

The story of experiences – the evolution of the interdisciplinarity of branding

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Abstract

Purpose

This study aspires to contribute to the literature on the evolutionary stages of the concept of branding through the acknowledgement of its connection with sensory (tangible) and philosophical (intangible) experiences. The concept of branding is planned to be understood from a two-fold perspective on experiences, palpable and non-physical.

Design/methodology/approach

In this qualitative research, a wide set of sources on the concept of branding laid the grounds for a historical methodology focused on providing a thorough insight into branding and its relatedness to tangible and intangible experiences.

Findings

This paper offers comprehensive views on the historical developments associated with the concept of branding. Through this investigation, a plethora of phenomena on the tangible and intangible character of branding has been unearthed confirming the complexity of branding and the experiences it evokes. This study demonstrates that understanding the concept of branding with its multi-faceted nature could offer a valuable source of support toward bettering a cognizance of the future of a brand and its reputation in a marketplace.

Originality/value

This investigation employs the approach of brand experience as sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses introduced by Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) and builds upon their call for more research on experiences.

This exploration is original in its approach as it considers a two-fold character of experience and its presence in branding. The investigation's novel character is embraced by distinguishing those two types of experiences against branding and simultaneously integrating both, tangible and intangible, occurrences as a stream of intrinsic characteristics of the essence of branding.

Keywords: Branding, Branding evolution, Brand research, Brand experiences

I. Introduction

The concept of branding has been vastly covered in the literature through diverse approaches to its understanding. From emphasizing the complexity of brands and their impact on consumers' perceptions (De Chernatony, 2010), voicing the controversial character of defining branding in marketing (Kapferer, 2012), agreeing that branding can be defined as a differentiating factor between competitive parties (Aaker, 2009; Van Zyl, 2011; Du Toit & Erdis, 2013) and the distinguishing characteristic can be a name, design, sign, symbol or "a combination of these" (Committee on Definitions, 1960, p.8) as pointed by the American Marketing Association, to seeing branding as

something richer and far more than a name and logo (Aaker, 2014), as an image that is evoked in consumers' minds (De Chernatony and Riley, 1998), a promise of value to consumers (Kapferer, 2012), a totality of everything that people can "think, feel, suspect, imagine, believe, wish and say about a brand" (Middleton, 2011, p. 108), and finally defining a brand as "the definition of your organisation" (Jones and Bonevac, 2013, p.117-8).

This investigation adapts the approach of brand experience as sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses introduced by Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) and builds upon their call for more research on experiences. An improved understanding of brand experiences generates vast opportunities for further inquiry. According to Schmitt (2009) experiences profoundly focus on "one of the most important aspects of our lives: the seemingly superficial world of brands" (p.419). This paper's general theme is the evolution of brand experiences and realising the value of the distinction of experiences that accompany branding.

The primary aim of this research paper is to discuss the evolutionary phases of brand experiences. The principal objectives that support the achievement of this investigation outcome are focused on distinguishing the development stages of branding, understanding the concept of brand experiences, and studying, both, tangible and intangible types of experiences evoked by brands. Finally, a simple framework for integrating the tangible and intangible brand experiences and supporting strategic management of branding is presented. This model serves as a supportive tool for executives and managers involved in or/and responsible for the direction of activities and programs related to branding in their organisations. The paper concludes by identifying the significance of this examined field to academic and non-academic grounds.

This qualitative research is designed in accordance with a historical research focus that encourages collating a wide spectrum of sources to enrich the desired outcomes of the study. Witkowski and Jones (2006, p.76) emphasize that "collecting different sources, both within and across categories, is highly desirable". This historiography of the concept of branding poses some important questions and attempts to respond by analysing systematically collected evidence from various sources and historical studies including primary sources (archives), secondary sources (other scholars' works), running records (case studies notes), and artefacts (artworks). This historical research focused on brand experiences and their evolution is built on the historical fundamentals of an array of sources to enhance the overall credibility of the study.

