



Corporate brand orientation: Identity, internal images, and corporate identification matters

John M.T. Balmer^{a,*}, Klement Podnar^b

^a Brunel University Business School, Brunel Business School London, United Kingdom

^b University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Corporate brand
Corporate brand identification
Corporate brand orientation
Corporate identity
Corporate image
Social identity theory

ABSTRACT

Considers the significance of corporate identity, internal corporate brand/identity images, and corporate brand identification for corporate brand orientation. Three propositions based on the above are formulated. By highlighting the importance of these concepts, scholars are more fully able to comprehend the importance and connectedness between the concepts. The same is true for senior managers who have responsibility for managing and nurturing meaningful corporate brand orientated organizations. They also need to be cognizant of these dimensions and regularly appraise them.

1. Introduction

This article considers the centrality of corporate identity, internal corporate brand image/internal corporate identity image, and internal corporate brand identification theory apropos corporate brand orientation. As such, it seeks to make a meaningful advance in our comprehension of corporate brand orientation through the introduction and explication of three propositions taking account of the aforementioned. By these means scholars and managers are better placed to understand the antecedents of an organizational-wide corporate brand orientation.

From its introduction in the mid-1990s (Urde, 1994), the brand orientation notion has attracted growing attention, and traction, within marketing. Brand orientation is based on the premise that brands can be pivotal to an organization's orientation and success. Consequently, it was argued that organizations should orientate themselves around their brands. However, the brand orientation idea has sometimes often been narrowly conceived. Significantly, with the formal introduction of the corporate brand orientation the importance of a company-wide corporate brand positioning was elucidated and regularized (Balmer, 2013). As such a corporate brand orientation – as evinced in the corporate brand covenant - epitomizes an organizational-wide philosophy and culture which represents a centripetal force that guides the entire organization (Balmer, 2013).

“A corporate brand orientation refers to a category of institution in which the corporate brand specifically acts as the cornerstone – and,

moreover, the centripetal force – that informs and guides the organisation, especially in relation to its core philosophy and culture”. (Balmer, 2013, p.724)

Hence, a corporate brand orientation dovetails a brand orientation reasoning with the precepts of corporate brand management (Balmer, 1995, 2001a, 2012a). Arguably, therefore, the formal introduction of corporate brand orientation made explicit what, all too often, had been implicit in that the most logical and powerful form of brand orientation was centred on the corporate brand. It was asserted that: “The formal introduction and explication of the corporate brand orientation perspective represents the apotheosis of Urde (1994) brand orientation notion”. Continuing: “a brand-based organisational-wide culture and philosophy is more intelligible at the level of the corporate brand than any other branding level or category”. (Balmer, 2013, p.738).

The article continues by providing an overview of business orientations in organizations with specific reference to marketing/corporate marketing orientation, brand orientation and corporate brand orientation; enumerates three propositions which highlight the importance of corporate identity, internal corporate brand image/corporate identity image, and corporate brand identification to corporate brand orientation; and concludes by discussing the theoretical contribution, management implications, research limitations, and avenues for future research.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: john.balmer@brunel.ac.uk (J.M.T. Balmer), klemen.podnar@fdv.uni-lj.si (K. Podnar).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.06.016>

2. Orientation matters

The orientation notion now enjoys wide currency in strategy, marketing and, more specifically, within branding. In general terms, an orientation relates to a mind-set and set of behaviors (Schmidt, Mason, Steenkamp, & Mugobo, 2017) and in business contexts strategic orientations are the guiding principles that influence a firm's strategy-making activities (Noble, Sinha, & Kumar, 2002). The concept has variously been described as strategic fit, strategic predisposition, strategic thrust, and strategic choice (Morgan & Strong, 1998). Strategic orientations designate the way firms operate and refers to a firm's proclivity to adopt specific values, agree with specific norms, and act or operate in specific ways (Cadogan, 2012). Inherently, orientations are inseparable from organizational culture (Baumgarth, 2010; Noble et al., 2002), and from issues of identity within organizations (Balmer, 2008; Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

A variety of strategic orientations are deemed to be of importance (Schmidt et al., 2017). In marketing, the most prominent are marketing orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993), relationship marketing orientation (Grönroos, 1994; Callaghan, McPhail, & Yau, 1995), services marketing orientation (Lytle & Timmerman, 2006), corporate identity orientation (Balmer, 2017a) brand orientation (Urde, 1994), and a total corporate communications orientation (Balmer, 1998). There are other prominent orientations including stakeholder orientation (Ferrell, Gonzalez-Padron, Hult, & Maignan, 2010); innovation and/technology orientation (Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997), learning orientation (Slater & Narver, 1995), and entrepreneurial orientation (Zhou, Yim, & Tse, 2005).

Multiple orientations can co-exist within organizations. An overlapping of orientations may not, necessarily, be deleterious. Oftentimes, multiple orientations can equally be efficacious. Empirical studies have revealed how firms, by integrating different orientations, frequently outperform those following a single orientation (e.g., Atuahene-Gima & Ko, 2001; Liu, Luo, & Shi, 2002; Grinstein, 2008). For example, a brand orientation can complement a marketing orientation (Urde, Baumgarth, & Merrilees, 2013) and a corporate brand orientation can dovetail with a corporate marketing orientation (Balmer, 2013).

The adoption, and pursuance, of a particular orientation – whether internal or external - can imbue an organization with a strategic advantage. A firm's success can be attributable to its overall orientation (Wright, Kroll, Pray, & Lado, 1995). Specifically, strategic orientations can be linked to competitive advantage, attractiveness to employees, organizational commitment, business growth, organizational performance, and overall profitability.

This is because a synchronistic relationship exists between a marketing orientation focussed on customers and a brand orientation centred on brands. Both orientations can be desirable and efficacious. Equally, a corporate marketing orientation focussed on stakeholders and a corporate brand orientation based on corporate brands are synergistic (Balmer, 2013). Organizations having a dual marketing and brand orientations are better placed to affect an integrated marketing communications effect within their organizations (Reid, Luxton, & Mavondo, 2005) and, prospectively, can serve customers more effectively (Urde et al., 2013).

2.1. Marketing and corporate marketing orientations

Marketing orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) – analogous with customer orientation (Kelley, 1992) - relates to the adoption of the marketing concept within an organization and is an orientation which places consumers at the centre of an organization's deliberations (Cano, Carrillat, & Jaramillo, 2004).

Marketing orientation is sometimes contrasted with production, product, sales, and cost orientation. While marketing orientation has received a great deal of attention within the marketing canon (Ćorić, Lučić, Brečić, Šević, & Šević, 2020; Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016; Morgan,

Vorhies, & Mason, 2009; Carrillat, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2004; Helfert, Ritter, & Walter, 2002; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Noble et al., 2002), there is a lack of consensus as to its precise nature. Some scholars stress that a marketing orientation can be expressed either through behavior, or through a company-wide culture (Schmidt et al., 2017), or as a set of shared values and beliefs about putting the customer first in business planning (Deshpande, 1999). Others focused on its impacts on an entity's systems and processes (Harris, 1998). Initially it was suggested that it includes *generation* of market information, cross-departmental *dissemination* of information, and *responsiveness* to disseminated information (Kohli, Jaworski, & Kumar, 1993). Alternatively, it can be viewed as constituting an amalgam of customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional coordination, and a profit orientation (Slater & Narver, 1996; Reid et al., 2005). Furthermore, subsets of market orientation have been highlighted including sustainable marketing orientation (Ćorić et al., 2020) and green marketing orientation (Papadas, Avlonitis, & Carrigan, 2017), among others.

