




## MIDDLE-AGE BRAND IDENTITY CRISIS

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This paper aimed to provide a systematic review of brand identity and understand how literature streams impact the current brand identity frameworks.

**Method:** There are few systematic reviews about this salient topic, and the existing ones have not analyzed how the research in brand identity has evolved in the last 30 years, what have been the leading research streams and gaps, and which future avenues of study could be pursued. To fill this gap, this paper analyzed 67 articles published in 24 leading academic journals (Academic Journal Guide grades 3, 4, and 4\*) between 1990 and 2021.

**Main Results:** Five key research streams were identified: brand identity frameworks; consumer behavior; corporate branding; visual brand identity; co-creation. Despite the impressive progress made over the last 30 years, our review points out what we defined as a “middle-age brand identity crisis”, since there is still no convergence among scholars about what brand identity is and what would be its main components. Also, the current research streams uncover concepts and ideas that were not previously included in brand identity frameworks.

**Relevance / Originality:** This study performed a comprehensive systematic analysis of the brand identity literature, highlighting essential recent research not considered by the current brand identity frameworks and connecting it to branding constructs. We also identified that there is still a lack of consensus regarding the brand identity components and dimensions.

**Theoretical / Methodological Contributions:** This paper contributes to the literature by presenting a new framework to shed light on the interactions of brand identity with other branding constructs, proposing that brand identity has a core (brand essence) and extended identity (composed of personality, relationship, symbology, and cultural expressions). A new brand identity taxonomy is also proposed, with complexity and tangibility as its dimensions.

## INTRODUCTION

Brand identity is a critical construct in the branding literature, having been studied by several scholars

and applied by practitioners in the last decades. Kapferer (2008) first defined it in 1986 to differentiate the distributor’s image from its competitors’ and to be a source of value (Kapferer, 2008). Other researchers si-

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multaneously developed the brand identity construct worldwide (Burmam et al., 2017) and, according to Aaker (1996), it is a set of associations that a company is willing to create and maintain.

Several scholars proposed brand identity frameworks that included sender and recipient aspects (Kapferer, 2008), could be related to a product, organization, person, or symbol (Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000), targeted internal groups (Burmam et al., 2017) and employees (de Chernatony, 1999; Coleman, de Chernatony, & Christodoulides, 2011), and satisfied functional, symbolic, and experiential needs (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986). Practitioners have also created their own frameworks to manage brand identity, although they confuse brand identity with positioning (da Silveira, Lages, & Simões, 2013) and use these models as just checklists (Kapferer, 2008).

Researchers also understood that brand identity could be composed of numerous elements. They explored several different elements of their frameworks, including: personality (Aaker, 1996; de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2008; Burmam et al., 2017), communication (Ghodeswar, 2008; Coleman et al., 2011; Balmer, 2012), mission and vision (de Chernatony, 1999; Balmer, 2012; Urde, 2013; Burmam et al., 2017), culture (Kapferer, 2008; Balmer, 2012), positioning (de Chernatony, 1999; Ghodeswar, 2008; Balmer, 2012), and reflection or self-image (Kapferer, 2008). However, according to Burmam and Zeplin (2005), there is still no convergence nor agreement between scholars, as they disagree on the dimensions of brand identity.

In this sense, are the brand identity frameworks (Aaker, 1996; de Chernatony, 1999; Balmer, 2012; Urde, 2013; Burmam et al., 2017) reflecting what has been researched on brand identity in the past 30 years? This article's objective was to understand the impact of the streams found in the brand identity and the frameworks built to reflect and manage it. It also aimed to clarify the brand identity construct regarding its dimensions, components, and interrelations with other branding constructs.

We adopted an exploratory approach to dive into the academic discussions about brand identity, performing a systematic review of articles published between 1990 and 2021. The review identified the main research themes and streams, highlighting the

topics that have been underemphasized. Moreover, the brand identity frameworks found in the literature were reviewed and compared with the systematic review findings to identify gaps.

The present study has several contributions to the literature on brand identity. To begin with, a "middle-age brand identity crisis" was identified by exploring the research streams, as some brand identity components that have been researched in the past years are not reflected in existing frameworks. Therefore, the proposal here was that the current brand identity models need to be updated to reflect these other components, such as myths, archetypes, storytelling, culture, sensory branding, spokes-character, and co-creation. Second, this paper proposed a brand framework that attempts to clarify the interactions of brand identity with brand positioning, organization, environment, and outcomes. Third, it is proposed that brand identity has two dimensions: a core and extended identity, presenting theoretical foundations for the brand identity components. Finally, a brand identity taxonomy was presented, involving complexity and brand meaning, ordering, grouping, and its shaping into a specific classificatory system (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2021).

The remainder of this paper was structured as follows. Section 1 described the research methodology and how the systematic review was conducted. Section 2 presented the main research themes, showing how brand identity has been studied in the last 30 years. Section 3 then discussed the systematic review results and compared them with the brand identity frameworks, exploring contributions to the brand identity problematization. Finally, the concluding remarks presented the theoretical contributions and suggestions for future studies.

## **1. METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1. Planning and conducting the review**

The systematic review followed a transparent, replicable, and scientific process to minimize biases and synthesize essential findings and contributions to a specific field (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). Thus, a clear and rigorous research protocol was established to allow the systematic review to be replicated, ensure its transparency (Torraco, 2005), and identify relevant

knowledge gaps (Paul & Criado, 2020). Selection criteria were defined beforehand and further discussed and validated with another experienced researcher.

In addition, this study followed guidelines for conducting a systematic review, by: adopting a period of more than ten years (Paul & Criado, 2020), using an integrative review method to critically review and reconceptualize the brand identity construct (Torraco, 2005), synthesizing the literature to create a new framework and taxonomy (Torraco, 2005), and adopting strict criteria to rely on the best-quality evidence (Tranfield et al., 2003).

A systematic search was performed on peer-reviewed academic journals on Web of Science and Scopus databases, filtering the results by articles in English and the fields of business, management, and communication. To choose appropriate search strings for this study (Tranfield et al., 2003), the exact keywords used were “brand identity” and “brand essence” in the topic field (title, abstract, and keywords), and the articles retrieved were within a timeframe from 1990 through 2021. As a result, 335 articles were obtained in Web of Science, of which 325 used “brand identity” as a keyword and 10 used “brand essence”. The same method was applied to Scopus, retrieving 683 articles.

Although brand essence is much less used to refer to the inner identity of a brand, scholars have argued that brand essence is at the core of a brand, symbolizing its values (Kapferer, 2008), timeless essence (Aaker, 1996), and key promise (Keller, 2009). Therefore, since it is closely related to brand identity, it was included as a keyword.

Only articles from journals that reached a threshold of at least 3 in the ranking of the Academic Journal Guide were selected (Paul & Criado, 2020), since the most significant contributions were likely to be found in the leading journals (Webster & Watson, 2002). This strict criterion aimed to guarantee that this review was based on the best-quality evidence (Tranfield et al., 2003). This procedure lowered the number of articles to 131 in Web of Science and 125 in Scopus. With the exclusion of duplicates, the total number of articles from the two databases was reduced to 140.

Next, a thorough abstract review was conducted to certify that the main article subject was related to brand identity or brand essence, thus ensuring relevance to the research objective (Snyder, 2019). Place

branding articles were not included in our analysis, limiting the study to consumer and corporate branding. With this more detailed analysis, a final list of 67 articles were selected to be reviewed. Figure 1 summarizes the overall step-by-step process.

