources of brand’s equity (recognition, loyalty, perceived value, associations and other brand actives) is observed. It will be later developed.
At this point, it is interesting to stress the importance of emotional benefits (Aaker, 2002; Gobé, 2005) facing just functional ones that are easy to reproduce. As Aaker (2002) points out, it is very difficult to attack a personality and very easy to attack a product.

Besides, corporate brand represents an explicit agreement between the organization and its groups of interest. It is demonstrated throughout multiple communication channels and it is experienced through firm’s and staff’s behavior, and especially, through the products or services provided by the firm, by continuously showing on time, the support to its brand, which turns into a guarantee brand (Balmer, 2012).

From these considerations, the following hypothesis arise:

**H4:** Brand identity sustains the proposition of value provided to its target audience in all concerning to mission, values and vision that sustain its compromise with brand.

Once the relation between identity and proposition of value has been established, it is possible to concrete how the target audience relates to brand image and to the proposition of value:

**H5a:** Brand image is the support of the relation aimed to maintain brand’s target audience.

**H5b:** The brand’s target audience and in general, its different stakeholders determine the proper brand image to maintain a lasting relation on time by providing the proofs to change that image according to the way these audiences increase or change preferences along time.

**H6a:** The brand’s equity proposition determines the target audience where the brand can be oriented to.

**H6b:** The evolution or enlargement of target audiences can require modifications in the value proposition offered by the brand.

The formulation of these hypotheses ends in what we have named the brand identity subsystem. It offers outputs that will be developed in the following paragraph.

### 3.3. Outputs from the identity subsystem

#### 3.3.1. Location

The concept of location provided by Aaker (2002) as part of the identity and value proposition that will actively be communicated to the different stakeholders, will allow establishing linkages with other agents from the proposed model since it refers to the identity sub-system and demands the brand to acquire the proper
relevance (Aaker & Álvarez del Blanco, 2012), semantic relevance (Kachersky & Carnevale, 2015) and the needed degree of exposure to the target audience (Lane & Fastoso, 2016).

Location must be credible (it must show reality), durable (lasting in the long run), significant (for consumers and other stakeholders), beneficial (it shows the strategic value for the organization and stakeholders) and responsible (Balmer, 2012) and have into account that a positioning strategy is an element for corporate identity (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

Therefore, the following hypothesis can be presented:

**H7: Brand’s identity subsystem determines brand’s potential placement.**

### 3.3.2. Formal identity

This concept refers to the group of signs that identify a brand by establishing differences with the rest of brands, understood as well-known signs (Martín, 2005) that shows as main mission make any entity perceptible (Gonzalez Solas, 2002).

This group of signs can be found in the literature under the name of corporate visual identities (CVIS) (Melewar, Saunders & Balmer, 2001; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006) As a summary of different approaches, the following elements are proposed as main ones required to build formal identity: Verbal Identity (name or phonotype, slogan), visual identity (logotype, symbol or image type, logo symbol, chromatic identity, typographic identity) Packaging and particular systems (Costa, 2004; Memelsdorff, 2004; Martín, 2005; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

These elements will be combined in a different way with the proper communication means by considering that corporate brand creates awareness and recognition by means of the name included in the logotype (Balmer, 2012) and that, an intelligent design has little intrinsic value per se. However as the explicit brand’s promise (proposition of value) has been maintained an experimented on time, the verbal and visual identifiers acquire that intrinsic value (Balmer, 2012).

These affirmations are supported by considering the behavior of private or distribution brands in relation to the manufacturer’s brands in the development of image (Galván, 2007, Cohelo do Vale & Verga, 2015) as promotion strategies (Marín, 2015). Similarly, the use of place names makes sense when it is congruent with its personality (image) (Pino, Guido & Peluso, 2015) although they can promote aversion to change (Hakala et al., 2015). Apart from this, in concrete cases, short names and with semantic relevance in English languages, turn out to be more memorable (Fetscherin et al., 2015).