In this qualitative research, a wide set of sources on the concept of branding laid the grounds for a historical methodology focused on providing a thorough insight into branding and its relatedness to tangible and intangible experiences. The selected methodological approach for this study, empirical historiography, aspires to deliver factual data free of judgements or interpretations to allow an objective set of historical events to emerge rather than a contextual analysis or explanation enriched with opinions and suggestions. According to Elton (1967), the "historical method is no more than a recognised and tested way of extracting from what the past has left and the true facts and events of that past" (Danto, 2008, p.12). The descriptive history model adopted by this study aims to outline neutral grounds for social scientists that can be further used in academic and non-academic settings to investigate the area of the evolution of brand experiences and the concept of branding.

II. Evolution of branding

With many attempts to define branding one important question about the origins of branding emerges. Herman stated that "branding, as a concept, is older than the modern theory" (2003, p.71), providing a solid ground for the value of seeking the historical events that shaped the modern concept of branding. Tracing the history and the evolution of branding many scholars drew attention to the Norse word "brandr" which was used in marking cattle (Hart and Murphy, 1998; Keller, 2008; Riezebos, 2003) meaning to burn a symbol or a mark on a skin surface that would identify livestock's owners (Khan & Mufti, 2007; Maurya & Mishra, 2012; Roper & Parker, 2006). This identifier served the purpose of emphasizing the ownership of livestock and also distinguishing them from others present in marketplaces. The names of families were used for several purposes, firstly, as a brand, secondly, helped to associate the livestock, and thirdly as a mark of quality (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

The branding of livestock dates back to 2000 BC (Dranove and Jin, 2010), there is some earlier evidence of branding in relation to the origins of products.

This Ancient Norse concept of symbolising ownership (around 350AD) has shaped the modern understanding of branding as an identifier, a mark, or a symbol. Approximately 600 years later the meaning of branding evolved and spread to a burning piece of wood (950AD). Another 300 years added some context of a tool or a factor that can burn a piece of wood.

Many would argue that branding beginnings can reach as far as the human species initiated some basic forms of communication and information exchange. Possibly the term depicting the meaning of a symbol, or an item was not even thought of when the various ways of promoting goods amongst our ancient ancestors were practised. Some primitive forms of communicating messages about who was offering what and where were discovered in anthropological studies of the Greeks and Romans. Room (1998) discussing the historical origins of branding pointed the very early forms of advertising were related to a personal level such as a name of an individual was equally critical as an item that was being offered (Hart and Murphy, 1998). This phenomenon can find its mirroring practice of naming conventions of stores based on the owners of those establishments. In the earlier days of ancient Rome first commercial exchanges, signs or images were the media to visually present an offering to the public. Figure 1.0 presents a sign found in the ruins of Pompeii displaying several ham pieces offered by a local butcher (Hart and Murphy, 1998).



Figure 1.0. A row of ham image found in Pompeii.

While Dranove and Jin (2010) state that the branding of cattle dates back to 2000 BC, there are indications that branding practices indicating products' origin of production date back even further when branded livestock in 2700 BC was used as an identifier for stolen cattle by Ancient Egyptians (Khan and Mufti, 2007). The main purpose of marking and placing some pictorial symbols on items, products, and other objects as well as livestock was to differentiate and trademark as a form of ownership but also quality and guarantee (Blackett, 1998; Farquhar, 1989; Khan and Mufti, 2007). The abundance of evidence of branding practices in the forms of pots and clay figurines marked by a potter found in ancient Greece and Rome over the years provides solid grounds for identifying the early visual forms of branding (Khan and Mufti, 2007).

Some other forms of corroboration that some branding origins can be discovered in even earlier periods such as 7000 BC in the Mesopotamia region, 3500 BC in the Middle East, and 3000 BC in Egypt were unearthed by Wengrow (2008), Eckhardt and Bengtsson (2010). The evidence of early branding practices encompasses some sealing practices (Wengrow, 2008) that could have acted as indicators of quality and origins (Eckhardt and Bengtsson, 2010) as well as marks of ownership (Yang, Sonmez, & Li, 2012).

The early discoveries' traditions of the use of visual symbols to mark ownership, represent value and guarantee as well as quality are prominent antecedents of modern branding and its heritage associations with the

ancient civilisations' practices. In Figure 1.1 which depicts an ancient Egyptian commodity oil label (3000 BC) and Figure 1.2 illustrating a modern Australian commodity wine label, there are some evident similarities between labelling practices in relation to the presence of quality, origins and the core messages (Wengrow, 2008).