Following the screening procedures detailed above, the final list of 67 articles published in the last 30 years from 24 academic journals is summarized in Table 1. The *Journal of Business Research* and the *European Journal of Marketing* published the majority of brand identity articles. They accounted for more than 50% of the publications. Figure 2 shows that the interest in brand identity has been consistently growing in the past 30 years.

## 1.2. Key themes

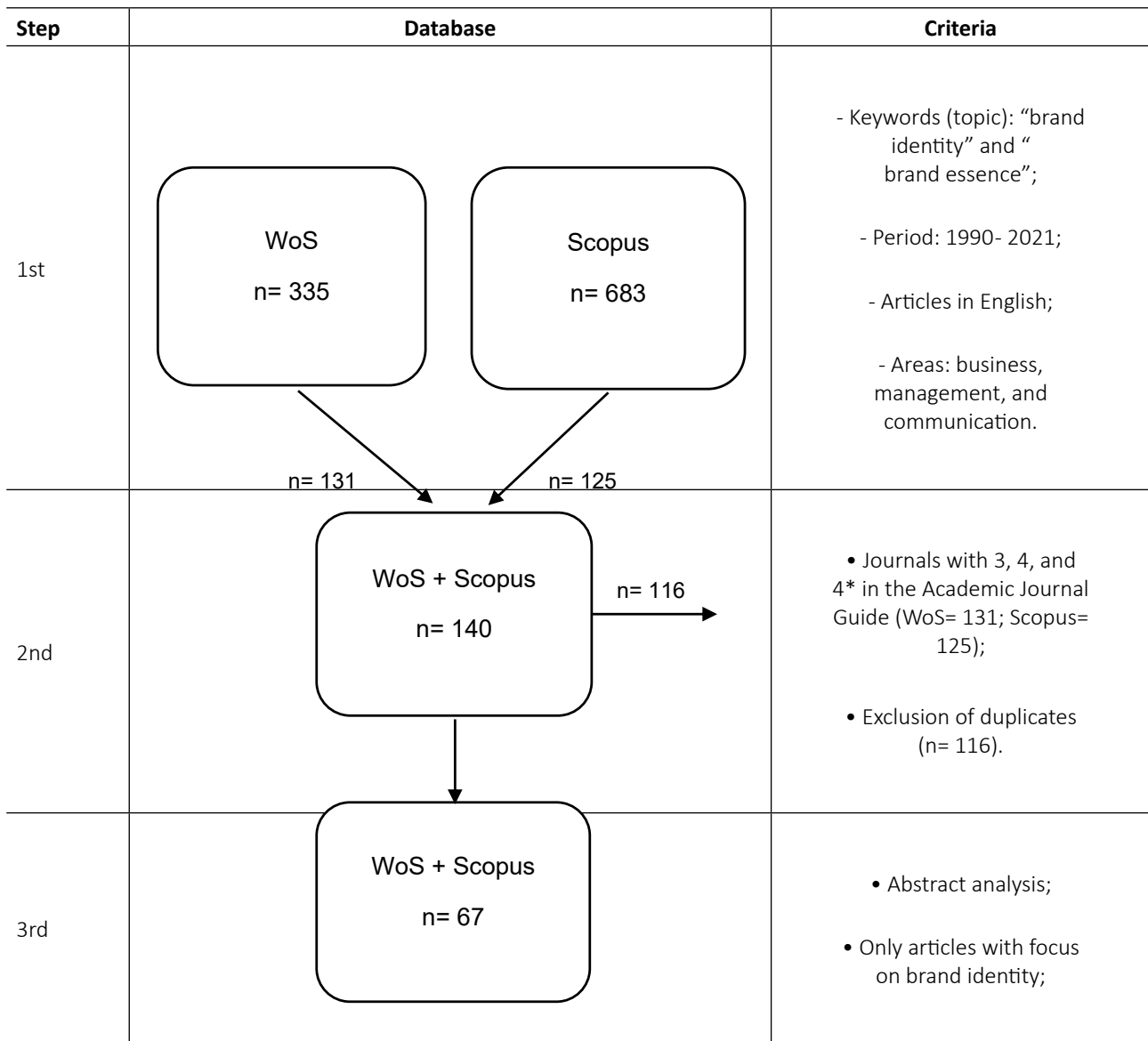
The articles were carefully read to detect the main themes, issues, and theoretical discussions (Snyder, 2019), adopting a concept-centric review (Webster & Watson, 2002). The concept-centric method is more suitable for synthesizing the literature because it structures the framework of the review. On the other hand, the author-centric one is not ideal, as it is fundamentally a summary of the most important papers (Webster & Watson, 2002).

To reach the main research themes, a qualitative process of data analysis was adopted (Creswell, 2012):

- articles were collected;
- data were prepared for analysis;
- articles were read to obtain a general sense of the materials;
- articles were coded;
- codes were grouped to form secondary and primary themes that answered the research objectives and formed an in-depth understanding of brand identity (Creswell, 2012).

We developed a 2x2 matrix (Figure 3) with the following dimensions to organize the main brand identity research streams: level of control (more or less) and orientation (inside or outside). The selected themes were the following:

- brand identity frameworks;
- consumer behavior;
- corporate branding;
- visual brand identity;
- co-creation.



**Figure 1.** Steps and criteria for article selection.

Frameworks were not depicted in any quadrants, since they discuss relations between constructs and have implications on all the other themes. Table 2 shows the primary and secondary themes, authors, categories and industries, number of articles, and where the studies were conducted.

In contrast, Table 3 shows the themes studied by year and the growing interest in each of them. Co-creation was the topic that had the highest growth in the last six years (2016–2021). Still, it is essential to note that the *Journal of Business Research* had a special section named *Co-creating Stakeholder and Brand Identities* in 2017 (volume 70), from which four articles were collected.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This section will discuss the five main identified themes to analyze critical findings and contributions and pinpoint topics that need further development, directing future research.

### 2.1. Brand identity frameworks

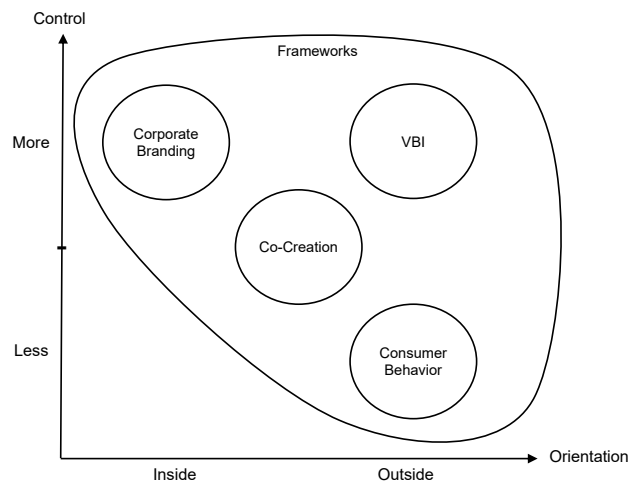
There have been not many conceptual papers and theoretical propositions regarding brand identity in the last 30 years. Only seven papers focused on theoretically discussing brand identity. Their focus was on building frameworks or making prop-