A synchronistic relationship exists between a marketing orientation focussed on customers and a brand orientation centred on brands and both orientations can be desirable and efficacious. For example, organizations having a dual marketing and brand orientations are better placed to effect build integrated marketing within their organizations (Reid et al., 2005) and, significantly, serve customers more effectively (Urde et al., 2013).

Corporate marketing (Balmer, 1998, 2001a) is an organizational-wide orientation. As such, it is underpinned by an organizational-wide philosophy and culture (Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Illia & Balmer, 2012), and represents a distinct strategic management approach (Balmer, 2017a). As an orientation it considers organizations, along with their corporate brands, as significant conduits by which mutually profitable exchange relationships between companies and stakeholders can be established (Balmer, 1998; 2017a). Significantly, corporate marketing represents a new corporate gestalt (Balmer, 1998). The corporate marketing logic is grounded in the notion that organizations and their corporate brands can be principal vehicles of exchange between organizations and their customers/stakeholders in a similar way that products/product brands are in traditional marketing or services/services brands in relation to services marketing (Balmer, 2017; Balmer & Greyser, 2006).

However, unlike mainstream product marketing, corporate marketing adopts explicit stakeholder and CSR approaches; emphasizes that ultimate responsibility resides with the CEO/Management Board and, significantly, is informed by a *trans*-temporal perspective where the past (and not only the present and future) is accorded importance. Just as product and services marketing have their own mixes, as noted by Balmer and Greyser (2003), eg. Borden (1964) and McCarthy (1960), the same is true for corporate marketing (Balmer, 1998, 2001a). As with brand orientation and marketing an interconnected relationship exists between a corporate brand orientation and corporate marketing. Both stress the importance of corporate brands to organizations and corporate marketing has an explicit organizational, stakeholder, CSR and *trans*-temporal foci which are complementary to a corporate brand orientation (Balmer, 2013).

Corporate marketing has been defined as follows:

“Corporate marketing is a customer, stakeholder, societal and CSR/ethical focussed philosophy enacted via an organisational-wide orientation and culture. A corporate marketing rationale complements the goods and services logic. It is informed by identity-based views of the firm: this is a perspective which accords importance to corporate identities and corporate brands. The latter provide distinctive platforms from which multi-lateral, organisational and stakeholder/societal relationships are fostered to all-round advantage. Whilst its primary focus is on mutually advantageous multi-lateral organisational and customer/stakeholder partnership of the

present and future, a corporate marketing logic also has sensitivity to the institution's inheritance. The corporate marketing orientation is also mindful of its corporate responsibilities in societal, ethical and in CSR terms. All employees share responsibility for the corporate marketing orientation, but senior managers and the CEO, in particular, has ultimate stewardship of the corporate marketing orientation". (Balmer, 2011, p.1350).

2.2. Brand orientation

The formal introduction of the brand orientation notion was made by Urde (1994). Subsequent work by him (Urde, 1999), and by others (Baumgarth 2009, 2010; Hankinson 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Wong and Merrilees, 2005, 2008), generated early interest in the territory. Consequently, today, there is a well-established literature on the brand orientation notion (Balmer, 2013; Bridson & Evans, 2004; Casidy, 2014; Evans, Bridson, & Rentschler, 2012; Ewing & Napoli, 2004; Gromark & Melin, 2011, 2013; Huang & Tsai, 2013; King, So, & Grace, 2013; Lee, 2013; Mulyanegara, 2011; Napoli, 2006; Reid, Luxton, & Mavondo, 2005; Urde, Baumgarth, & Merrilees, 2013; Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2013; Boso et al., 2016). Engagement with the area has not abated, as the recent literature attests (Anees-ur-Rehman, Wong, & Hossain, 2016; Chang, Wang, & Arnett, 2018; Gromark, 2020; Lamprini & Avlonitis, 2018; Laukkanen, Tuominen, Reijonen, & Hirvonen, 2016; Lee, O'Cass, & Sok, 2017; Merk & Michel, 2019; Odom & Mensah, 2019; Osakwe, Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Mihajlov, & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2020; Renton, Daellenbach, Davenport, & Richard, 2016; Schmidt, Mason, Steenkamp, & Mugobo, 2017; Temprano-García, Rodríguez-Escudero, & Rodríguez-Pinto, 2020; Zhang, Jiang, Shabbir, & Zhu, 2016; M'zungu et al., 2017).

Initially, brand orientation was introduced as an alternative to a marketing orientation, owing to its inside-out perspective. To "be brand oriented is market orientation 'plus'." (Urde, 1999, p. 118). Subsequently, it was viewed as being synergistic with a firm's marketing orientation (Urde et al., 2013). Brand orientation was defined as:

"An approach in which the processes of the organization revolve around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving last competitive advantage (Urde, 1999, p. 117)."

It was later stressed that brand orientation relates to a functional, or business unit, focus on brands which were reinforced by brand strategies which support strong customer and stakeholder relationships (Bridson & Evans, 2004).

In prosaic terms, a brand orientation entails not only building a brand identity but living a brand identity in addition (Schmidt, Baumgarth, Wiedmann, & Luckenbach, 2015), and requires consistency in the brand message (Urde, 1994; deChernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Reid et al., 2005). Moreover, for brand orientated firms, there needs to be a strong organizational culture which is informed by a strong brand ethic (Balmer, 2013; King et al., 2013). Given the critical importance of a brand-centric culture, it has also been observed that a brand orientation is manifested through an organizational-wide brand vision; shared brand functionality; and shared brand positioning. Consequently, brand-orientated firms recognize the symbolic utility of brands; their brand value-adding capabilities and their role in enhance financial performance (Reid et al., 2005).

Multifarious, inherent, benefits flow from brand orientated entities (Zhang et al., 2016), and this explains why brand orientation can be viewed as a valuable strategic resource (Schmidt et al., 2017). Thus, the strategic benefits of brand orientation include effectiveness in meeting customer and stakeholder needs (Mulyanegara, 2011; Napoli, 2006); supporting customer/stakeholder relationships (Bridson & Evans, 2004); improving employee behavior and satisfaction (Azizi, Ghytasiv, & Fakharmanesh, 2012; King et al., 2013); enhancing organizational

growth (Reijonen, Laukkanen, Komppula, & Tuominen, 2012); and improving market, financial, and overall corporate performance (Baumgarth, 2010; Gromark & Melin, 2011).

Notably, the early literature did not fully recognize, or clearly accommodate, variations in brand orientation nor adequately accommodate different brand modalities (Balmer, 2013). Habitually, a good deal of the literature stressed that brand orientation is principally centred on functional/business units and/or strategic hubs (Urde 1994, 1999; Bridson & Evans, 2004; Zhang et al., 2016). However, brand orientation is a portmanteau term and is heterogeneous in terms of its application. It has a pertinency to all manner of brands. Just as there are differences between product, service, and corporate brands, so there are differences in, and diversities of, brand orientation (Balmer, 2013).

The variety of meanings accorded to brand orientation has resulted in scholars identifying multiple schools of thought. Illustratively, Evans et al. (2012), identified three of thought: philosophical, behavioural, and hybrid. Schmidt et al. (2017), ascertained there were two: behavioural and cultural. Balmer (2013) designated nine schools of thought: philosophical, behavioural hybrid, cultural, performance, strategic, marketing, omni-brand, and corporate brand.