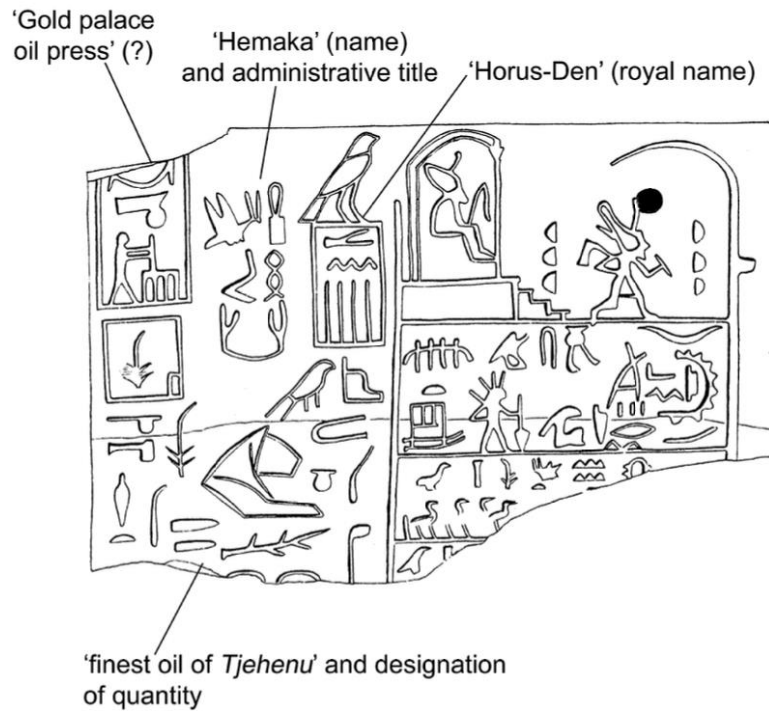


Figure 1.1 An ancient Egyptian commodity label (after Petrie 1900, pl. 15/6 found in Wengrow, 2008).

Over 5000 years later and the essence of branding remain close to the ancient commodity practices.



Figure 1.2 A modern Australian commodity label (courtesy of De Bortoli's Ltd. Found in Wengrow (2008)).

The noticeable similarities between ancient commodity label practices and modern branding are the marks of early brand activities (Wengrow, 2008). Some other branding-related practices discovered between 2700 BC and 2000 BC have revealed that identification and differentiation were the main aims of stamping pottery in China (2700 BC) (Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2009) as well as craftsmen sealing of containers and other items in modern-day India (the Indus Valley) (2250-2000 BC) (Yang et al. 2012). Moore and Reid (2008) argued that those seals made by craftsmen were the first signs of brand imagery, oftentimes presenting vivid pictorial displays of animals or gods, and used as trademarks in shops (Reddi, 2009).

Further development stages of branding discovered through findings from the period 2000 BC – 1500 BC, known in history as the middle bronze era, illustrate the nurturing of traditions of marking products to present origins and ensure quality. In Shang China, items were crest marked by a king (wang) to carry a Zu family identification, considered the initial form of primitive branding (Moore & Reid, 2008).

Between 1500 BC and AD 500 across the Mediterranean regions the evolution of branding took the form of large ceramic containers (amphorae) to initiate the beginnings of consumer packaging (Grace, 1979; Twede, 2002; Lawall, 2021). Those popularly used by the ancient Greeks and Romans commercial transport large vessels were used for shipping wine and oil (Twede, 2002) and gave the foundations for successful design practices for packaging used by brands. The amphoras' design objectives were clear and functional, they had to be economical to manufacture and fit for the purpose of shipping (Twede, 2002). According to Twede (2002), today's marketing campaigns are directly influenced by the traditions of the use of the trademark shape of amphoras and its mark on coins. Holleran (2012) reminded of product identification and differentiation as the essence of the practice of marking those ancient vessels.

Another period in the evolutionary stages of branding that engraved its importance in historical findings belongs to the Song Dynasty in China (AD 960 – AD 1127) where the first complete brand emerged, the White Rabbit brand of a needle manufacturer (Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2009). This Chinese brand, the White Rabbit, initiated practices that guide today's modern branding such as logo print on paper packaging displaying the producers' details, production specifications, usability and discount (Muller, 2017). The brand name took its inspiration from a Chinese legend that considers a white rabbit as an essence of feminine ideologies (Lai, 1994; Masako, 1995). Some other contributions of the Song Dynasty period to the advancement of branding are mass advertising (Starcevic, 2015) and block-printing as an initiator of mass communication (Landa, 2005).