**Table 1.** Bibliographic sources of the 67 brand identity articles.

Journal	Articles
<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	18
<i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	16
<i>Psychology &amp; Marketing</i>	4
<i>Industrial Marketing Management</i>	3
<i>Journal of Advertising</i>	3
<i>Marketing Theory</i>	3
<i>Journal of Advertising Research</i>	2
<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	2
<i>Business History</i>	1
<i>Family Business Review</i>	1
<i>International Business Review</i>	1
<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	1
<i>International Marketing Review</i>	1
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	1
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	1
<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>	1
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	1
<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	1
<i>Journal of Small Business Management</i>	1
<i>Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science</i>	1
<i>Long Range Planning</i>	1
<i>Marketing Letters</i>	1
<i>Marketing Science</i>	1
<i>Tourism Management</i>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

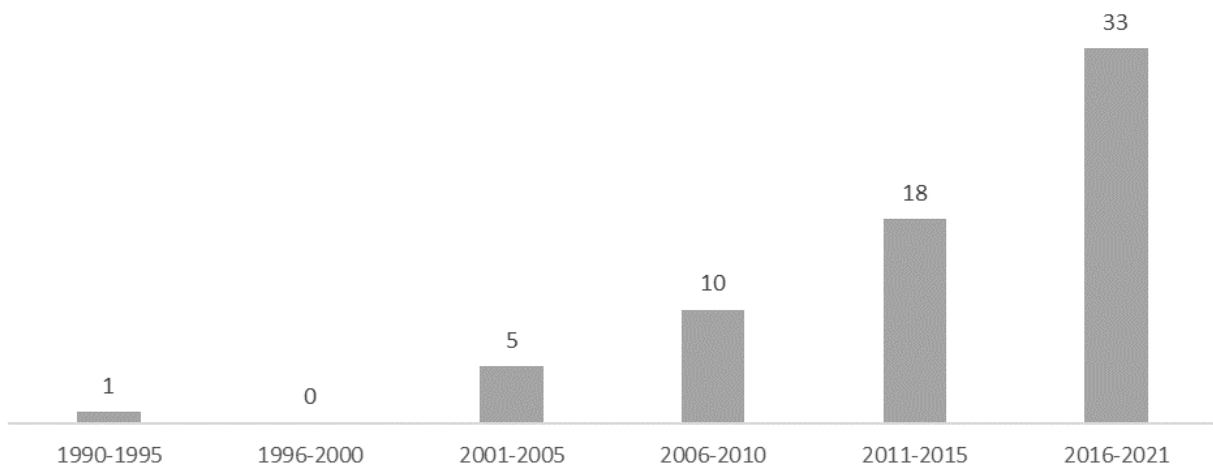
ositions about the relationship with Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005; Orazi, Spry, Vredenburg, & Theilacker, 2017), understanding brand identity as a dynamic entity (da Silveira et al., 2013; Brodie, Benson-Rea, & Medlin, 2017), building an econometric model (Kuksov, Shachar, & Wang, 2013), and considering identity-based branding (Burmman, Hegner, & Riley, 2009).

Not that scholars have not proposed brand identity theoretical frameworks in the last 30 years, as they did on branding books (Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2013; Burmann et al., 2017). While other authors were more



**Figure 3.** Brand Identity key research themes.

**Number of Articles per Year**



**Figure 2.** Publication trend by year on the selected sample.

**Table 2.** Brand identity main research themes.

Main Research Theme	Secondary Research Themes	Authors	Categories or Industries	Methods	# Articles	Location
Co-creation	B2B, Brand Community, Personal Branding, Political Branding, Storytelling, UGC	Christodoulides, Jevons, & Blackshaw (2011); Dean et al. (2016); Black and Veloutsou (2017); Centeno and Wang (2017); Kornum et al. (2017); von Wallpach et al. (2017); Voyer et al. (2017); Essamri et al. (2019); Iglesias et al. (2020); Kristal et al. (2020); Suomi et al. (2020); Borges-Tiago et al. (2021)	Agency, Cars, Celebrities, Consultancy, Festivals, Higher Education, Life Science, Motors, Political Movement, Prosthetic-Technology, Travel Platforms, Social Media, Sports Apparel, Toys	Conceptual, Phenomenology Analysis, Content Analysis, Ethnography, Netnography, Observation, and Case Study	12	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Mexico, Philippines, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, UK
Consumer Behavior	Brand Identification, Brand Loyalty, Brand Passion, Brand Transgression, Co-Branding, Identity Threat, Rebranding, Retro branding, Social Identity, Storytelling	Brown et al. (2003); White and Argo (2009); Brasel and Gips (2011); Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011); He et al. (2012); Lin and Sung (2014); Xiao and Lee (2014); Orth and Rose (2017); So et al. (2017); Alonso-Dos-Santos, Llanos-Contreras, and Fariñas (2019); Bellamy (2020); Krishna and Kim (2021)	Airlines, Apparel, Cars, Cosmetics, Beverages, Cell Phones, Consumer Electronics, E-commerce, Films, Leisure & Entertainment Activities, Skincare, Videogames, Websites	Netnography, Survey, Experiment, and Case Study	12	Australia, Canada, Chile, Taiwan, USA
Corporate Branding	Brand Equity, Brand Extension, Brand Internationalization, Brand Pride, Corporate Brand Orientation, Employee Branding, Family Business, IMC, Shared Brands, SME	Harris and de Chernatony (2001); Urde (2003); Lowrie (2007); Craig et al. (2008); Currás-Pérez et al. (2009); Tregar and Gorton (2009); Spence and Essoussi (2010); Coleman et al. (2011); Hudson (2011); Micelotta and Raymond (2011); Balmer (2012); Bendisch et al. (2013); Coleman et al. (2015); Helm et al. (2016); Yuan et al. (2016); Balmer and Chen (2017); Foroudi et al. (2017); Törmälä and Gyrd-Jones (2017); Liu et al. (2020); Shi and Miles (2020); Balmer and Podnar (2021); Kusi et al. (2021)	Apparel, Cosmetics, Cruise Lines, Higher Education, Luxury Hotels, International New Ventures, IT Services, Personal Care, Porcelain, Processed Meat, SME, Start-up	Conceptual, Ethnography, Survey, Case Study, Grounded Theory, and Exploratory.	22	China, Finland, Germany, Italy, Monaco, Spain, Sweden, UK, USA, World
Frameworks	IMC, Internet Impact, Econometric Model, RBV, Social Identity, Stakeholder	Madhavaram et al. (2005); Alsem and Kosteljik (2008); Burmann, Hegner, et al. (2009); da Silveira et al. (2013); Kuksov et al. (2013); Brodie et al. (2017); Orazi et al. (2017).	N/A	Conceptual	7	N/A
Visual Brand Identity	Archetypes, Brand Naming, Color, Copycats, Corporate Identity, Identity Standards Manual, Logo, Merchandising, Rebranding	Schmitt et al. (1995); Kohli et al. (2005); Bottomley and Doyle (2006); Jordá-Albiñana et al. (2009); Labrecque and Milne (2013); Phillips et al. (2014a); Phillips et al. (2014b); Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel (2014); Fajardo et al. (2016); Nguyen and Gunasti (2018); Woodside et al. (2018); Zhao et al. (2018); Gurzki et al. (2019); Roggeveen et al. (2021)	All Purpose Cleaners, Apparel, Beverages, Cars, Cell Phones, Chocolate, Financial Services, Fragranced Candles, Luxury, Medicine, Mobile APP, MP3 Player, Printers, Shampoo, Soup, Watches	Conceptual, Survey, Experiment, Grounded theory, Phenomenology Analysis, Content Analysis, Survey, Comparative Analysis, and Event Study.	14	Australia, UK, USA, World