Consequently, considerable nuance, and discernment, is required when navigating, comprehending, and utilizing the brand orientation notion. Exemplary, organizations can orientate themselves around a firm's multiple, brands "omni-brand orientation." However, they may also do the same specifically in relation to product brands "brand orientation", or to services brands "service brand orientation", or, in relation to corporate brands "corporate brand orientation" (Balmer, 2013).

Thus, brand orientation has variously been considered in the context of organizations "corporate brand orientation" (Balmer, 2013); services "service brand orientation" (King et al., 2013); and products "product brand orientation" (Urde, 1994). It has also been considered through sectoral lenses encompassing public sector entities "public sector brand orientation" (Gromark & Melin, 2013); retail industry "retail brand orientation" (Schmidt et al., 2017; Bridson, Evans, Mavondo, & Minikiewicz, 2013); and not-for-profit entities (Ewing & Napoli, 2004). Given this article's focus on corporate brand orientation, it can be observed that many services, public sector, retail sector and not-for-profit brands are, de facto, corporate brands. Consequently, this offers a further explanation as to the utility of this article. To reiterate, often, the literature fails to fully, and unambiguously, discern how corporate brand orientation is sui generis: a failure to recognition that corporate brand orientation is a distinct, and vital, mode of brand orientation (Balmer, 2013).

More generally, it can also be observed how the brand orientation canon has also accommodated recent developments apropos the co-creation perspective - where customers are viewed as active, and equal, contributors in constructing brand identity - (Gromark, 2020), and this has given rise to the relational brand orientation perspective (Louro & Cunha, 2001). Notably, too, is the identification of a management-centric understanding of brand management which is labelled projective brand orientation. Analogously, a specific employee-focused approach has the title "internal brand orientation" (Piha & Avlonitis, 2018).

2.3. Corporate brand orientation

With the formal introduction of the corporate brand notion (Balmer, 1995), came a realization that brands were applicable to entire organizations and therefore were of strategic importance. Additionally, corporate brands represented a new, and powerful, platform by which organizations and stakeholders could have on-going, bi-lateral, and mutually profitable exchanges and relationships. At its core, a corporate brand denotes a powerful covenant (an informal contract) between an organization and its customers and other stakeholders (Balmer, 1998; 2001a; 2001b; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer & Greyser, 2003).

Corporate brands, as marks of assurance, grow out of and are reliant on an organization's corporate identity (what a corporation makes, what it does and how it behaves). Thus, it is an organization's corporate identity which delivers the corporate brand promise (Balmer, 2012a, 2012b). This in effect, represents a melding of corporate brand and brand orientation perspectives. Consequently, "a corporate brand orientation represents a logical development, if not a logical dénouement, of the brand orientation notion" (Balmer, 2013p.724).

Corporate brands are only meaningful when they meet the wants and needs of customers and other stakeholders, and account must be given to their perceptions of the corporate brand (Balmer et al., 2020b). Significantly, the real worth of a corporate brand comes from a realization on the part of managers that customers, and other stakeholders, have *emotional ownership* of a corporate brand, and this contrasts with *legal ownership*, which is vested in the corporation (Balmer, 2012a, 2012b).

A corporate brand covenant distinguishes and differentiates the corporate brand from others and can enhance the esteem, and commitment in which the organization is held by its stakeholders (Balmer, 2001b). A corporate brand is a powerful navigational tool to a variety of stakeholders, including existing and potential employees (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

Employees have a central, and critical role in the delivery of the corporate brand promise (Balmer, 1995, 2001b, 2010, 2012a, 2012b) with it being emphasized: "An essential element of corporate branding is the need for total organizational commitment" (Balmer, 2001b, p.3). It also requires a supporting corporate brand culture (Balmer, 2001a, 2001b; Hatch & Schultz, 2001). Unlike many product and services brands, corporate brand management is a senior management imperative owing to its normative and strategic significance. Consequently, it requires a stakeholder focus; a multidisciplinary perspective; and warrants unremitting senior management attention, and a realization that the CEO is, de facto, the corporate brand manager (Balmer, 1995, 2010, Balmer, 2012a). Hatch and Schultz (2001,) asserted that it is fundamentally concerned with mission, culture, and image.

A corporate brand is underpinned by core values (Balmer, 1995, 2001b; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer, 2012a, 2013; Hatch & Schultz, 2001, 2003; Ind, 1997). These values are narrow in scope and are well-defined (Balmer, 1998). Moreover, brand orientation can be viewed as a type of corporate culture (Balmer, 2013; Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010; Evans et al., 2012; Schmidt et al., 2017), where there are shared patterns of beliefs and expectations and behaviors (Schwartz & Davis, 1981; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). A brand-centred culture values is a significant motivator. It is a culture that meaningfully shapes employee attitudes and behavior (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010).

Furthermore, corporate brands are multidisciplinary in scope (Balmer, 1995, 2001b) and require a holistic approach to brand management, in which all members of an organisation behave in accordance with the desired brand identity (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001).

Although the phrase "corporate brand orientation" did not surface in the seminal corporate brand literature foundational articles emphasized an organizational wide corporate brand focus which accorded importance to employees (Balmer, 1995, 2001b); to organizational values and culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2001, 2003) and a distinct corporate brand promise/covenant (Balmer, 1995; 2001b).

Moreover, it was argued that a corporate brand orientation represents the most powerful of all brand orientations, "The formal introduction and explication of the corporate brand orientation perspective represents the apotheosis of Urde (1994) brand orientation notion. In the writer's estimation, a brand-based organisational-wide culture and philosophy is more intelligible at the level of the corporate brand than any other branding level or category." (Balmer, 2013, p.738)

As such employees are a key corporate brand management constituency (Balmer, 1995, 2001b): they deliver the brand and provide an important interface with other stakeholders. They are critical to corporate brand building and success: their actions and behavior should reinforce the corporate brand covenant and with corporate brand values

(Burmman, Zeplin, & Riley, 2009; Harris & De Chernatony, 2001). Employee commitment to a corporate brand ensures that customers and other stakeholders experience greater uniformity in the implementation and delivery of the corporate brand covenant (Löhndorf, & Diamantopoulos, 2014). Successful brands are dependent of employees reflecting brand values and brand promise through their behavior (Merrilees & Frazer, 2013; Piha & Avlonitis, 2018; Piehler, King, Burmann, & Xiong, 2016; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007) and commitment (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010; Merrilees & Frazer, 2013), and behave in accordance with the desired brand identity (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001). Employees are important in corporate brand contexts because everyone should be involved in brand-building efforts (Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak, 2009; Löhndorf, & Diamantopoulos, 2014). Front-line staff, particularly in services, deliver the corporate brand promise (Löhndorf, & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Boukis, Punjaisri, Balmer, Kaminakis, & Papastathopoulos, 2021), and can be considered as brand champions (Morhart et al., 2009). As observed by Hatch and Schultz (2003, p. 1046). "When corporate branding works, it is because it expresses the values and/or sources of desire that attract key stakeholders to the organisation and encourage them to feel a sense of belonging to it."

3. Propositions

In this article it is argued that corporate identity, internal corporate brand image and internal corporate identity along with corporate identification are some (but not necessarily all) of the important antecedents of corporate brand orientation (See Fig. 1). These perspectives inform the three propositions which are enumerated in the following section.