Between the period of the Song Dynasty and the Industrial Revolution, a couple of practices such as printing labels for products by Chinese manufacturers in the 14th century and the design of the modern print press in the 15th century created a solid communication ground enabling organisations, shops, craft practices to share their products offering to customers.

The new evolutionary stage was initiated by the Industrial Revolution during the 18th century which is considered to be the predecessor of modern branding (Roper & Parker, 2006). During the Industrial Revolution mass production and mass communication replaced the individuality of producers and their products, and the focus was placed on productivity (Varey, 2011). During the 19th century, organisations realised the power of competitiveness and the element of personalisation emerged as a differentiator but also relationship-building support between brands and their customers (Muller, 2017). Those market dynamics and organisations' movements towards the customers to connect initiated the thinking around brands and their ability to evoke feelings at the start of the 1900s (Klein, 2000). As the competition started rising to its power, organisations began to outrun their rivals in ways to adapt to the demands of customers and convince the market about the superiority of their offering over their competitors.

In the 20th century, the popularity of marketing and communication directed towards raising engagement between organisations and customers or potential customers started seeing branding as part of corporate identity (Suchman, 2007). According to Daffey and Abratt (2002) between the 50s and 80s (20th century) the shift from corporate image and personality to corporate brand management can be observed (Muller, 2007). The concept of branding has gained its value as a central element that conveys originality, quality and differentiation as part of a corporate body offering. Together with the goals of authenticity and uniqueness for brands, the threat of

replaceability transpires, therefore trademarks as ways to guard brand identities have surfaced and remain relevant in modern branding (Duguid, 2009; Muller, 2007; Petty, 2013).

The presence of branding or brands as separate phenomena was insignificant or rather non-existing before the 19th century. The main reason was related to the practice of selling goods mainly in bulk and lack of distinction between the superiority or a “better quality” or “better value” of one store over another as in the majority of towns there were single stores offering sacks or barrels of products (Bastos & Levy, 2012). The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of naming, labelling and packaging conventions as a way to add some extra value to offered products, an example of which include “producers such as Folger (1872), Kraft (1903), and Vlastic (1942) showed pride in their brands by putting their names on their coffee, cheese, and pickles, respectively” (Bastos & Levy, 2012, p. 354).

Moore and Reid (2008) pointed out that the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries had a prominent impact on the evolution of branding as a result of the appearance of media “[...] this is largely a phenomenon that could have only occurred starting at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, due to the media (TV, radio, print advertising, e-marketing, etc.)” (p. 429).

The Second World War did not bring much progress, nor vitality to civilisation, but it served as a competitive ground for producers operating to serve customers’ demands and supply the war’s needs. The rising levels of produced goods and growing appetites for purchasing amongst customers in the 40s and the 50s (20th century) were described as a period of “Customer Revolution” (Bastos & Levy, 2012). During that time many brands came to competitive battles for the superiority pedestal for such categories as coffee, hamburger, soft drinks and more.

Since the end of the Second World War and the rising level of competition between products, organisations, and countries, there was a need for a “greater awareness of the social and psychological nature of products – whether brands, media, companies, institutional figures, services, industries, or ideas” (Gardner and Levy, 1955, p. 34) that would support customers in making conscious purchasing decisions. The importance of brand names and the symbolism associated with presentation conventions has emerged as a practice aiding customer choice. The symbolic character of products offered by brands has risen in its importance to customer behaviour and selection dynamics observed around buying activities because oftentimes customers’ choices are driven by the symbolic meaning of products in addition to their primary use (Gardner and Levy, 1955). The modern era has embraced the value of personality in relation to branding and many characteristics have been associated with brand personality, amongst which, it enables to market a brand in various cultures (Plummer, 1985), it allows self-expression of consumers (Belk, 1988), it impacts consumer preference and use (Biel, 1993), it acts as a differentiator in a category of products (Halliday, 1996), it can be captured through five basic dimensions: excitement, competence, sincerity, sophistication, and ruggedness (Aaker, 1997).