UGC: User-Generated Content; IT: Information Technology; IMC: Integrated Marketing Communication; SME: Small and Medium-Size Enterprises; RBV: Resource-based View

**Table 3.** Brand identity main themes by year of publication.

1990-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2015	2016-2021	Total
		Frameworks (1)	Frameworks (2)	Frameworks (2)	Frameworks (2)	7
		Consumer Behavior (1)	Consumer Behavior (1)	Consumer Behavior (5)	Consumer Behavior (5)	12
				Co-creation (1)	Co-creation (11)	12
VBI (1)		VBI (1)	VBI (2)	VBI (4)	VBI (6)	14
		Corporate Branding (2)	Corporate Branding (5)	Corporate Branding (6)	Corporate Branding (9)	22
<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>67</b>

VBI: Visual Brand Identity.

generically understanding brands and their evolution (Goodyear, 1996; McEnally & de Chernatony, 1999; Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009), discussing brand building for competitive markets (Ghodeswar, 2008), and investigating corporate and organization identities (de Chernatony, 1999; Urde, 1999, 2013; Balmer, 2001), which overlaps with brand identity, as will be discussed in the corporate branding section.

However, a general brand identity theory is still lacking, as researchers do not agree on its components or how they are related to other constructs. In this sense, the conceptual papers in this systematic review proposed relations between brand identity and other essential constructs. Madhavaram et al. (2005) and Orazi et al. (2017), for instance, suggested that brand identity is an antecedent and brand equity is a consequent, with IMC being in the middle. This idea relates to what Keller (2009) proposes since he also understands brand equity as the final brand-building block, with brand salience as the starting point. Keller and Lehmann (2006) take another similar approach, which sees company actions as an antecedent of what customers feel and do about brands, resulting in a financial impact on the market.

On the other hand, other scholars related the antecedents and consequents as not being unidirectional (company to consumers), having a feedback loop from brand equity (Orazi et al., 2017), consumers (da Silveira et al., 2013), or other stakeholders (Burmam, Hegner et al., 2009; Brodie et al., 2017).

None of the articles theoretically explored the definition of brand identity or discussed the consistency of its components. Researchers were more concerned with brand identity relations with other constructs (brand equity, brand image, brand personality,

etc.) and stakeholders (*e.g.*, employees, partners, retailers, competitors, etc.). The only exception was the work of Burmann, Hegner et al. (2009), but it does not contain details about the central brand identity components, which the leading author best explored in other works (Burmam, Jost-Benz, & Riley, 2009; Burmann et al., 2017). Even when researchers discussed brand identity in relation to other research streams (*e.g.*, dynamic capabilities, IMC, Resource-Based View – RBV, etc.) and summarized the components proposed by other scholars (see the tables in da Silveira et al., 2013, as a reference), they did not present what would be the brand identity dimensions and components.

In summary, brand identity lacks a general theory with antecedents, consequents, and moderators. Moreover, there is no consensus about which components should be considered part of brand identity (*e.g.*, brand personality, brand vision, symbols, etc.) and which ones should be left aside. Also, the relation of brand identity with brand equity, brand image, or brand positioning, for instance, is not clear.

## 2.2. Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior and brand identity are intertwined. It would not be possible to build consumer brands without understanding how individuals buy them, react to their communication, perform their storytelling, identify with their purposes and values, and incorporate them into their sense of self.

Scholars have researched the interaction of consumers with brands considering them as symbols (Gardner & Levy, 1955), cultural icons (McCracken, 1986; Holt & Cameron, 2010), and part of the self or

ingroup (Sirgy, 1982; Belk, 1988; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Studies have also identified cultural differences across countries (de Mooij, 2019), stories, and myths around brands (Mark & Pearson, 2001; Escalas, 2004; Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008), and emotional bonds and relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010), although the effect of emotional branding is not always positive (Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006).

These studies were fundamental for a deeper understanding of consumers' relationship with brands in general, specifically with brand identity, as several aspects can be related to the inner essence of a brand, such as myths and values.

Our systematic review revealed that scholars predominantly had a psychological approach to brand identity, as their theoretical lenses were based on psychology or social psychology. Only one study relied on an anthropological approach (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry Jr., 2003), while another mainly focused on a historical collection (Bellamy, 2020). In this sense, most papers conducted surveys to test hypotheses (Table 2), trying to understand the impact of independent variables on brand identity. It was interesting to verify that scholars were less inclined to adopt in-depth interviews or other qualitative methodologies to investigate consumer behavior, which is a methodological gap.

It seems logical that scholars relied on psychology to study brand identity since brands are commonly associated with human characteristics, such as personality (Aaker, 1997) and use personification in advertising (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011). Thus, brand identity can be entangled with the consumer's inner self. However, it might as well have dubious effects, as in the case of Red Bull, when consumers were negatively and positively impacted by the brand personality (Brasel & Gips, 2011).

On the other hand, consumer behavior studies extensively used social psychology, applying concepts from the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), which was also employed in corporate branding and co-creation articles, as will be later seen in this article. Therefore, scholars are understanding and studying consumers from their association with ingroups *versus* outgroups. Consumers adopt new brands with different appeals (independent or interdependent)

depending on how they perceive their brand ingroups (Orth & Rose, 2017), construct their own brand stories and meanings (Brown et al., 2003), may be less impacted by brand transgressions (Lin & Sung, 2014), and create identification with brands (Krishna & Kim, 2021), leading to brand attractiveness (So, King, Hudson, & Meng, 2017) and brand loyalty (He, Li, & Harris, 2012). However, consumers may avoid products and brands if they represent a social identity threat (White & Argo, 2009). Also, co-branding success depends on the strength of their identification with brand identity (Xiao & Lee, 2014).

Although the studies of brand identity and consumer behavior encompassed various research questions, most were based mainly on the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and identity fusion (Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012), while setting aside other social psychology theories. For example, scholars could investigate the impact of brand architecture on brand identity in relation to the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012), which states that if members of different groups recategorize themselves as part of a more inclusive entity, they would have more positive feelings and behavior among themselves. Thus, how do a house of brands and branded houses impact brand identity?

Another social psychology theory could be explored: the self-categorization theory (Turner & Reynolds, 2012), which expounds that a person can define oneself as an individual, part of a group, or member of a higher-order group, depending on the situation. It is unclear how the multiple consumer identities interact with brand identity. How different is the impact of brand identity on consumers' group and individual identities? Are they compatible? Should brand message and brand identity be malleable according to each consumer identity?

Besides, none of the consumer behavior articles researched the impact of multiple cultures and values on brand identity. Scholars have studied the implications of culture on consumption (de Mooij, 2003), but more cross-cultural researchers are needed to understand how different values specifically impact brand identity and how it is seen by consumers worldwide. Although some authors include culture as a component of brand identity in their models, they referred to values *per se* or country of origin (Kapferer, 2008)



or corporate culture (de Chernatony, 1999; Balmer, 2012). However, they did not study the multicultural impact on brand identity, as in the case of brands sold across the globe.