3.1. Corporate identity matters to corporate brand orientation

Corporate identity is a critical construct since it underpins the distinctiveness, differentiation, cohesiveness, representativeness, effectiveness, and competitive advantage of an organization. At its most prosaic, corporate identity encapsulates an organization's identity: it is what a corporate is (Balmer, 1995). Corporate identity is "one (albeit fundamental) element of a corporate gestalt" (Balmer, 2008) and is a key dimension of corporate marketing: "Corporate identity provides the central platform upon which corporate communications policies are

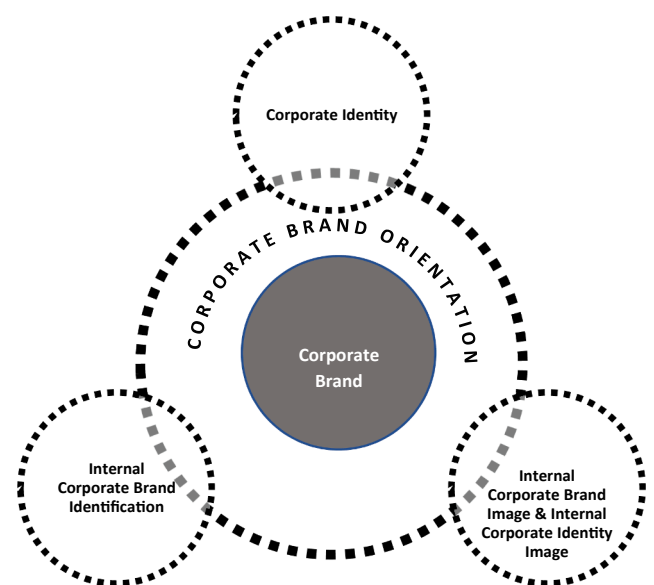


Fig. 1. Corporate brand orientation: the importance of corporate identity, internal corporate brand image/corporate identity image and internal corporate brand identification.

developed, corporate reputations are built and corporate images and stakeholder identifications/associations with the corporation are formed.” (Balmer, 2008, p. 881).

It is an organization’s corporate identity which delivers the corporate brand promise (Balmer, 1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2012b). Corporate identity forms the platform on which corporate brands are constructed and maintained (Balmer, 1995, 2001a, 2001b). Corporate identity represents a mix of organizational characteristics (Balmer, 2017b; Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2006) which make it unique (Balmer, 2008; Cornilissen et al., 2007; Podnar, 2015). Characteristics that make an organization uniform inward and differentiated outwards (Podnar, 2015). Corporate identity attributes relate to, among others, what it does, how it does it (Balmer, 2008, 2017b) and can be understood as “a series of interdependent characteristics of the organization from which it draws its specificity, stability, and unity” (Larçon & Reitter, 1994, p. 251). More specifically it encompasses an institution’s organisational type; its purpose(s); activities; ethos and values; market position; markets and customers served; product and service quality; management and employee behaviours; geographic scope and may also include a company founders’ vision and ethos (Balmer, 2017b).

From the above, corporate identity serves as platform by which a company allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it (Melewar, 2003). As a foundation, as well as the expression, of the corporate brand (Balmer, 2001b) it is the corporate identity that delivers the corporate brand promise (Balmer, 2012a). As such corporate identity and corporate brand are inextricably linked (Balmer, 2001b), and often inseparable (Christensen & Askegaard, 2001). Corporate brand values should be related to a common corporate identity and, moreover, corporate brands can be seen as communicating corporate identity (Kay, 2006). The authenticity of companies, and corporate brands, comes a presentation of the real corporate self and not from making unsubstantiated claims, or from following management fads and fashion. Similarly, an organization’s identity needs to be in dynamic alignment with the corporate brand promise (Balmer, 2012a, 2012b; Balmer & Greyser, 2003). A key tenor of brand orientation is that it should be embedded in all an organization’s activities (Bridson & Evans, 2004) and this is akin to saying that a corporate brand orientation should be embedded in an organization’s corporate identity (Balmer, 2012a, 2012b).

Therefore, the first proposition can be enumerated as follows:

P₁ Corporate identity is important to a corporate brand orientation because it provides the foundations for a corporate brand and as such the corporate brand and corporate identity should be dynamically aligned.

3.2. Internal corporate brand image and internal corporate brand identity matters to corporate brand orientation

Corporate image is the instantaneous mental picture a person has of an organization at one point in time (Balmer, 1998; Gray & Balmer, 1998). It represents the totality of perceptions held of an organization by an individual (Alvesson, 1990; Barich & Kotler, 1991; Bromley, 1993; Kennedy, 1977). At the level of a group, a stereotype image occurs where there are shared perceptions of an organization (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Martineau (1958b)). Images are formed by interactions with an organization/corporate brand (Abratt & Kleyn (2012) and through corporate communications effects (Alvesson, 1990; Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). Image shape attitudes and behavior (Boulding, 1956; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Martineau, 1958a; 1958b). Corporate (identity) image informs an individual’s attitudes and behavior towards an organization’s corporate identity (Larçon & Reitter, 1994). Similarly, corporate brand image shapes a person’s attitudes and behavior to a corporate brand (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Alwi & Kitchen, 2014; Balmer et al., 2020b). Images can be conscious and unconscious (Larçon & Reitter, 1994). Drawing on psychological dual process theory in psychology (Smith & DeCoster, 2000), it was asserted by Balmer et al. (2020b) that corporate brand image utilizes either

system 1 or system 2 cognitive processing. System 1 processing is immediate, effortless, and non-conscious, whereas system 2 processing is considered, deliberate and cerebral. Employee’s images inform their actions (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), and in turn affects organizational performance (Riordan, Gatewood, & Bill, 1997).

Strong employee internal corporate identity image acts as a catalyst for employees’ motivation, performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment Gilani (2019). Employees are pivotal in delivering the corporate brand covenant (Balmer, 1995, 2001; Balmer, 2012a; Burmann et al., 2009; Harris & De Chernatony, 2001). Strong and successful corporate brands are reliant on employees being committed (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010; Merrilees & Frazer, 2013); and adopting brand values in their behaviors (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001; Merrilees & Frazer, 2013; Piha & Avlonitis, 2018; Piehler et al., 2016; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

Therefore, the second proposition can be enumerated as follows:

P₂ Employee internal corporate image and internal corporate brand image are important to a corporate brand orientation because they shape employee cognitions and behaviors.