The review of the historical literature on the subject of branding unearthed some common themes that serve as evolution stages of the concept of a brand. Moore and Reid (2008) pointed out the main development stages of brand characteristics that can be categorised based on their focus on information and image. Figure 1.3 presents an insight into the evolution of brand characteristics through the time periods of the eras of early bronze, middle bronze, late bronze, the iron age revolution, the iron age and the modern era.

Period	Brand Characteristics				
	Information: Origin	Information: Quality	Image: Power	Image: Value	Image: Personality
Early Bronze IV 2250 – 2000 BCE The Indus Valley	X	X			
The Middle Bronze Age 2000 – 1500 BCE Shang China	X	X			
The Late Bronze Age 1500 – 1000 BCE Cyprus	X	X		X	
The Iron Age Revolution 1000 – 500 BCE Tyre	X	X	X	X	
The Iron Age 825 – 336 BCE Greece	X	X	X	X	
Modern	X	X	X	X	X

Figure 1.3 Brand characteristics in the ancient and modern worlds (adapted from Moore and Reid (2008)).

It is noticeable that the informational focus on origin and quality was the branding driving force during those early transactional periods in history when products were marked to display the location they were made and often ownership. On the contrary, image-focused branding related to power, value and personality was the core objective for later historical transformational periods focused on enriching the buyer and the choice made to own a product representing a brand. The modern branding evolution displays hybrid characteristics of informational and transformational value that support communicating cultural meaning (McCracken, 1986) that relates to, both, information and image (Moore & Reid, 2008).

III. Concept of brand experiences

The idea of branding and its presence in academic literature is relatively modern, it dates back to the 1950s of the last century when works on names and the symbolic value of products started emerging (Gardner & Levy, 1955). However, when studying people’s relationships with goods, symbols, pictorial signs, trademarks, identifiers of origins and quality, since the early period in history when goods were made for exchange, the concepts of ownership and differentiation were not alien. The essence of trademarks, those early distinguishing signs, was to assure customers of the value of products represented by them and emphasise their origins. Those positive associations started arising.

On the contrary, history delivers numerous examples of the primitive forms of branding, marking, that convey the negative connotations of the experience of branding. Some salient exemplars include the Second World War and the practice exercised by Nazis to brand people with numbers who were later sent to concentration camps, and the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade when the Africans were marked by the branding irons for ownership display purposes (Keefer, 2019). The act of branding studied from the perspective of its archaeological and anthropological history provides vast evidence that its negative connotation is rooted in the act of stigmatization of the criminal and dehumanizing. Keefer (2019) stated that “branding is one of the most charged symbols of the evils of slavery, and branding irons are displayed from that period as a testament to the inhumanity of the slave trade” (p. 660). Those permanently placed “country marks” on enslaved individuals in the Americas were used for identification and categorisation (Gomez, 1998). Therefore, the very early experiences of branding concern body modification practices representing violent acts executed against the will of a branded individual. Warner (2016) pointed out the relatedness of the commodity and branding when branding was used to commodify individuals in the trans-Atlantic slave period.

The historical literature provides a rich source of evidence that the early practices of branding were not only exercised on humans and animals but also container ships or food products, meaning that the branding experience was purposeful to act as some form of protection and guarantee (Keefer, 2019). The act of branding of living flesh was practiced far earlier than the period of slavery and the Second World War, some examples were found in the law code of Hammurabi in 1754 BC and Pharaonic Egypt when slaves had inscribed their owners' names on their arms. The act of branding and associated experiences maintain negative attachments from the earliest practices of trade until the early modern period. This form of marking evokes emotions supporting the sense of authenticity and ownership from the perspective of the owner, however, from the standpoint of those branded, in the event of studying the experiences of living individuals, it could be seen as dehumanizing and commodifying. Figures 1.4 and 1.5 present some drawing practices as acts of branding the living flesh of humans and animals to indicate ownership and were also used in register books to report enslaved individuals and brands as owners.



Figure 1.4 A drawing after sketch in Register of Liberated Africans 1808-1812. Sierra Leone Public Archives, Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone (Found in Keefer, 2019).



Figure 1.5 A drawing after sketch in sketch in RLA 1808-1812, SLPA (Found in Keefer, 2019).