Other aspects that scholars did not pay much attention to in the systematic review, apart from the study of retro brands by Brown et al. (2003), were storytelling, cultural symbols, archetypes, and myths. Researchers have studied brand narratives and storytelling (Escalas, 2004; Woodside et al., 2008), brands as cultural symbols (McCracken, 1986, 1990; Holt & Cameron, 2010), and brand myths and archetypes (Mark & Pearson, 2001). However, studies lack to relate brand identity with storytelling, cultural symbols, myths, and archetypes.

### 2.3. Corporate branding

Corporate identity and organizational identity are related to a set of beliefs and values that executives and stakeholders hold about the company and that are enduring and distinct (Aaker, 1996), which can include culture, strategy, structure, and heritage, among others (Balmer, 2001). Unlike consumer brands, corporate brands have a broader marketing mix (Balmer, 2001), a complex set of products and services (Urde, 2013), and relationships with multiple stakeholders (de Chernatony, 1999; Balmer, 2001; Urde, 2013). On the other hand, consumer brands can be more imaginary constructions and focused on intangible values, which is not entirely possible in corporations, as they need to be based on reality (Kapferer, 2008).

Apart from that, there is a significant intersection between corporate branding constructs. To bring clarity to the matter, Balmer (2001) explored the confusion that exists between corporate brand, corporate communication, corporate identity, organizational identity, visual identity, and corporate image. A clear distinction between these concepts still lacks, despite scholars' attempts.

This blurred distinction and plurality of perspectives were also seen in the systematic review, as researchers considered corporate brands to have multiple identities (Lowrie, 2007; Balmer, 2012); employees and executives to be influential brand builders (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Coleman et al., 2011; Bendisch, Larsen, & Trueman, 2013); corporate brand identity to develop through stages (Törmälä & Gyrd-

Jones, 2017; Kusi, Gabrielsson, & Kontkanen, 2021) and to adapt depending on context (Shi & Miles, 2020); corporate brand building to depend on organization's orientation and values (Urde, 2003; Balmer & Podnar, 2021); brand heritage to positively impact customer satisfaction (Hudson, 2011; Balmer & Chen, 2017); employee brand identification to depend on fit with their actual and ideal self (Helm, Renk, & Mishra, 2016; Liu, Hsu, & Fan, 2020); brand extension congruence to rely on functional, symbolic, and self-image (Yuan, Liu, Luo, & Yen, 2016); brand personality and human resources activities to drive brand performance (Coleman, de Chernatony, & Christodoulides, 2015); family and founder's identity and beliefs to drive brand identity development (Craig, Dibrell, & Davis, 2008; Spence & Essoussi, 2010; Micelotta & Raynard, 2011); integrated marketing communication to have a positive impact on brand identity (Foroudi, Dinnie, Kitchen, Melewar, & Foroudi, 2017); corporate social responsibility to increase brand prestige and distinctiveness (Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, & Alvarado-Herrera, 2009); and brand identity creation to be impacted by third-party governance structures (Tregear & Gorton, 2009).

As shown in Table 3, corporate branding was the most studied topic in the present review, which was reflected in the variety of studies commented on above. The methods were diverse, ranging from surveys, case studies, exploratory studies, ethnographies, and conceptual papers, showing the richness of approaches (Table 2).

Corporate branding studies (Currás-Pérez et al., 2009; Balmer, 2012; Helm et al., 2016; Törmälä & Gyrd-Jones, 2017; Shi & Miles, 2020) have predominantly used the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), the same way that it appeared on consumer behavior articles. However, corporate branding studies also relied on branding constructs, such as brand equity (Tregear & Gorton, 2009; Spence & Essoussi, 2010; Bendisch et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2020), RBV (Craig et al., 2008), and brand identity frameworks (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Coleman et al., 2011; Balmer, 2012).

Some aspects were not clear from the articles in this review. First, if a corporation has several brands, how does the corporate brand identity relate to its subsidiaries, as they often lack attention, although having recognizable identities (Balmer, 2001)? Sec-

ond, regarding the internal aspects of the corporate brand identity, some topics were not explored in detail by the researchers, such as brand personality, brand values, and corporate culture. Specifying how they should be explored in corporate brand identity frameworks would be essential. For instance, how important is brand personality for corporate brands? Are the dimensions of brand personality (Aaker, 1997) different for corporate brands? As Balmer (2001) states, there is no precise meaning or consensus on what corporate personality is.

Third, the review showed that corporate branding articles mainly focused on internal stakeholders and resources (brand heritage, employees, brand teams, corporate social responsibility, and integrated marketing communication). However, there is a lack of understanding of what Balmer (2012) calls “attributed identity”, or the identity ascribed to the organization by several stakeholders. How do they impact corporate brand identity?

#### 2.4. Visual brand identity

It would be difficult for brands to have an identity without any visual brand elements. Therefore, scholars have been studying several key visuals, such as logos (Henderson & Cote, 1998), color (Labrecque & Milne, 2012), and typefaces and fonts (Doyle & Bottomley, 2004). Moreover, other studies focused on the overall impact of brand elements in advertising (McQuarrie & Mick, 1992) and the unique potential of brand-building elements (Ward, Yang, Romaniuk, & Beal, 2020).

The same diversified perspective was found in our systematic review, as scholars have studied brand names (Kohli, Harich, & Leuthesser, 2005), colour (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006; Labrecque & Milne, 2013), logos (Fajardo, Zhang, & Tsiros, 2016), identity standard manuals (Jordá-Albiñana, Ampuero-Canellas, Vila, & Rojas-Sola, 2009), visual brand identity in advertising (Phillips, McQuarrie, & Griffin, 2014a, 2014b), advertising archetypes in healthcare (Woodside, Persing, Ward, & DeCotiis, 2018), merchandising in retail stores (Roggeveen et al., 2021), structures and patterns in luxury advertising (Gurzki, Schlatter, & Woisetschläger, 2019), rebranding (Zhao, Calantone, & Voorhees, 2018), copycats (Nguyen & Gunasti, 2018), and

aesthetics management (Schmitt, Simonson, & Marcus, 1995).

Regarding the methodologies adopted by the authors, we found several methods, including surveys, interpretative analyses, and experiments. Academics used qualitative approaches to interpret and discuss phenomena and better understand visual brand elements in communication and advertising. They also applied surveys to test the impact of specific visual components (*e.g.*, logos, color, etc.) on brand identity.

One of the first gaps identified was the lack of studies about other human senses and their impact on brand identity. Sensory marketing is a relatively new field (Krishna, 2012), although researchers and practitioners have already applied sensory concepts in the past (Hultén, 2011). Using the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) creates an emotional connection with the consumer (Lindstrom, 2005), enhancing brand identity uniqueness (Hultén, 2011). Therefore, we believe that visual brand identity should be expanded to sensory brand identity to include the other human senses. However, it is crucial to understand the importance of each sense as a component of brand identity. Is there a hierarchy? How should brands apply them? Which sensory components have the most impact on brand equity?

Another aspect that is not present in our review is the use of spokes-characters, such as the Michelin Man, The Laughing Cow, Colonel Sanders, or Mr. Muscle. Studies have related spokes-character to product identification, brand personality, and promotional continuity (Phillips, 1996). Although Phillips (1996) relates the characters to aspects of brand identity (such as personality), more detailed research is needed to understand the impact of spokes-character in other brand identity components. For instance, scholars have studied the impact of characters on positive brand attitudes (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004), but the effect on brand identity is unknown.