3.3. Corporate brand identification matters to corporate brand orientation.

Brand identification is informed by social identity/self-categorization theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987), and this theory provides the foundations for an understanding of brand identification (Balmer et al., 2020a; Balmer & Liao, 2007; De Roeck, Maon, & Lejeune, 2013; Tuškej et al., 2013). Identification represents a psychological and emotional sense of oneness and belongingness - with an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cornilissen et al., 2007; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). Identification requires the fulfilment of one or more self-definitional need, including self-continuity, self-distinctiveness, or self-esteem (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Employee identification is where an organizational member strongly, and positively, identifies with an organization, adopts the characteristics of the firm so that it is part of their own self-concept (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994); and views an organization’s success and failures as their own (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Individuals with high levels of identification think highly of the organization; meaningfully engage with an organization; and have a sense of “oneness” with an organization’s corporate identity (Cornilissen et al., 2007; Podnar & Golob, 2015; Smidts et al., 2001). Internal branding is a process where staff behavior is aligned with a corporate brand (Tosti & Stotz, 2001; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). Similarly, corporate brand identification is where the intersection of a self-identity corresponds to that of the corporate brand (Balmer, 2012a; Brannan, Parsons, & Priola, 2015). Brand identification occurs when an individual’s cognitions of a brand is self-defining and self-referential (Hughes & Ahearne, 2010) and where there is an internalization of brand values (Hughes & Ahearne, 2010; Morhart et al., 2009). Preferably, all employees should behave in accordance with the desired brand identity (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001). An emotional attachment and identification with a brand are dependent on brand trust (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Park et al., 1986). Identification fosters employees’ activities that further the company’s goals (Madrigal, 2020), and underpins organizational-congruent behaviors, socialization, commitment, intra-group cohesion and cooperation, (Ashforth & Mael, 2004), and stimulates corporate brand affinity; (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008) and brand citizenship behaviors (Balmer, 2017a; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014, Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Strong corporate brands attract individuals who have a sense of belonging to the corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Employees with a strong sense of identification are the most profitable capital of an organization (Lu & Torng, 2017): they bring a corporate brand to life through their thoughts and actions (Reid et al., 2005) and widespread employee identification ensures uniformity in the implementation and delivery of the corporate brand covenant (Löhndorf, &

Diamantopoulos, 2014). Brand orientated organizations require a strong organizational culture which is informed by a strong brand ethic (Balmer, 2013). Corporate brands are underpinned by core values and a supporting brand culture (Balmer, 1995, 2001b; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer, 2012a, 2013; Hatch & Schultz, 2001, 2003; Ind, 1997; Kay, 2006).

Therefore, the third proposition can be enumerated as follows:

P₃ Corporate brand identification (an organizational-wide identification with the corporate brand) is important to realizing a corporate brand orientation (an organizational wide culture and philosophy grounded in a corporate brand).

4. Conclusion

This article has advanced, and broadened, the perspective that corporate identity; internal corporate brand image and internal corporate identity image; and internal corporate brand identification are important requisites for a corporate brand orientation. To date, these dimensions have not been afforded adequate prominence within the literature. Hence, it is argued that a corporate brand orientation requires the corporate brand to be dynamically aligned with corporate identity; for there to be positive internal corporate brand/corporate identity images and for there to be organizational-wide identification with the corporate brand. Where the above transpires, a corporate brand philosophy and culture meaningful informs the thoughts, actions, and behaviors of the organization. It is also apparent that the above dimensions are linked as illustrated in the simple, and pragmatic, flow chart: see Fig. 2.

4.1. Theoretical contribution

This article also furthers the general understanding of corporate branding by highlighting the significant role of social identity/self-characterization theory apropos corporate brand orientation. Specifically, corporate brand identification is an application of social identity in a corporate brand context. To date, this theoretical perspective has not enjoyed a high profile within the corporate brand orientation and yet it affords a firm theoretical basis which delineates a key facet corporate brand orientation. Employees can have a psychological, sometimes emotional, sense of oneness with a corporate brand. Consequently, where there is organizational-wide identification with a corporate brand then a corporate brand orientation is established. The three propositions enumerated in this article intimate that corporate identity, internal corporate identity image/corporate brand image, and internal corporate brand are key mainstays of corporate brand orientation.

4.2. Management implications

An effective corporate brand requires an organization to have an institutional-wide corporate orientation among employees. This is because employees not only deliver the brand but invariably are corporate brand ambassadors. This is particularly the case of corporate service brands. Consequently, senior managers should regularly appraise internal corporate identity/corporate brand images, and internal corporate brand identifications towards the corporate brand. This should come with a realization that employees’ corporate cognitions,

attitudes, and behaviors towards the corporate brand can militate for, or against, the establishment of an effectual corporate brand orientation. This is in addition to the critical roles senior managers have in ensuring that the corporate brand is dynamically dovetailed with an organization’s capabilities as expressed in its corporate identity; guaranteeing the corporate brand is attractive and meaningful to customers and other stakeholders; and corroborating the corporate brand in mutually profitable to the organization and to stakeholders. Where organizations have a corporate marketing orientation the nurturing of a corporate brand orientation may be more straightforward since corporate marketing orientation has an explicit organizational/corporate brand focus where importance is accorded to stakeholders and where corporate-level concerns focussed on corporate brand, communications, identity, identifications, images, and reputations, are valued.

Human resources managers are also important given the centrality of employees to corporate brand orientation. Consequently, it is imperative they comprehend their role in fostering a corporate brand orientation when appointing, rewarding, and promoting organizational members. It should also inform induction courses and training programmes.

Additionally, corporate communications managers have a crucial role in terms of ensuring on-going, and consistent, internal corporate brand communications. This is in addition to their responsibilities apropos external-facing corporate brand communications and general corporate identity-based communications. Corporate brand communications need to be dynamically aligned with corporate identity communications.

4.3. Limitations and further research

While this conceptual article seeks to advance theory, the insights need to be empirically tested to verify their saliency. The focus of this investigation was limited to an exploration of identity, image, and identification apropos corporate brand orientation. As such, the authors do not claim this represents the totality of factors which can meaningfully contribute to the establishment of a corporate brand orientation. The contrary is the case.

Based on the conceptual insights contained herein, empirical studies could test the voracity of the propositions and approaches in this article. Thus, corporate brand orientation and its interconnectedness with corporate identity, internal corporate brand/corporate identity image, and international corporate brand identifications as advanced in this article merits empirical attention. Moreover, the saliency of other dimensions/disciplines apropos corporate brand orientation merit further investigation including the role of human resource management, and corporate brand communications in creating and maintaining a corporate brand orientation. Given the broad range of industries and organizations where the corporate brand orientation notion is applicable, further research may usefully focus either on sectors, particular organizations or even include organizational members in senior, middle, and other positions such as those who are in customer-facing roles. Furthermore, the impacts of corporate marketing orientation on corporate brand orientation could also usefully be investigated.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence

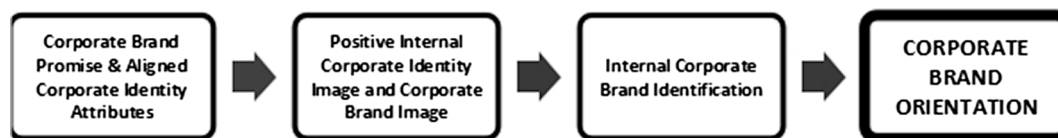


Fig. 2. Relationships between corporate identity, internal corporate image/internal corporate brand image, internal corporate brand identification and corporate brand orientation.

the work reported in this paper.