This way, the following hypotheses are formulated:

**H8: Brand’s identity subsystem determines the so-called formal identity. This way, a linkage with the target audiences can be reached in a more efficient and effective way.**
H9: Brand position, as a vehicle for brand’s identity and value proposition, must condition the so-called brand formal identity in such a way that it can be adequately communicated to target audiences.

3.4. Communication subsystem

Communication is considered as the “technical production and the spread of messages enabled via a stable tool” (Costa, 2006), and, no matter if brand worries about public image or not, transmitted messages as a consequence of a way of doing and establishing relationships are associated to the organization, as communication activities are developed, intentionally or in an spontaneous way, that finally project a certain image in the internal and external environment (Costa, 2006).

Therefore, a brand must communicate with target audiences in a continuous way, and especially constantly express to stakeholders that the promise of brand is maintained (Balmer, 2012). It determines that the main axis for communications must be location and through it, its value proposition and identity. In any case, different communication modes must be coordinated and articulated around three action places: institutional relations, organizational communications and marketing communications (Costa, 2006).

This communications would be grouped in three levels (Balmer, 2012): Primary communication (development of products and services; organizational policies; managerial behavior; experience with employees and their arguments), secondary communication (marketing and other ways of controlled communication) and tertiary communication (in person).

Amongst mass media, publicity in different ways has been the development driver for brands. This has promoted reflections about its consequences in saturation moments in communication mass media. This way, different alternatives are proposed aimed to reach a leadership position (Aaker & Joachimstaler, 2001) or in the process of brand’s creation (Joachimstaler & Aaker, 2005a). The idea is to consider the role of communication beyond mere publicity, focused on the relation of brand with consumers. This determines a strong loyalty and serves as a linkage amongst this loyalty, trust in the brand and customer’s satisfaction (Veloutsou, 2015). At the end, target audiences continuously receive messages transmitted in a intentionally or un-intentionally way and this removes reliability to those ways of more potential controlled communication means such as publicity and public relations, especially designed to create a proper organizational image (Ind, 1992).

Brand’s image and location determines the communication strategy to reach the objectives of corporate strategy and the brand vision. This objective can be reached by communicating in all the potential ways and channels the brand’s location to stakeholders (Davis, 2002) and by applying an integrated communication strategy (ICS) that defines adequate actions and controls oriented to reach communication objectives.
The implementation of this strategy impacts in the brand’s performance, not just in financial aspects derived from the development of favorable attitudes, preferences and the subsequent consumption, but it would affect, especially on reputation and the brand awareness (Porcu, Del Barrio & Kitchen, 2012). All this supports a positive attitude of real or potential consumer (Chan et al., 2016). In this sense, the importance of new communication technologies must be reinforced, since they allow an interpersonal influence through social networks (Ruane & Wallace, 2015). However, the practices adapted in this field can harm the brand on not having been properly regulated (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2015) and previously requires a consolidated image (Lozano, 2005).

The explained arguments support the following hypotheses:

*H10: Location is the main axis in which the communication system to different stakeholders must be built in such a way that, through that location, brand’s identity, image and value proposition are reflected.*

*H11: Formal brand identity must continuously be communicated to the different stakeholders in such a way that recognition of values associated to brand can be maintained and reinforced to different stakeholders.*

### 3.5. Outputs from the brand’s management system

Results from brand’s management are multiple: possibility of obtaining best prices and provide more control on distribution channels; allow the launching of new products to a lower cost than the competence by minimizing the recovery time for development and new product lunch; reduction in the cost of new customer’s recruiting; enabling the issuance of licenses, branding activities, franchise management; possibility of leveraging up the brand so that the control of a category can be acquired without diluting the value of the brand (Davis, 2002).

These ideas suggest considering as outputs from the proposed system those derived from the brand’s equity, the impact of reputation, heritage, organizational brand’s culture an extensions, elements that will be developed briefly in the following paragraphs.

#### 3.5.1. Brand equity

The brand’s equity (also named brand’s capital in the literature) is defined as the positive and negative assets linked to the brand’s name and symbol that are incorporated (or removed) from product or service (Aaker & Joachimstaler, 2001). They must be manipulated as value generators.