#### 2.5. Co-creation

The last theme of this systematic review is related to co-creation, which had the most extensive number of articles (11) in the period between 2016 and 2021 (Table 3). Co-creation is based on the idea that consumers and other stakeholders no longer want to be passive observers, willing to interact and influence

company decisions. Therefore, value would be co-created with dialogue, transparency, access, and risk benefits (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Besides, most of the theoretical background of co-creation is based on the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), which has also been used in corporate branding and consumer behavior articles, as previously mentioned.

From this perspective, scholars have argued that brand identity should not be unidirectional, stable, constant, consistent, and enduring; but rather dynamic, fluid, multiple, negotiable, co-constructed, and dependent on context (Csaba & Bengtsson, 2006; da Silveira et al., 2013).

Most papers in our review used case studies to research co-creation and its interaction with brand identity. Scholars have also adopted an anthropological and phenomenological perspective, conducting netnographies, ethnographies, and observations. The use of these methodologies is comprehensible since the impact of co-creation on brand identity is not fully understood. However, no quantitative studies have been conducted, which is a methodological gap. Thus, the effect of co-creation on brand identity has yet to be measured.

Studies in our systematic review discussed several different topics regarding co-creation, which can be summarized in five:

- involvement of brand executives and corporate executives;
- internal employees' impact on brand identity;
- stakeholder's performances;
- brand identity evolving process;
- tensions and contestation.

First, there is an involvement of management (von Wallpach, Hemetsberger, & Espersen, 2017; Essamri, McKechnie, & Winklhofer, 2019; Kristal, Baumgarth, & Henseler, 2020) in actively conducting the brand identity process (Essamri et al., 2019; Kristal et al., 2020), being guardians of the co-construction of brand identity (von Wallpach et al., 2017), or keeping a safe distance from brand communities (Kornum, Gyrd-Jones, Al Zagir, & Brandis, 2017). Second, internal employees help to build brand identity (Dean, Arroyo-Gamez, Punjaisri, & Pich, 2016), although they need to be aligned with corporate brand values (Iglesias, Landgraf, Ind, Markovic, & Kaporcic, 2020; Kristal et al., 2020). Third, stakeholders impact brand identity via

several different performances (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Centeno & Wang, 2017; Kornum et al., 2017; von Wallpach et al., 2017; Essamri et al., 2019; Iglesias et al., 2020; Kristal et al., 2020; Suomi, Luonila, & Tähtinen, 2020), which are enacted on online and offline channels (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Centeno & Wang, 2017). Fourth, brand meaning evolves through stages (Dean et al., 2016; Iglesias et al., 2020; Kristal et al., 2020), with the appropriation of symbolic and cultural meanings (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Centeno & Wang, 2017; Voyer, Kastanakis, & Rhode, 2017; Essamri et al., 2019; Suomi et al., 2020) and with the contribution from anonymous users and electronic word of mouth (Borges-Tiago, Arruda, Tiago, & Rita, 2021). Finally, co-creation is not necessarily a smooth and easy process, as tensions and contestation can happen (Dean et al., 2016; Kornum et al., 2017; Essamri et al., 2019; Iglesias et al., 2020).

Despite the diverse findings that co-creation articles bring, there is a need for further investigation and theoretical contributions. None of the papers touched a key and central question: how far can co-creation go before it starts diluting brand identity? The dilemma between a controlled and stable brand identity *versus* a dynamic and temporary brand identity can lead to an oxymoron: a malleable-consistent brand identity. Or, worst, if considering, for instance, the article of Black and Veloutsou (2017) that discusses the Yes Scotland movement for independence, would it not be possible to freely co-create brand identity until we arrive at *No* Scotland? Thus, it seems that co-creation has a limit, but what would be it? How can companies engage more with stakeholders without jeopardizing brand essence? Which elements of brand identity can be co-created with limited risk-taking? What are the no-go areas? As a way to solve this dilemma, da Silveira et al. (2013) argued that brand identity is dynamic yet consistent over time, keeping core values stable while other dimensions might change. However, they did not mention which dimensions would be flexible and which, apart from values, would be enduring. Therefore, more theoretical discussions need to be done to clarify the role of co-creation in brand identity.

### 3. DISCUSSION

Our systematic review explored research studies about brand identity and organized them into five themes (brand identity frameworks, consumer be-

havior, corporate branding, visual brand identity – VBI, and co-creation). The analysis showed no agreement between scholars about what brand identity and its components would be.

To ensure that the conclusion taken from the systematic review was not based only on selected articles' view, Tables 4 and 5 were prepared with a collection of brand identity frameworks from the literature (some of which were also in our review). Each scholar chose several components (Table 4) to describe brand identity, but there was little convergence (Table 5). This view corroborates what we have called a "middle-age brand identity crisis".

Following the systematic review and branding scholars' works, we proposed a framework to portray the brand-layered structure, shown in Figure 4. The framework starts with the organization, the most inward entity but outside the brand structure. Thus, corporation acts as a shadow endorser, influencing the brand with its culture, mission, values, employees, heritage, etc. (Balmer, 2001).

The first layer is the brand identity, which is at the brand's heart, being more inward-directed (dependent on core principles, personality, etc.). On the other hand, brand positioning is a more outward-directed layer (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2008) focused on competition, target markets, and unique selling propositions. The last layer is brand outcomes, or the results yielded by brand activities, such as brand equity, awareness, and image (Keller, 1993; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). It is outward-directed, depending on the market results or how consumers perceive the brand.

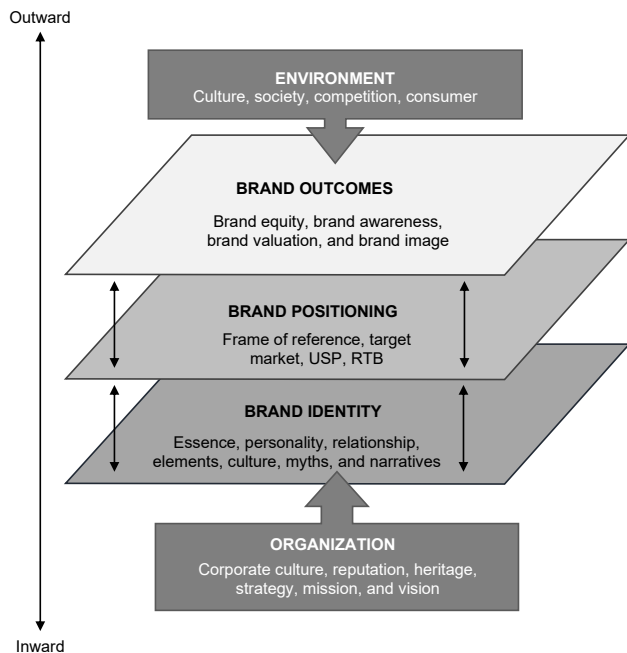
The final part of the framework is related to the environmental impact. As brands are part of culture and society, they are influenced and affected by the environment. They might not be the same or understood the same way depending on the culture they are sold (de Mooij, 2019), how they are used, the number of competitors in the market, the level of income, and the cultural icons (Holt & Cameron, 2010).