The aspiration of this study is not to provide an exhaustive historical dataset on the concept of branding and brand experiences but to pinpoint some of the significant stages in the evolution of branding hoping to stimulate curiosity for future research and interpretation. Therefore, the discussion around the negative connotations associated with branding is important to retain impartiality in relation to scholars who value more and dedicate their attention to positive connotations of branding and those whose interest focuses on the negativity around branding.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the importance of branding and advertising to support the dissemination of information about goods and products has grown. The positive experience of branding and promotion of items reached its peak stimulating demands for products and new customers, the mass communication efficiently served the need of manufacturers and producers to attract potential buyers. The appearance of the first advertising agencies in England was noted in the 1800s, they were working with sellers on approaches to reach customers who were not necessarily fond of reading newspapers, the first banners, poles and branded items such as umbrellas were launched, and the significance of an image and visual communication became apparent (Landa, 2005). The brand's name, label and packaging were dedicated to stimulating the demand and transforming a product line created by a brand into an object of desire. Landa (2005, p. xxiii) suggested that the rise of a "brand word" was a sign of the twentieth century in industrialized countries where corporations treated the brand identities created for their goods as sets of identifications standards to evoke happiness in consumers. The unified look achieved by consistent visual communication was the essential purpose of organisations which were aiming for having a personality engraved within their corporate style.

Branding can be described as “the entire development process of creating a brand, brand name, brand identity, and in some cases, brand advertising” (Landa, 2005, p. 9), a name, term, design, symbol that identifies goods (The American Marketing Association), and a strategic company objective (Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2008). From the symbolic representation of beliefs, values, and personality to an element that creates an emotional attachment with consumers, branding has been transformed (Beig & Nika, 2019) and its meaning has deepened. The challenging dynamics of global markets have impacted the approach organisations undertake to attract potential clients. Creating memorable experiences is the focus of brand offerings (Beig & Nika, 2019), oftentimes infused with hedonic incidents that leave a long-lasting emotional impact on customers’ mental images created through contact with brand offerings. Contentment, pleasure and emotional attachment are the desirable feelings that brands focus on evoking (Hirshman & Holbrook, 1982; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Beig and Nika (2019) highlighted the importance of focusing on the perceived hedonic value of a brand that stresses the urgency of “primary process thinking in accord with the pleasure principle” (Holbrook & Hirshman, 1982) that indicates pleasurable experiences associated with a brand. Sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values are often replacing functional values (Schmitt, 1999) when considering experiences as the notion of connection or building blocks of a relationship between a brand and a consumer, which is critical to bonding experience (Fournier, 1998).

The concept of brand experience is considered essential to capturing the ethos of branding (Schmitt, 2009). With expanding demands of a global consumer who carefully selects items and brands for further engagement, the expectations rise to a level of a unique kind of delight that engages the senses and delivers excitement and authentic experiences. Brand experiences are “subjective, internal responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) as well as behavioral response evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications and environment” (Schmitt, 2009, p. 417). Improved offerings, personalised products and widely available items are the results of utilising customer experiences evoked by brands to deliver value (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). From the purely hedonic purpose of fun, fantasies and feelings (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) to rational and emotional attributes (Schmitt & Rogers, 2008), experiences form a unique relationship between a consumer and a brand that can be of a different character, aesthetic, escapist, entertainment and educational (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Brands can evoke various experiences, according to Schmitt (1999, 2003), sense experiences (sensory perception), feel experiences (affect and emotions), think experiences (creative and cognitive), act experiences (physical behaviour, actions, lifestyles), relate experiences (connection with a group or culture) (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Branding can be perceived as a method of creating customers value through experiences (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Lee & Jeong, 2014).

IV. Tangible and intangible brand experiences: natural science, philosophy, psychology, and semantics.

Brand experiences can be viewed as customers’ sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli (a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments) (Brakus et al., 2009).

Whether there is a specific need that arises and requires to be satisfied (physiological, survival) or a desire related to wants and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954), humans continuously look for satisfaction experiences that would meet deficits whether physiological and survival or growth. Connecting this discussion about brand experiences to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954, 1970a, 1970b) unravels the primary and secondary motives behind seeking fulfilment of needs through experiences. This observation creates a path towards bridging tangible experiences generated by brands to fulfil the primary needs and wants of customers based on biological requirements and survival as well as safety and comfort, and their intangible counterparts that serve the needs of self-actualisation, belonging, esteem, as well as cognitive, aesthetic and transcendence needs.

