

Advancing the Scholarship on Corporate Identity and Corporate Branding.

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Guest Editor' Introduction

The relationship and integration between management studies and corporate branding continues to be of interest for many researchers and practitioners alike. As organizations and managers are keen on developing distinctive characteristics and improve company images among key stakeholders, corporate branding concepts, such as identity, is just one of the many branding ideas that are increasingly important to create a competitive advantage in the highly competitive global environment.

Of interest to researchers is how corporate brand management can be adapted and develop theories from strategic management studies with the incorporation of branding concepts, such as identity, impression management, and mission. We propose that these concepts should be advanced further both in relation to the branding literature as well as in the management and organization context. In this respect, we encourage further developments of the 'brand-strategic management studies'-link, much to the benefit of branding, since varying management orientations, arising from an organizational context, will support the generalizability of the theories or reveal modifications, both of which are interesting to the branding literature.

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We believe that in the management and organization context there is considerable debate and uncertainty about how to respond to branding-related competition and how to capitalize on the opportunities branding offers. Therefore, we believe that it is very timely to seek to publish more research, which critically engage with theoretical and empirical issues on branding conjointly with management studies, in order to draw from as wide a range of perspectives as possible in the context of organization management. In this issue we publish six articles that cover specific issues related to corporate identity and corporate branding.

The first article, by Devereux, Melewar and Foroudi, entitled “Corporate Identity and Social Media: Existence and Extension of the Organization,” explores the relationship between corporate identity and social media. The authors note that the corporate identity concept is heading into increasingly fragmented, but exciting times as increased resources for organizations, especially in terms of technology. This has created new ways to develop and disseminate corporate identities. Consequently, the article seeks to explore in depth the corporate identity/social media relationship, by separating social media use into five stages, and discussing how each stage can reveal and develop elements of corporate identity. In doing so they suggest further areas that can be researched by corporate identity scholars and offer a framework that can aid practitioners in gaining a greater understanding of what social media can do for the corporate identity.

The second article, entitled “Corporate Identity at the Stakeholder Group Level: A Conceptual Model of Frontline Employee Corporate Identity,” written by

Glanfield, Saunders and Evanschitzky, examines corporate identity from the perspective of an individual stakeholder group; front-line employees, considered central to the development of an organization's corporate identity as it spans an organization's boundaries, frequently interacts with both internal and external stakeholders, and influences a firm's financial performance by building customer loyalty and satisfaction. The authors address how corporate identity manifests within the front-line employee stakeholder group, identifying what components comprise front-line employee corporate identity and assessing what contribution front-line employees make to constructing a strong and enduring corporate identity for an organization. In reviewing the literature, the authors develop propositions that, in conjunction with a conceptual model, constitute the generation of new theory that is recommended for empirical testing.

The article entitled "Impression Management Activity in Vision, Mission and Values Statements: A Comparison of Commercial and Charitable Organizations," by Spear, investigates the extent to which vision, mission and values (VM&V) statements play a role in corporate identity management by commercial and charitable organizations. Adopting impression management (IM) theory, the author analyzes how these statements influence stakeholders' impressions of an organization. The author finds that there are evidently gaps between theory and practice. Many of the commercial and charitable organizations under-utilized VM&V statements as corporate identity cues, and there is subsequently potential for greater use of these statements as part of corporate identity management by organizations in both commercial and charitable sectors. Managers are thus encouraged to ensure that the

influence of the statements on stakeholders' impressions of the organization aligns with the desired corporate image.

The fourth article, entitled "Corporate Logo: History, Definition and Components," by Foroudi and Melewar, assesses and organizes the literature relating to the historiography of the corporate logo and further discusses the challenges in developing a corporate logo. The authors note that despite the important role of the corporate logo as a company's signature and communication tool, and the positive attention it has received in the last few years, a definitive construct of the corporate logo and its measurement does not yet exist. As organizations continue to spend extensive time, research and money on developing a logo that reflects the organization's identity and helps to mold its image in a positive way, further investigation is needed. The authors report findings of a literature-based study that sought to clarify the definitions and components of the corporate logo, namely, color, typeface, corporate name and design.

The article entitled "Shaping Corporate Brands: From Product Features to Corporate Mission," written by Pace, examines if the technical features of products can express some dimensions of a corporate brand, namely, the corporate mission. Products convey more technical information, which is usually detached from the abstract values of the corporate brand. As such, the research argues that if the technical features of a product are presented in verbal forms, as opposed to numerical forms, they can better express the corporate mission of a company.

The final article, entitled “Advancing a Citizenship Approach to Corporate Branding: A Societal View,” by Biraghi, Gambetti and Schultz, presents a novel view of corporate branding (CB) as “societal CB.” By societal CB, the authors refer to the humanistic tendency of a company to use the corporate brand as an enabler of social discourses and actions through which the company, in enacting its corporate citizenship (CC), carries out quasi-governmental interventions in favor of society. The authors elaborate the view of the corporate brand as a relational asset nurtured by business and society encounters, by elucidating the conceptual seeds that pave the way to societal CB, to then illustrate and critically discuss anecdotes of quasi-governmental actions carried out by companies in their CB efforts. In doing so, they attempt to open an arena for reflection on societal CB as a contemporary humanistic expression of CC. Due to the emergent and ambiguous nature of the phenomenon, it is conceived that the contribution is an incubator of ideas for the advancement of CC through the societal CB view.

We hope these articles will encourage further discourse, discussion and debate in this ever-expanding research field linking corporate branding with strategic management studies. In particular, further research could explore several increasing area of interests within this field. For example, as the importance of social media is vital to address the corporate brand’s identity (e.g. corporate logo, symbol, colour, design as well as the values), further empirical works within this field would enhance our understanding of how to use and complement this channel to communicate the specific messages to the different stakeholders. More importantly, corporate brand scholars could explore the alignment of a myriad of stakeholders’ perceptions towards brand identity within and across the organization (e.g. comparison of how top, middle

and bottom level employees perceive their organisational identity) rather than exploring it from a single stakeholder group. Finally, we are witnessing that stakeholders demand transparency from the corporate brand as well as the importance of the company to behave morally and responsibly in their business activities; further empirical work could provide a clearer understanding of how companies could use this element and integrate them in their overall corporate strategies.