**Table 4.** Brand identity frameworks and its components.

Framework	Components	Focus
Aaker (1996), Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000)	Brand as product (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin), brand as organization (organization attributes, local vs. global), brand as person (personality, brand-consumer relationships), and brand as symbol (visual imagery and metaphors, brand heritage).	Brand Identity
Balmer (2012)	Actual, communicated, conceived, covenanted, cultural, ideal, and desired.	Corporate Brand Identity
Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. (2009), Burmann et al. (2017)	Heritage, organizational capabilities, values, personality, vision, and core offering.	Brand Identity
de Chernatony (1999)	Positioning, personality, relationships, brand vision, culture, and presentation.	Brand Identity
Coleman et al. (2011)	Human resources initiatives, employee and client focus, brand personality, corporate visual identity, and consistent communications.	Service Brand Identity
Ghodeswar (2008)	Positioning, communication, brand performance, and brand equity.	Brand Identity
Kapferer (2008)	Physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image.	Brand Identity
Urde (1999)	Company name, brand name, target audience, product category, product, vision & mission, and values.	Brand Identity
Urde (2013)	Value proposition, relationships, position, personality, competences, culture, mission & vision, expression, and core values and promises.	Corporate Brand Identity

**Table 5.** Brand identity components.

Brand Identity Components	Authors
Brand equity	Ghodeswar (2008)
Communication	Ghodeswar (2008); Coleman et al. (2011); Balmer (2012)
Culture	(Kapferer, 2008; Balmer, 2012)
Heritage	Aaker (1996); Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000); Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. (2009); Burmann et al. (2017)
Mission & Vision	de Chernatony (1999); Urde (1999, 2013); Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. (2009); Balmer (2012); Burmann et al. (2017)
Organization Attributes & Capabilities	Aaker (1996); Urde (1999); Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000); Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. (2009); Coleman et al. (2011); Burmann et al. (2017)
Performance	Ghodeswar (2008)
Personality	Aaker (1996); de Chernatony (1999); Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000); Kapferer (2008); Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. (2009); Coleman et al. (2011); Burmann et al. (2017)
Positioning	de Chernatony (1999); Ghodeswar (2008); Balmer (2012)
Product	Aaker (1996); (Urde, 1999); Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000)
Reflection & Self-Image	Kapferer (2008)
Relationship	Aaker (1996); de Chernatony (1999); Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000); Kapferer (2008)
Symbol & Visual Identity	Aaker (1996); de Chernatony (1999); Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000); Kapferer (2008); Coleman et al. (2011); Urde (2013)
Values	Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. (2009); (Urde, 1999, 2013); Burmann et al. (2017)



USP: Unique Selling Proposition; RTB: Reason to Believe.

**Figure 4.** Brand-layered structure.

Apart from the proposed framework (Figure 4) and according to the systematic review and other academic studies in branding, we argue that brand

identity is composed of a core and extended identity. The core is the brand essence, or the most fundamental brand values and purposes (Michel, 1999; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). On the other hand, extended identity is composed of:

- brand personality;
- brand relationship and community;
- brand elements and symbology;
- brand culture, myths, and narratives.

The theoretical foundations for each component are depicted in Table 6.

First, brand essence is anchored mainly in social psychology, in the theories of social representations (Moscovici, 1961) and central nucleus (Abric, 1994). Second, brand personality is based on the Big Five personality traits from psychology (Cattell, 1943) and the theory of animism from anthropology (Gilmore, 1919), as consumers consider brands to have human characteristics. Third, brand relationship and community also rely on the theory of animism and the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Fourth, brand elements and symbology have a variety of influences, not just the theory of animism (in the case of the spokes-char-

**Table 6.** Theoretical foundations of the brand identity components.

Brand Identity Component	Theory	Theoretical Lenses	Selected Branding and Consumer Behavior Studies
Brand Essence	Social Representations (Moscovici, 1961); Central Nucleus (Abric, 1994).	Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology	(Michel, 1999; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000)
Brand Personality	Big Five (Cattell, 1943); Animism (Gilmore, 1919).	Psychology, Anthropology	(Aaker, 1997).
Brand Relationship and Community	Animism (Gilmore, 1919); Social Identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).	Social Psychology, Anthropology	(Fournier, 1998).
Brand Elements and Symbology	Semiotics (Barthes, 1986); Gestalt (Koffka, 1936); HAM (Anderson & Bower, 1980); Animism (Gilmore, 1919).	Psychology, Anthropology, Linguistics, Visual Arts	(Levy, 1959; Mick, 1986; Henderson & Cote, 1998; Krishna, 2012; Labrecque & Milne, 2012).
Brand Culture, Myths, and Narratives	Transportation (Gerrig, 1993); Self-Narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 1988); Myths (Lévi-Strauss, 1955); Culture (Geertz, 1973); Archetypes and the collective unconscious (Jung, 1964).	Psychology, Anthropology, Literature	(Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1986; Stern et al., 1998; Mark & Pearson, 2001; Brown et al., 2003; Escalas, 2004; Woodside et al., 2008; Holt & Cameron, 2010).

HAM: Human Associative Memory.

acters) and the Gestalt psychology (Koffka, 1936), but especially semiotics (Barthes, 1986) and the Human Associative Memory (HAM) theory (Anderson & Bower, 1980). Finally, brand culture, myths, and narratives are grounded in psychology, in the theory of archetypes, and the collective unconscious (Jung, 1964); in literary theory and psychology (Gerrig, 1993); in anthropology, in the theories of culture (Geertz, 1973) and mythology (Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

Finally, after delineating what brand identity is and its relationship with other branding constructs, we propose a new taxonomy for brand identity dimensions, as shown in Figure 5. The taxonomy is organized in a 2x3 matrix. The rows reveal the amount of complexity that brand identity faces, whilst the columns depict whether brand meaning is leaning toward a more tangible or intangible focus. That does not mean that a brand in the tangible column does not have any intangible elements (such as storytelling or essence), but it is mainly driven and understood via tangible aspects (and vice-versa).

What we understand by complexity is explained in Table 7. More complexity means that the market is more competitive, with fewer barriers to entry, more promotional activities, multiple ways of communicating the brand message (via multiple media broad-

		BRAND MEANING		
		Tangible	Tangible/Intangible	Intangible
COMPLEXITY	High	Performance Brand Identity	Experiential Brand Identity	Cultural-Mythic Brand Identity
	Low	Functional Brand Identity	Relational Brand Identity	Symbolic Brand Identity

**Figure 5.** Brand Identity Taxonomy.

**Table 7.** High versus low complexity.

Dimension	High	Low
Stakeholders	Multiple	Limited
Barriers of entry	Low	High
Competition	High	Low
Message	Connoted-driven	Denoted-driven
Communication	Multiple channels	Single channel
Promotion	High	Low
Price	More sensitive	Less sensitive
Distribution	Multiple channels	Single channel
Consumer needs	Complex	Simple
Market segments	Multiple	Single

casters), distribution and logistics involving diverse agents, many possible ways of segmenting the market, consumer needs being satisfied by several different attributes, a greater number of stakeholders, and the brand message with a stronger connoted aspect.

The brands with *functional brand identity* are in the first cell of the first column (low complexity and tangible brand meaning). These brands are based on product features and ingredients that meet customer needs (Park et al., 1986). Their natural evolution is to avoid being trapped on product features alone while forgetting the market needs and, thus, suffering from marketing myopia (Levitt, 1960). As complexity increases, brands start to focus on attributes and benefits (Kapferer, 2008), adopting a *performance brand identity* depicted in the second cell (high complexity and tangible brand meaning).

The second column has a mix of tangible and intangible brand meanings. In the lower complexity settings, brands show a *relational brand identity*. They develop relationships with consumers (Fournier, 1998), affection (Park et al., 2010), and other positive emotions. However, as complexity increases, brands tend to develop an *experiential brand identity*, which involves multisensory relationships, pleasure, amusement, and fun, which goes beyond mere affection (Park et al., 1986), involving emotional arousal and psychological experiences accompanying the product (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).