Maslow pointed out that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954, 1970a, 1970b), therefore it is apparent that to fulfil needs and wants on various levels individuals will be looking for satisfaction. Experiences that lead to addressing various needs deficits can occur directly and are often led by conscious

decisions and calculated choices, but some experiences are evoked indirectly mainly by media of promotion, advertising, or marketing communication (Brakus et al., 2009).

Customers are often exposed to diverse attributes and features of goods that provide stimuli aiming to fulfil individual needs. In addition to utilitarian features, items offered by brands are enriched with specific brand-related stimuli including colours (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992; Meyers-Levy & Peracchio, 1995), shapes (Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998), typefaces (Mandel & Johnson, 2002), slogans (Keller, 1987) that generate “subjective, internal consumer responses” (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53), brand experiences. Tangible brand experiences can be described as emotions or thoughts or preferences evoked or caused by tangible aspects of a brand or branding such as brand image, brand logo, brand colours, brand slogans, and marketing communication. Brand intangibles refer to those aspects of a brand or branding that is non-physical, intangible, and do not represent specific, concrete characteristics (Levy, 1999; Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

To deepen the understanding of experiences evoked by brands, it is important to review germane works from other fields to further the interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional character of human experience. The value of comprehension of different levels of experiences is sought to be better understood by marketing and management professionals to support their practices but also it aspires to lay foundations for better-informed multidisciplinary research on branding and the experiences it evokes.

From a philosophical viewpoint, experience is a kind of cognition that requires understanding (Kant, 1929), it comes from perception and memory, and it initiates art and science according to Aristotle (Gregoric, 2006), and is a subjective mental phenomenon stated Descartes in the 17th century (Britannica, 2023). The Kantian view of experiences as the knowledge that forms the human understanding of the world is based on a priori experiences. Dewey, the 19th/20th-century philosopher argued with the Kantian perception of experiences, and in addition to the intellectual experience favoured by Kant, Dewey proposed experiences evoked by feelings, perception (senses) and actions (Brakus et al., 2009).

From a psychological perspective, experiences are often connected to pleasure. Dube and LeBel (2003) distinguished pleasure dimensions including intellectual, emotional, social and physical pleasures. “Emotional response, which was part of [the] pleasure category, is at an implicit level. Pleasure, a hierarchical concept, is considered at various levels” (Bapat & Thanigan, 2016, p. 1359).

Jantzen (2013) considered experience as fundamental for understanding mental life. Some historical definitions of experience crafted within the science of psychology considered psychology as a science of immediate experience and the foundation of the humanities (Wundt, 1896). James (1911) proposed viewing psychology as radical empiricism based on understanding the reality that is created every single day rather than encapsulated in a priori concepts.

The diverse range of experiences as well as the semantic connotations associated with the word “experience” enrich the understanding of the experience phenomenon.

Studying the semantics of the word “experience” it is apparent that the variety of meanings encapsulated in the word itself provides a rich foundation for its use and understanding. According to the Oxford University Press dictionary, a spectrum of connotations is listed, and an experience can be “the knowledge and skill that you have gained through doing something for a period of time; the process of gaining this”, “the things that have happened to you that influence the way you think and behave”, “an event or activity that affects you in some way”, “what it is like for somebody to use a service, do an activity, attend an event”, “events or knowledge shared by all the members of a particular group in society, that influences the way they think and behave” (2023). Similarly, the Merriam-Webster dictionary distinguishes the following denotations, “direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge”, “practical knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events or in a particular activity”, “something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through”, “the conscious events that make up an individual life”, “the act or process of directly perceiving events or reality” (2023).

Experiences cannot be narrowed to only goods or services consumed, they cannot be purchased nor offered by brands for selling, they are evoked by interactions and are subjective, and their mental and physical significance is complex (Jantzen, 2013).