References

- Abratt, R., & Kleyn, N. (2012). Corporate identity, corporate branding, and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(7/8), 1048–1063.
- Alvesson, M. (1990). Organization: From substance to image. *Organization Studies*, 11(3), 373–394.
- Alwi, S. F. S., & Kitchen, P. J. (2014). Projecting corporate brand image and behavioral response in business schools: Cognitive or affective brand attributes? *Journal of Business Research*, 67(11), 2324–2336.
- Anees-ur-Rehman, M., Wong, H. Y., & Hossain, M. (2016). The progression of brand orientation literature in twenty years: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(6), 612–630.
- Ashforth, B., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), 20.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (2004). Social identity theory and the organization. In M. J. Hatch, & M. Schultz (Eds.), *Organizational identity: A Reader*. (pp.134-160). Oxford University Press.
- Atuahene-Gima, K., & Ko, A. (2001). An empirical investigation of the effect of market orientation and entrepreneurship orientation alignment on product innovation. *Organization Science*, 12(1), 54–74.
- Azizi, S., Ghytasiv, F., & Fakharmanesh, S. (2012). Impact of brand orientation, internal marketing, and job satisfaction on the internal brand equity: The case of Iranian's food and pharmaceutical companies. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 2(2), 122–129.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (1995). Corporate branding and connoisseurship. *Journal of General Management*, 21(1), 24–46.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (1998). Corporate identity and the advent of corporate marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 14(8), 963–996.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2001a). Corporate identity, corporate branding, and corporate marketing - Seeing through the fog. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(3/4), 248–291.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2001b). The three virtues and seven deadly sins of corporate brand management. *Journal of General Management*, 27(1), 1–17.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2008). Identity based views of the corporation: Insights from corporate identity, organisational identity, social identity, visual identity, corporate brand identity and corporate image. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(9/10), 879–906.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2010). Explicating corporate brands and their management: Reflections and directions from 1995. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(3), 180–196.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2011). Corporate marketing myopia and the inexorable rise of a corporate marketing logic. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(9/10), 1329–1352.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2012a). Corporate brand management imperatives: Custodianship, credibility, and calibration. *California Management Review*, 54(3), 6–33.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2012b). Strategic corporate brand alignment: Perspectives from identity-based views of corporate brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(7/8), 1064–1092.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2013). Corporate brand orientation: What is it? What of it? *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(9), 723–741.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2017a). Advances in corporate brand, corporate heritage, corporate identity, and corporate marketing scholarship. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(9/10), 1462–1471.
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2017b). The corporate identity, total corporate communications, stakeholders' attributed identities, identifications, and behaviours continuum. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(9/10), 1472–1502.
- Balmer, J. M. T., & Gray, E. R. (2003). Corporate brands: What are they? What of them? *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(7/8), 972–997.
- Balmer, J.M.T. & Greyser, S.A. (2003). *Revealing the corporation. perspectives on identity, image, reputation, corporate branding and corporate-level marketing*, Routledge.
- Balmer, J. M. T., & Greyser, S. A. (2006). Corporate marketing: Integrating corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image, and corporate reputation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8), 730–741.
- Balmer, J. M. T., & Liao, M. (2007). Student corporate brand identification: An exploratory case study. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 12(4), 356–375.
- Balmer, J. M. T., Mahmoud, R., & Chen, W. (2020a). Impact of multilateral place dimensions on corporate brand attractiveness and identification in higher education: Business school insights. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 628–641.
- Balmer, J. M. T., Lin, Z., Chen, W., & He, X. (2020b). The role of corporate brand image for B2B relationships of logistics service providers in China. *Journal of Business Research*, 117.
- Barich, H., & Kotler, P. (1991). A framework of marketing image management. *Sloan Management Review*, 32(2), 94–104.
- Baumgarth, C. (2009). Brand orientation of museums: Model and empirical results. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 11(3), 30–45.
- Baumgarth, C. (2010). Living the brand: Brand orientation in the business-to-business sector. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44(5), 653–671.
- Baumgarth, C., & Schmidt, M. (2010). How strong is the business-to-business brand in the workforce? An empirically tested model of 'internal brand equity' in a business-to-business setting. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(8), 1250-1260.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(2), 76–88.
- Borden, N. H. (1964). The concept of the marketing mix. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 4(2), 2-7.
- Boso, N., Carter, P. & Annan, J. (2016). When is brand orientation a useful strategic posture? *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(4),363–382.
- Boukis, A., Punjaisri, K., Balmer, J. M. T., Kaminakis, K., & Papastathopoulos, A. (2021). Unveiling front-line employees' brand construal types during corporate brand promise delivery: A multi-study analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 131, 673–685.
- Boulding, K. (1956). *The image*. University of Michigan Press.
- Brannan, M. J., Parsons, E., & Priola, V. (2015). Brands at work: The search for meaning in mundane work. *Organization Studies*, 36(1), 29–53.
- Bridson, K., & Evans, J. (2004). The secret to a fashion advantage is brand orientation. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 32(8), 403–411.
- Bridson, J., Evans, J., Mavondo, F., & Minkiewicz, J. (2013). Retail brand orientation positional advantage and organisational performance. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 23(3), 245–264.
- Bromley, D. B. (1993). *Reputation, image and impression management*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Burmann, C., Zeplin, S., & Riley, N. (2009). Key determinants of internal brand management success: An exploratory empirical analysis. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(4), 264–284.
- Caccioliati, L., & Lee, S. H. (2016). Revisiting the relationship between marketing capabilities and firm performance: The moderating role of market orientation, marketing strategy and organisational power. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5597–5610.
- Cadogan, J. W. (2012). International marketing, strategic orientations, and business success: Reflections on the path ahead. *International Marketing Review*, 29(4), 340–348.
- Callaghan, M., McPhail, J., & Yau, O. H. (1995). Dimensions of a relationship marketing orientation: An empirical exposition. *Proceedings of the Seventh Biannual World Marketing Congress*, 7(2), 10–65.
- Cano, C. R., Carrillat, F. A., & Jaramillo, F. (2004). A meta-analysis of the relationship between market orientation and business performance: Evidence from five continents. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 21(2), 179–200.
- Carrillat, F. A., Jaramillo, F., & Locander, W. B. (2004). Market-driving organizations: A framework. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 5(5), 1–4.
- Casidy, R. (2014). Brand orientation and service quality in online and offline environments: Empirical examination in higher education. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 35(3), 236–254.
- Chang, Y., Wang, X., & Arnett, D. B. (2018). Enhancing firm performance: The role of brand orientation in business-to-business marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 72, 17–25.
- Chatman, J. A., & O'Reilly, C. A. (2016). Paradigm lost: Reinvigorating the study of organizational culture. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 36, 199–224.
- Christensen, L. T., & Askegaard, S. (2001). Corporate identity and corporate image revisited. A semiotic perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(3/4), 292–315.
- Čorić, D. S., Lučić, A., Brečić, R., Šević, R. A., & Šević, Z. (2020). An exploration of start-ups' sustainable marketing orientation (SMO). *Industrial Marketing Management*, 91(11), 176–186.
- Cornilissen, J. P., Haslam, S. A., & Balmer, J. M. T. (2007). Social identity, organizational identity, and corporate identity: Towards an integrated understanding of processes, patterns, and products. *British Journal of Management*, 18(S1), 1–16.
- deChernatony, L. & Segal-Horn, (2003). *The criteria for successful service brands*. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(7/8), 1095-1118.
- De Roeck, K., Maon, F., & Lejeune, C. (2013). Taking up the challenge of corporate branding: Integrative framework. *European Management Review*, 10(3), 137–151.
- Deshpande, R. (1999). *Developing a Market Orientation*. CA: Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.
- Dukerich, J. M., Golden, B. R., & Shortell, S. M. (2002). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder: The impact of organizational identification, identity, and image on the cooperative behaviors of physicians. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47(3), 507–533.
- Dutton, J., & Dukerich, J. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3), 517–554.
- Dutton, J., Dukerich, J., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and membership commitment. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39(2), 239–263.
- Evans, J., Bridson, K., & Rentschler, R. (2012). Drivers, impediments, and manifestations of brand orientation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(11/12), 1457–1475.
- Ewing, M. T., & Napoli, J. (2004). Developing and validating a multidimensional non-profit brand orientation scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(6), 841–853.
- Ferrell, O. C., Gonzalez-Padron, T. L., Hult, G. T. M., & Maignan, I. (2010). From market orientation to stakeholder orientation. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 29(1), 93–96.
- Gatignon, H., & Xuereb, J. (1997). Strategic orientation of the firm and new product performance. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(1), 77–90.
- Gilani, H. (2019). Corporate brand identity and employee brand citizenship behaviour: A conceptual framework. *The Marketing Review*, 19(1–2), 51–84.
- Gylling, C., & Lindberg-Repo, K. (2006). Investigating the links between a corporate brand and a customer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 13(4), 257–267.
- Gray, E. R., & Balmer, J. M. T. (1998). Managing corporate image and corporate reputation. *Long Range Planning*, 31(5), 695–702.
- Grinstein, A. (2008). The relationships between market orientation and alternative strategic orientations. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(1/2), 115–134.
- Gromark, J. (2020). Brand orientation in action—a transformational learning intervention. *Journal of Business Research*, 119(2), 412–422.
- Gromark, J., & Melin, F. (2011). The underlying dimensions of brand orientation and its impact on financial performance. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(6), 394–410.