This value is based in the so called brand’s assets: Brand’s loyalty, brand’s awareness, brand’s perceived value and brand’s associations with other assets that belong to the brand (Aaker & Joachimstaler, 2001; Aaker 2002).
Each of these elements offer some specific benefits but, it is remarkable that the recognition of a brand will involve an association of it with attributes and benefits that the product offer (Keller, 1993; 2003a). This implies, on one hand, that the product will provide a positive memory that will affect the chances of buying it (Chan, Petrovici & Lowe, 2016) and, on the other hand, that the perceived quality turns into a value generator as it promotes the possibilities of consumer’s differentiation and brand’s locations allowing to demand a given priority price.

These values generated through brands can be summarized from the consumer’s perspective and from the perspective of the brand’s owner (Aaker & Joachimstaler, 2001; Aaker 2002) in such a way that value is delivered to customers by linking it to the brand, trust in the buying decision and satisfaction of use. Besides, the company benefits from the efficiency and effectiveness of the marketing plan, brand loyalty, prices / margins, brand extensions, commercial leverage and in sum, by establishing a competitive advantage.

Finally, it is interesting to indicate that sources that are based in brand equity allow paying attention to those attributes that allow identifying and differencing one offer from another and, at the same time, provide an intrinsic value to it (Aaker, 2003).

3.5.2. Reputation

Reputation is the result of a positive firm’s image. It must contain values that indicate the firm’s commitment with stakeholders, and it would reflect the degree of fulfillment of the above mentioned commitments on time consolidated (Villafañe, 2004).

Image and reputation shape the public perception over a company (Villafañe, 2004), in such a way that image would be a changing figure created while reputation would constitute the bottom or background where the above mentioned figure is projected. Differences, amongst other things, would be centered on the fact that image projects corporate personality, with short-lived effects, it generates expectations and, as it has been indicated, it is built outside the organization. On the contrary, reputation derives from the recognition of the firm’s behavior, it presents a structural character and long-lasting effects. It generates value and it is created inside firms.

3.5.3. Brand heritage

The concept heritage has been oriented from different points of view, as an integral element of brand identity (Aaker & Joachimstaler, 2001; Aaker, 2002) and as corporate heritage (Balmer & Burghausen, 2015a), what it implies considering organizational identity, its identification and cultural identity (Balmer & Burghausen, 2015b).
From this perspective, brand heritage, would be conditioned by its history in terms of its constitutive elements and/or as contingency factors, since from a time period analysis, historical references would be considered (textual, visual and oral), historical associations (cognitive and affective) and historical outcomes (material and ideological) (Balmer & Burghausen, 2015a).

This way, heritage is raised as the management of a set of ideas brought over of the corporation expressed in the shape of strategy in every particular case (Burghausen & Balmer, 2015). These conceptions turn around placement (continuation, sense of belongingness and sense of self), awareness of inherited heritage (sense of responsibility and power) and awareness of custody of inherited heritage (sense of heritage/equity) (Burghausen & Balmer, 2015).

These considerations and its relationship with previously mentioned elements (identity, placement) evidence how the concept of inheritance, dynamic in nature, since it increases (or decreases) in the constant brand’s change, is a feedback element in the proposed system.

3.5.4. Brand’s culture

Culture is defined as a set of attitudes that distinguish members in a category or groups that would be learnt to take action in the social environment and it has not been inherited in the genetic sense of the word (Hofstede, 1999). From this perspective, corporate culture would be a set of norms, values and behaviors that would be shared, even although they are not written and that are reflected in the behavior of the members of an organization (Capriotti, 1999).

This group of rules and attitudes cannot be easily be defined in advance from the fact of the existence of a group of persons linked to a brand or an organization and, in fact, the literature contemplates the concept of corporate as integral culture of brand identity (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006) or as cultural identity (Balmer, 2012) associated to the identity class previously described. These considerations make think in a feedback cycle of the result by considering brand’s identity and image.

Anyway, it would be the result of a continuous interaction inside the firm, sustained on time and conceived as a tool to obtain a competitive advantage (Aaker, 2002; Martín, 2005).

