



Design, Branding and Marketing: Experience and Value Creation in Design, Branding, Marketing, Corporate Reputation and Identity

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Contemporary businesses are confronted with a complex and unpredictable landscape. This complexity arises partly due to the digital transformation of our society. First, this transformation led to the blending of boundaries between various service sectors such as service design, UX design (user experience design) and retail design. They all are encapsulated under the widely recognized concept of the 'Experience Economy' (Petermans 2012; Pine and Gilmore 1998). Second, the proliferation of connectivity has led to customers becoming more informed, discerning, and value-oriented (Willems et al. 2016). Consequently, in their quest to stand out and maintain their customer base, businesses have shifted their focus toward implementing design as a differentiation strategy. Design of products, spaces, services, and indeed experiences, all to create value for their users. Indeed, customer value and the importance of it is acknowledged as a foundational concept in both marketing and branding academia and real-world applications (Zeithaml et al. 2020; Zeithaml 1988). It is commonly understood that customer value serves as a crucial driver of competitive advantage (Woodruff 1997), and it plays a central role in shaping business strategies. Also in design, creating value is at the core of the discipline (Servais et al. 2019). Maybe less in design academia yet, but well accomplished in practice.

In the ever-evolving world of business, the symbiotic relationship between marketing and design has become increasingly evident in practice (Quartier et al. 2022). The successful synergy of these disciplines is not merely an option but a prerequisite for organizations seeking to thrive in the competitive marketplace. As consumers increasingly demand immersive and genuine experiences, the conventional distinctions segregating marketing from design have blurred significantly. Academia has picked up on this and more and more publications are appearing on the subject

(e.g. Quartier et al. 2022). Still, there is some catching up to do. In this Special Issue, we therefore explore aspects of theory and practice that cross perceived boundaries between marketing and design. It includes academic work of merit that spans the areas of branding, corporate reputation and identity, promotion, product development, retail design, online and/or multimedia consumer engagement. This Special Issue aims particularly to focus on aspects of the creative process, exploring interdisciplinary connections between research, practice and teaching. We seek to unravel the intricacies of this transformative phenomenon by compiling a diverse array of contributions, encompassing a broad spectrum of topics ranging from branding and corporate reputation to corporate identity, marketing assets, product design paradigms, retail design dynamics, and the expansive realm of online and multimedia consumer engagement. In these contributions it is posited that innovation and forward-thinking are not the exclusive prerogatives of either marketing or design but rather find their zenith at the convergence of these disciplines. The exploration of the creative process thus yields insights into how these domains can harmonize to propel organizations toward uncharted vistas.

A first contribution by Jorge Costa and António Azevedo (2023)¹ focuses on brand hate. It defines brand hate as a strong negative emotional state that consumers develop toward brands that provide poor experiences. It notes that brand equity can account for a significant portion of a company's value, making brand reputation crucial. The paper extends the discussion beyond existing models of brand hate, such as brand avoidance, brand retaliation, and negative word of mouth, by introducing the concept of brand forgiveness. The article explores the dynamics of brand hate and introduces the concept of brand forgiveness, shedding light on the factors that lead consumers to hate brands and the potential strategies for brand redemption. It offers several managerial implications, suggesting that brands should

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¹ Due to a technical error, this paper as well as the one by Foroudi (2023) were published already in earlier issues of *Corporate Reputation Review*. We apologize for this mistake.



implement pre-crisis social responsibility strategies, claims monitoring and management policies, and crisis communication plans to mitigate brand hate. Apologizing for mistakes and taking corrective actions can help brands regain customer trust. The digital transformation of our society makes this even more challenging on the one hand, but it definitely offers opportunities as well.

In a second paper, Zakkiya Khan, Raymund König, and Chrisna du Plessis examine the growing interest of global brands in creating unique and authentic retail store designs instead of standardized ones. Global brands often choose localized retail store designs that reflect the specific place and culture in which the store is situated. Unlike traditional retail designs that focus solely on the brand, localized designs draw inspiration from both the brand and the local environment, posing challenges to maintaining brand recognition. The findings reveal three key areas for mediating global brand identity and local authenticity in localized retail design: collaboration between brands and local designers; dual inspiration drawing from both the brand's essence and local culture for design inspiration; and effective communication conveying the brand to local consumers.

Catarina Lelis and Elizete de A. Kreutz explore in a third paper how contemporary brands are embracing flexibility, increased interaction with the public through social media, and a focus on customer experience and storytelling in their visual identities. It identifies different levels of audience participation in the design of dynamic and mutable brand visual narratives. The research suggests that brands welcoming co-creation and audience involvement may establish stronger emotional bonds with the public, promote citizenship, and reinforce democratic principles. These insights are thus actually adding to the knowledge of the second paper.

In a fourth paper, Pantea Foroudi (2023) studies the importance of marketing assets as a source of competitive advantage for hospitality and tourism companies. Marketing assets are categorized into intellectual, physical, and cultural aspects. The study suggests that organizations in the tourism and hospitality sector should pay attention to factors influencing different types of assets and focus on enhancing marketing capability. It emphasizes the role of marketing resources and assets in achieving superior business marketing management capability.

Maaïke Mulder-Nijkamp, Mendel de Kok, Viktor Klasen, and Wouter Eggink discuss the importance of the visual appearance of product brand extensions and how it impacts their success in a fifth paper. It highlights that while established brands have a recognizable identity, creating successful extensions involves a balance between typicality (resemblance to the archetype product), novelty (newness), and brand fit (alignment with brand characteristics). The paper introduces the "Triangular Designer Space," a tool that helps designers and design managers

strategically make decisions for successful brand extensions by guiding design decisions. The study concludes that archetype products (e.g., headphones and watches) have a smaller designer space, while multitype products (e.g., lamps and speakers) offer more room for innovative alternatives.

The sixth and last paper, Elisa Servais, Katelijn Quartier and Jan Vanrie discuss the development of the "Retail Design Kick-off Platform," a tool aimed at assisting retail professionals, especially retail designers, in the design process of valuable in-store experiences. The tool challenges existing habits in the retail design process and supports retail designers and retailers in triggering a reflective process focused on experiences and values before store conceptualization. The tool's content challenges current habits by making users think beyond their usual approaches, encouraging complete reflection, and questioning the status quo. It draws on the knowledge of marketing and design literature, merging both in a strategic instrument.

In conclusion, these six papers offer valuable insights for businesses navigating the ever-changing landscape of experiences. They collectively emphasize the critical importance of brand reputation, customer experience and value creation, and adaptability in today's dynamic business environment.

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