- Gromark, J., & Melin, F. (2013). From marketing orientation to brand orientation in the public sector. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28(9–10), 1099–1123.
- Grönroos, C. (1994). From marketing mix to relationship marketing. Towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision*, 32(2), 4–20.
- Hankinson, P. (2001a). Brand orientation in the top 500 fundraising charities in the UK. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 10(6), 346–360.
- Hankinson, P. (2001b). Brand orientation in the charity sector: A framework for discussion and research. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 6(3), 231–242.
- Hankinson, P. (2002). The impact of brand orientation on managerial practice: A quantitative study of the UK's top 500 fundraising managers. *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 7(1), 30–44.
- Harris, (1998). Cultural domination: the key to marketing-orientated culture. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(3/4), 354–357.
- Harris, F., & De Chernatony, L. (2001). Corporate branding and corporate brand performance. *European Journal of Marketing*, 5(3/4), 441–456.
- Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (1997). Relations between organizational culture, identity, and image. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(5/6), 356–365.
- Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2001). Are the strategic stars aligned for your corporate brand? *Harvard Business Review*, 79(2), 129–134.
- Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2003). Bringing the corporation into corporate branding. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(9/10), 1041–1064.
- Helfert, G. M., Ritter, T., & Walter, A. (2002). Redefining marketing orientation from a relationship perspective: Theoretical considerations for empirical results. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(9/10), 1119–1139.
- Huang, Y. T., & Tsai, Y. T. (2013). Antecedents and consequences of brand-orientated companies. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(11/12), 2020–2041.
- Hughes, D. E., & Ahearne, M. (2010). Energizing the reseller's sales force: The power of brand identification. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(4), 81–96.
- Ilija, L. & Balmer, J.M.T. (2012). Corporate communication and corporate marketing: Their nature, histories, differences and similarities, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 17(4), 415–433.
- Ind, N. (1997). *The corporate brand*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jaworski, B. L., & Kohli, A. K. (1993). Market orientation: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(3), 53–73.
- Kay, M. J. (2006). Strong brands and corporate brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8), 742–760.
- Kelley, S. W. (1992). Developing customer orientation among service employees. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 20(1), 27–36.
- Kennedy, D. S. H. (1977). Nurturing corporate images. *European Journal of Marketing*, 11(3), 120–164.
- King, C., So, K. K. F., & Grace, D. (2013). The influence of service brand orientation on hotel employees' attitude and behaviors in China. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 24, 172–180.
- Kohli, A. J., & Jaworski, B. J. (1990). Marketing orientation: The construct, research, propositions, and managerial implications. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 1–18.
- Kohli, A. K., Jaworski, B. J., & Kumar, A. (1993). MARKOR: A measure of market orientation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(4), 467–477.
- Kuenzel, S., & Halliday, S. V. (2008). Investigating antecedents and consequences of brand identification. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 17(5), 293–304.
- Lamprini, P. P., & Avlonitis, G. J. (2018). Internal brand orientation: Conceptualisation, scale development and validation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 34(3/4), 370–394.
- Larçon, J. P., & Reitter, R. (1994). Corporate imagery and corporate identity. In *Psychoanalysis and Management* (pp. 251–260). Heidelberg: Physica.
- Laukkanen, T., Tuominen, S., Reijonen, H., & Hirvonen, S. (2016). Does market orientation pay off without brand orientation? A study of small business entrepreneurs. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(7/8), 673–694.
- Lee, Z. (2013). Rebranding in brand-orientated organisations: Exploring tensions in the non-profit sector. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(9/10), 1124–1142.
- Lee, W. J. T., O'Cass, A., & Sok, P. (2017). Unpacking brand management superiority: Examining the interplay of brand management capability, brand orientation and formalisation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(1), 177–199.
- Lu, C. J., & Torng, C. S. (2017, July). The impact of corporate social responsibility and organization identification on employee engagement. In *International Conference on Innovative Mobile and Internet Services in Ubiquitous Computing* (pp. 751–758). Springer, Cham.
- Liu, S., Luo, X., & Shi, Y. Z. (2002). Integrating customer orientation, corporate entrepreneurship, and learning orientation in organizations-in-transition: An empirical study. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 19, 367–382.
- Löhndorf, B., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2014). Internal branding: Social identity and social exchange perspectives on turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Service Research*, 17(3), 310–325.
- Louro, M. J., & Cunha, P. V. (2001). Brand management paradigms. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 17(7–8), 849–875.
- Lytle, R. S., & Timmerman, J. E. (2006). Service orientation and performance: An organizational perspective. *Journal of Retailing*, 35(3/4), 136–147.
- Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(2), 103–123.
- Madrigal, R. (2020). The role of identification and gratitude in motivating organization-serving intentions and behaviors. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 75–84.
- Martineau, P. (1958a). The personality of the retail store, *Harvard Business Review*, January/February, 47–55.
- Martineau, P. (1958b). Sharper focus for the corporate image, *Harvard Business Review*, November/December, 49–58.
- McCarthy, E. J. (1960). *Basic marketing: A Managerial Approach*. Irwin.
- Melewar, T. C. (2003). Determinants of the corporate identity construct: A review of the literature. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 9(4), 195–220.
- Merk, M., & Michel, G. (2019). The dark side of salesperson brand identification in the luxury sector: When brand orientation generates management issues and negative customer perception. *Journal of Business Research*, 102, 339–353.
- Merrilees, B., & Frazer, L. (2013). Internal branding: Franchisor leadership as a critical determinant. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(2), 158–164.
- Morgan, N. A., Vorhies, D. W., & Mason, C. H. (2009). Market orientation, marketing capabilities, and firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 30(8), 909–920.
- Morgan, R. E., & Strong, C. A. (1998). Market orientation and dimensions of strategic orientation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(11/12), 1051–1073.
- Morhart, F. M., Herzog, W., & Tomczak, T. (2009). Brand-specific leadership. Turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 122–142.
- Mulyanegara, R. C. (2011). The relationship between market orientation, brand orientation and perceived benefits in the non-profit sector: A customer-perceived paradigm. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(5), 429–441.
- M'zungu, S., Merrilees, B., & Miller, D. (2017). Strategic hybrid orientation between market orientation and brand orientation: guiding principles, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 25(4), 275–288.
- Napoli, J. (2006). The impact of non-profit brand orientation on organizational performance. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 22(7/8), 673–694.
- Noble, C.H., Rajiv K. Sinha, R.K., & Kumar, A. (2002). Market Orientation and Alternative Strategic Orientations: A Longitudinal Assessment of Performance Implications, *Journal of Marketing*, 66(4), 25–39.
- Odom, R., & Mensah, P. (2019). Brand orientation and brand performance in SMEs: The moderating effects of social media and innovation capabilities. *Management Research Review*, 42(1), 155–171.
- Osakwe, C. N., Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, N., Mihajlov, M., & Ciunova-Shuleska, A. (2020). Brand orientation, brand-building behavior and brand identity in SMEs: An empirical evaluation. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 38(7), 813–828.
- Papadas, K.-K., Avlonitis, G. J., & Carrigan, M. (2017). Green marketing orientation: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Business Research*, 80, 236–246.
- Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J., & MacInnis, D. J. (1986). Strategic brand concept-image management. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(4), 135–145.
- Piehlher, R., King, C., Burmann, C., & Xiong, L. (2016). The importance of employee brand understanding, brand identification, and brand commitment in realizing brand citizen behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(9/10), 1575–1601.
- Piha, L. P., & Avlonitis, G. J. (2018). Internal brand orientation: Conceptualisation, scale development and validation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 34(3/4), 370–394.
- Podnar, K. (2015). *Corporate communication. A marketing viewpoint*. Routledge.
- Podnar, K., & Golob, U. (2015). The twin foci of organisational identification and their relevance for commitment: A study of marketing communications industry. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 16(1), 214–227.
- Punjaisri, K., & Wilson, A. (2007). The role of internal branding in the delivery of employee brand promise. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), 57–70.
- Punjaisri, K., & Wilson, A. (2011). Internal branding process: Key mechanisms, outcomes and moderating factors. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(9/10), 1521–1537.
- Reid, M., Luxton, S., & Mavondo, F. (2005). The relationship between integrated marketing communication, market orientation, and brand orientation. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(4), 11–23.
- Reijonen, H., Laukkanen, T., Kompulla, R., & Tuominen, S. (2012). Are growing SMEs more market-orientated and brand orientated? *Journal of Small Business Management*, 50(4), 699–716.
- Renton, M., Daellenbach, U., Davenport, S., & Richard, J. (2016). Finding fit: An exploratory look at SME brand orientation and brand management in the New Zealand food and beverage sector. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(3), 289–305.
- Riordan, C. M., Gatewood, R. D., & Bill, J. B. (1997). Corporate image: Employee reactions and implications for managing corporate social performance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 16(4), 401–412.
- Schmidt, H. J., Baumgarth, C., Wiedmann, K.-P., & Luckenbach, F. (2015). Strategic orientations and the performance of social entrepreneurial organizations: A conceptual model. *Social Business*, 5(2), 131–155.
- Schmidt, H. J., Mason, R., Steenkamp, P., & Mugobo, V. (2017). Does brand orientation contribute to retailers' success? An empirical study in the South African market. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 38(9), 219–222.
- Slater, S. F., & Narver, J. C. (1995). Market orientation and the learning organization. *Journal of Marketing*, 59, 63–74.
- Slater, S. F., & Narver, J. C. (1996). Competitive strategy in the market-focused business. *Journal of Market-Focused Management*, 1(2), 159–174.
- Smids, A., Pruyn, H., & Van Riel, C. B. M. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organizational identification. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 44(5), 1051–1062.
- Smith, E. R., & DeCoster, J. (2000). Dual-process models in social and cognitive psychology: Conceptual integration and links to underlying memory systems. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4(2), 108–131.
- Schwartz, H., & Davis, S. M. (1981). Matching corporate culture and business strategy. *Organizational Dynamics*, 10(1), 30–48.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). Social categorization, social identity, and social comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of inter-group relations* (pp. 61–76). Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1985). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In W. Steven, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.