3.5.5. Extensions

Brand extensions directly impact, in the short and long run, in the brand equity and results associated to that brand (Aaker, 2000; Davis, 2002). They would be defined as the action of putting into de market changes, improvements of different versions of the products, services and existent experiences or new products, services or similar or different experiences protected, in one or another way under a brand that has already been established (Martín, 2005).
Additionally, Keller (2003b) warns that a high percentage of new products presented in the market (between an eighty and ninety per cent at the beginning of the nineties) used a well-known brand name as they are more attractive to consumers (Keller, 2003b).

Though it has been considered that, after consolidating a brand, the natural development would spend for its expansion (Drawbaugh, 2001), extensions should consider some generic conditions: be consistent with brand’s vision, sustain and strengthen brand image, agree with the global location and foresee the contingencies derived from a negative impact as a consequence of an extension failure (Davis, 2002).

Furthermore, the acceptance of the extension will be given by the perceived quality and the dimensions of the perceived adjustment (transference, complementarity and substitution) with the extended brand although this criteria has been completed more recently by including the adjustment in the category and the consistency with brand image (Buil, Martínez & Pina, 2008).

Any case, the extension possibility of a brand depends on the extent of lines of products that could relate to the brand’s identity expanded in terms of the consistency with the proposition of value of the above mentioned brand and of the kind of relation established with target audiences (Aaker, 2002). Apart from this, the extension will be benefited from an appropriate repetition of brand’s exposure (Lane & Fastoso, 2016).

Previous arguments allow establishing the following hypothesis:

H12: The proposed brand’s management system produces as generic outputs the brand equity, reputation and heritage and the development of brand’s culture and it allows providing brand’s extensions with credibility.

But the obtained outputs, as it has been indicated for each of them in previous paragraphs contain implicit and explicitly flows of information that, through the control system, will feedback other system’s elements, mainly, the location and the brand’s identity subsystem.

3.6. Control subsystem

Davis (2002) mentions the need to count on with qualitative and quantitative methods applied half-yearly and annually or, eventually when the nature of the brand or the firm needs it.

Previous literature has referred, with special worries to the measure of brand equity, to the justification by financial motivations related with potential mergers or acquisitions oriented to the increase of the efficiency of marketing actions and the improvement of brand’s management (Keller, 1993a). For that, the term “valuation” for those measures related to the financial brand equity in different varieties
is considered (Torres, 2002; Villarejo, 2002), even though, these measures lack of
unified criteria what turns into a lack of credibility in the accounts processing inde-
pendently that the reflected image is just punctual and in a short term run.

Brand’s equity metrics are required from the consumer’s perspective (Aaker &
Joachimstaler, 2001; Aaker & Álvarez del Blanco, 1994, 1995), as the need to pro-
gram in each case the proper KPI (key indicators for the development/performance)
for each specific case (Benlloch & Álvarez, 2014) in such a way that the decided
parameters and the reliability of its observation are consistent.

Same way, it must be remarked the importance of the application of the proposed
metrics on global visual corporate identity (Melewar, 2001; Melewar, Saunders
& Balmer, 2001), scorecards and tools applied to intangible elements (Casado &
Peláez, 2014), an especially, the corporate ones (Villafañe, 2004: Casado & Peláez,
2014) and, based on the need that specific departments have on the organization as
support to corporate reputation (Casado, Peláez & Cardona, 2014).

3.7. System’s feedback

Results from the control subsystem and what it has been described in previous
paragraphs, conclude in the formulation of the following hypothesis that relates
systems’ outputs with previous elements:

H13: System’s outputs reinforce (or weaken) the brand’s positioning.

Although in a generic way it can be affirmed that the group of outputs provide
feedback to the brand’s identity system, the following aspects must be specified:

H14: Brand equity increases the brand’s value proposition and image.
H15: Brand reputation feedbacks the brand’s image and value.
H16: Brand heritage reinforces all the elements in the identity sub-system.
H17: Brand culture reinforces and provides feedback to brand’s identity.
H18: Brand’s extensions offer value, strengthen brand image and attract new
audiences and at the same time, they reinforce the loyalty of today’s target
audiences.