V. Strategic brand management framework

Brand experiences occur during various events and periods in time of consumers associated with a brand. The need for knowledge about how to intensify the customer experience during, after or ahead of direct and indirect interaction with a brand, increases among organisations outrunning each other in ways to better their engagement practices. Some engaging brand experiences can attract but also alter consumers' perceptions (Hoch, 2002). Brands need to understand the foundations of behaviours of their target markets on an individual level, to better satisfy their needs and deliver customer delight. Brand experience relates to cognitive, motivational and affective aspects (Schmitt, 2009). Therefore, to support better management practices of a brand, an integrative framework of strategic brand management based on a 3-phased approach is proposed (Fig.1.5). The model seeks to increase cognizance of a consolidative nature of a brand and brand management of individuals involved in decisions regarding the presence and future status and behaviour of a brand.

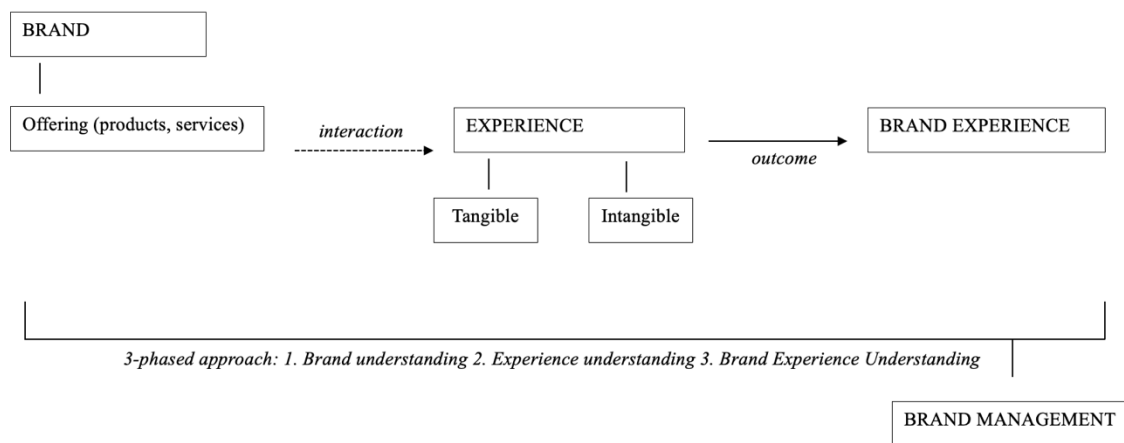


Figure 1.5 A brand management model (author's own).

This framework (Fig. 1.5) for integrating the tangible and intangible brand experiences aims to support strategic management of branding and ignite curiosity in academic discussions towards studying brand-related concepts through the lens of their interconnected and multi-dimensional character.

VI. Significance and the future direction

Developing, exploring and authenticating the integrative character of branding serves the purpose of deepening understanding of its components and interrelationships. Since brand experiences arise in a plethora of settings and following Schmitt et al. (2009) conceptualisation of brand experience as “subjective consumer responses that are evoked by specific brand-related experiential attributes” (p.65), different brand dimensions (sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural) require adequate understanding and their impact on experiences evoked in customers. The results of this study contribute to a clearer perception of the concept of branding and the two-fold character of experiences and their implications on the complexity of customer experiences and brand management. From a theoretical standpoint, the study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates existing explanations of tangible and intangible experiences, and brand experiences. This model is a step forward towards validating the interconnectivity and interdisciplinary character of branding and brand experiences. The current study contributes to the existing literature by identifying primary areas of attention for improving knowledge and practice related to brand management. Considering the ascending competition in global markets and the significance of brand equity and brand position, the role of brand experiences has gained attention as they act as a knowledge base for managers and executives involved in brand-related practices and decisions. Beyond theoretical contributions, this

paper serves as practical guidelines for practitioners across industries. This study's novel character is embraced by the proposal of studying brand experiences from a two-fold perspective as well as introducing an integrative framework aiding strategic brand management efforts.

A call for further research is directed towards further investigations of the multi-disciplinary features of branding and potential discoveries of its interrelatedness with other yet not analysed disciplines. In addition, a future study may focus on validating the proposed framework (Fig. 1.5) by employing its principles for various types of brands. It would be also recommended for future research in identifying how customers of brands offering categorise their experiences and whether they are cognizant of tangible and intangible differences while experiencing brands.

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