- Temprano-García, V., Rodríguez-Escudero, A. I., & Rodríguez-Pinto, J. (2020). Do proactive and reactive causes to delete a brand impact deletion success? The role of brand orientation. *Journal of Brand Management*, 27(2), 211–226.
- Tosti, D. T., & Stotz, R. D. (2001). Brand: Building your brand from the inside out. *Marketing Management*, 10(2), 28.
- Turner, J.C. (1987). *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*. Oxford; Blackwell.
- Tuškej, U., Golob, U., & Podnar, K. (2013). The role of consumer–brand identification in building brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 53–59.
- Urde, M. (1994). Brand orientation – a strategy for survival. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 11(3), 18–32.
- Urde, M. (1999). Brand orientation: A mindset for building brands into strategic resources. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1–3), 117–133.
- Urde, M., Baumgarth, C., & Merrilees, B. (2013). Brand orientation and market orientation-from alternatives to synergy. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(2), 13–20.
- Vallaster, C., & de Chernatony, L. (2006). Internal brand building and structuration: The role of leadership. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8), 761–784.
- Wallace, E., Buil, I., & de Chernatony, L. (2013). Brand orientation and brand values in retail banking. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(9–10), 1007–1029.
- Wong, H. Y., & Merrilees, B. (2005). A brand orientation typology for SMEs: A case research approach. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 14(3), 155–162.
- Wong, H. Y., & Merrilees, B. (2008). The performance benefits of being brand orientated. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 17(6), 372–383.
- Wright, P., Kroll, M., Pray, B., & Lado, A. (1995). Strategic orientations, competitive advantage, and business performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 33(2), 143–151.
- Zhang, J., Jiang, Y., Shabbir, R., & Zhu, M. (2016). How brand orientation impacts B2B service brand equity? An empirical study among Chinese firms. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 31(1), 83.
- Zhou, K. Z., Yim, C. K., & Tse, D. K. (2005). The effects of strategic orientations on technology and market-based breakthrough innovations. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(2), 42–60.

Further reading

- Hatch, M. J. (1993). The dynamics of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 657–693.

Professor John M. T. Balmer holds a personal chair as Professor of Corporate Marketing at Brunel University Business School, Brunel University London and is quondam Professor of Corporate Brand/Identity Management at Bradford School of Management (UK). A leading proponent of corporate identity and corporate heritage scholarship he co-conceived the corporate heritage brand notion (2006). Sometimes regarded as the ‘Father’ of the corporate brand concept (1995), he also pioneered the corporate marketing, total corporate communications and monarchical marketing notions, and penned cornerstone articles in these areas. He has published in many leading journals including California Management Review, Journal of Business Research, British Journal of Management, European Journal of Marketing, Long Range Planning, Journal of Business Ethics etc. Address: Brunel University Business School, Brunel University London, Eastern Gateway Building, Kingston Lane, London UB8 3PH, The United Kingdom. [email: john.balmer@brunel.ac.uk]

Professor Klement Podnar is a Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. His research interests lie in corporate marketing and communication, corporate social responsibility and organisational identification. He has published his work in journals such as European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Product & Brand Management etc. Address: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Marketing Communication and Public Relations Department, Kardeljeva pl., 1000, Ljubljana, Slovenia. [email: klement.podnar@fdv.uni-lj.si]