4. Results

Figures 1 and 2 show in a graphical way the different results obtained in this
research. It is worth it to mention that the complexity of the proposed model pre-
sents the inclusion of details referred to very concrete situations that are difficult to
generalize.

This way, in the food industry, the images (perceptions) generated by consumers
impact in the selection of more or less healthy food (Coary & Poor, 2016). In the
fashion brands concrete dimensions of image are defined from the cognitive, emotional, sensory and of self-expression (Cho & Fiore, 2015) and relationships are found amongst the slogans with the corporate image and the value of the brand’s product (Anwar, 2015).

Corporate Social Responsibility as main axis for brand identity is communicated by companies by means of low-profile communication strategies and high levels of segmentation with the target audiences without resigning specific mas media communication channels (Villagra & López, 2013). The investment in publicity has been discussed by establishing a linkage between its costs with the design of lines of products (Villas-Boas, 2004) or with models based in optimal control techniques (Tuchnolobova, Terletskii & Vasilieva, 2011).

Special mention deserves the irruption of new technologies that allow to consider clusters in the development of the communications in social networks (Vernuccio, 2014), problems that can arise as a consequence of its use (Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2015) and the requirements for a correct implementation (Lozano, 2005).

These exposed cases must not be considered out from the margin of the presented model. However they illustrate their flexibility to be integrated from the perspective of brand’s management in a general framework.

5. Discussion

The different dimensions attributed to brand identity from different perspectives (Aaker, 2002, 2005a; Balmer 2012; Keller, 2006; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006), constitute shades that enrich the concept provided that this identity will be founded in a selection of the above mentioned dimensions (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2001).

From this selection, the weight of each element depends on and how critical each relation is depending on the market and industry where the brand is developed. As an example, the importance of reflecting the image’s identity in a generic way (Bernabel, 2016) and the image as a as support for identity in the industry of healthy food (Coary & Poor, 2016) or fashion (Cho & Fiore, 2015) can be remarked.

Apart from this, brand’s positioning based in its identity (Balmer, 2012; Aaker & Alvarez del Blanco, 2012) is positively stressed in apparently contradictory cases as positioning brand on social benefits (Kachersky & Carnevale, 2015) by considering that it is appropriate to do it when it is based on the consumer, element, that as it has been indicated, constitutes brand identity.

This model evidences how brand equity is started as a promise to consumers and other stakeholders and it turns into a clear part of value proposition and therefore as brand identity according to different interests’ groups that can confirm the veracity of the so called promise.

The obtaining of this value comes from a proper brand’s management by considering industries and markets in which the brand operates, especially the contingencies
derived from the consideration of global brands that operate in multicultural markets to implement publicity (Almierajati, 2013) and the need of a consistent exposition (Chan et al., 2016; Hegner & Jevons, 2016) which proposes wider research areas to confirm or refute the proposed hypotheses for cases, industries or concrete markets.

The use of literature based in empirical studies presents as main barrier to show evidences of concrete cases in specific industries and markets but, its consideration all together supports the proposed model.

It rests to conclude indicate that, although the different elements represented in the proposed figures with same size show results, the reality of the study of concrete cases will suggest the use of iconic models that can be scalable according to the importance of specific weight in the studied problem.

6. Conclusion

The proposed model is a useful tool to analyze in a rigorous way brand’s management as an audit on the real updated state or to build an extra brand oriented to any general or strategic purpose.

The model is based in four main dimensions: Identity, positioning, formal image and communication. To these elements, control and feedback must be added from the systemic perspective. These elements complete and provide reliability to the model. These elements and their relationships, formulated as hypotheses, have been defined as result of the qualitative analysis of the applied literature.

The research presents the opportunity to develop more specific models to concrete industries and markets where the weight of the different elements can be established and the relationships amongst them and for each of them can be analyzed.

This way, a sequence of attention focus is presented. They allow building the protocols of intervention for each moment, industry and circumstances to start the creation or, what it is more frequent, brand’s audit.

References


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