The third column shows a predominant intangible brand meaning. The first cell (low complexity and intangible brand meaning) refers to *symbolic brand identity*. The brand acts as a symbolic carrier, guiding consumer behavior and social identification (Solomon, 1983), self-enhancement and role position (Park et al., 1986), self-expression, and a form of differentiation (Levy, 1959). When facing more complexity, brands can evolve into a *cultural-mythic brand identity*. In this cell (high complexity and intangible brand meaning), brands develop iconic status, relying on cultural symbolism (Holt & Cameron, 2010), myths and archetypes (Mark & Pearson, 2001), and storytelling (Stern, Thompson, & Arnould, 1998; Escalas, 2004; Woodside et al., 2008).

However, we are not stating that a brand with an experiential brand identity, for instance, does not have functional attributes or cannot develop cultural or symbolic meanings. Our taxonomy shows a

possible classification for the most prominent brand characteristics. In this sense, we are in line with what Park et al. (1986) proposed (functional, symbolic, and experiential brand concepts). However, we have expanded their original understanding to incorporate other taxonomies (performance, relational, and cultural-mythic) and organized them into a matrix with two dimensions (complexity vs. tangibility).

Finally, the level of complexity might be hard to measure. Thus, the proposed taxonomy indicates a *tendency* rather than a *certainty*. The more the brand faces complexity, the more it tends to have performance, experiential, or cultural-mythic brand identities.

## CONCLUSION

Thirty years have passed since brand identity was first introduced in the literature, presenting an innovative way of understanding brands, discussing brand essence and its components, identifying relations with other constructs, and building frameworks to be used by scholars and practitioners to manage brands and brand identity better.

Scholars have greatly expanded the initial narrow focus on products to a multitude of new applications in several different fields and industries, such as B2B, services, healthcare, higher education, and many more. In addition, studies applied a plurality of academic disciplines to better understand and evaluate brand identity, ranging from psychology, anthropology, and sociology to economics, business, and public administration.

However, our review concludes that brand identity is in a middle-age crisis. There is still a lack of consensus on what brand identity is and what would be its primary components. Also, the current brand identity frameworks do not consider significant aspects that have been researched in the last 30 years and are becoming preeminent: co-creation, culture, myths, archetypes, sensory branding, spokes-character, and storytelling.

The first theoretical contribution is related to scrutinizing brand identity's relations with other branding constructs. We explored the interactions of brand identity with the corporation, brand positioning, brand equity, and the market. We contributed by proposing a brand-layered structure (Figure 4) that shows

how brand identity relates to other influential factors, shedding light on this middle-age crisis. We proposed that brand identity has a core (brand essence) and an extended identity composed of brand personality, relationship, symbology, culture, myths, and narratives.

The second theoretical contribution of this article emerges from the gaps identified in the systematic review of the literature. We developed a new brand identity taxonomy (Figure 5) that relates complexity to brand meaning, identifying six possible brand identity types and complementing previous studies.

Apart from the theoretical contributions, we identified some managerial implications. The proposed brand identity taxonomy could be used to guide branding professionals in the evolution of brand identity. They could examine where the brand is currently situated and whether it should be placed in another quadrant. This exercise can also be done with competitors, which would help understand whether the brand is well positioned or not.

Brand managers could also benefit from the distinction between core and extended identity, understanding the components of brand identity that would fit each dimension. They would be better positioned to separate what is essential and intrinsic to brand identity and what is more malleable.

Branding executives can use the brand-layered structure as guidance. Brand touchpoints with the organization and the market could be identified and scrutinized, as well as the brand outcomes. Brand managers could plot key information about the brand characteristics, competitors, company goals, and brand metrics to fully monitor brand performance.

We also provide some directions for future research. First, academics could better understand the effects of co-creation on brand identity. Is there a risk of diluting the brand essence when co-creating it with stakeholders? Which brand identity dimensions can be co-created and which cannot?

Regarding consumer behavior, scholars could understand the psychological influences of other social psychology theories on brand identity and not just the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). They could explore the self-categorization theory (Turner & Reynolds, 2012) to see how brand identity is perceived by consumers depending on the categorization made. The common in-group identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012)

could be used to identify the impact of different brand architecture strategies, such as endorsements, sub-brands, houses of brands, etc.

Moreover, studies could emphasize the impact of different cultures on brand identity: do they fundamentally change it? How can brands adapt to cultural nuances without losing their essence? Another essential aspect is the relationship between brand identity and storytelling. How should brands create their stories? How should they use archetypes and myths to resonate with consumers? What would be the impact on brand loyalty and preference?

There is also a need to dive into companies with several brands in the corporate branding field. What would be the corporate influence when multiple brand identities are involved? Does the company act as an *éminence grise*? Besides, what would external stakeholders' role be in the corporate brand identity? Do they have a strong influence on shaping its dimensions and components?

Another area for future studies is related to theoretical discussions about the brand identity construct. How can frameworks be developed to reflect what has been studied in the last 30 years? What would be the impact on the current brand identity models? How can scholars theorize brand identity and identify its antecedents and consequents?

Finally, scholars could explore some visual and sensory aspects of brand identity that have been less studied. How does sensory branding define brand identity? What are the sensorial components of brand identity? What is the role of spokes-characters in brand identity? Are they part of the core or extended identity? Can they be changed or suppressed without the risk of brand dilution? With society's digital development and the emergence of born-digital companies, what would impact on brand identity? Is there a digital brand identity?

Our study has limitations that need to be highlighted. We focused on journals that had been classified at least with 3 in the Academic Journal Guide, which does not represent the whole academic research on brand identity. Choosing only two specific keywords (brand identity and brand essence) and using Scopus and Web of Science as the primary research databases could also have left out important academic papers. The final number of articles (n=67) that were systematically reviewed is also a limitation,



representing only a small piece of the total amount of studies in this field.

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## CRISE DE MEIA-IDADE DA IDENTIDADE DE MARCA

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### DETALHES DO ARTIGO

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#### Palavras-chave:

Identidade de Marca

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Essência de Marca

Estratégia de Marca

Taxonomia

Revisão Sistemática

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Este artigo apresenta uma revisão sistemática da literatura sobre identidade de marca e discute como as linhas de pesquisa nesta área impactam os modelos existentes.

**Método:** Existem poucas revisões sistemáticas sobre este tópico relevante. As que existem não analisaram como a pesquisa relacionada à identidade de marca evoluiu nos últimos 30 anos, quais foram as principais linhas de investigação e suas omissões, nem quais caminhos de estudos futuros poderiam ser perseguidos. Para preencher essa lacuna, este trabalho analisou 67 artigos publicados em 24 periódicos acadêmicos de renome (classificados no Academic Journal Guide como 3, 4 e 4\*) entre 1990 e 2021.

**Principais Resultados:** Identificamos cinco linhas importantes de pesquisa: modelos de identidade de marca; comportamento do consumidor; *branding* corporativo; identidade visual da marca; co-criação. Apesar do progresso expressivo que foi feito nos últimos 30 anos, nossa revisão sistemática chama a atenção para o que definimos como uma “crise de meia-idade da identidade de marca”, já que ainda não há convergência entre os acadêmicos sobre o que é a identidade de marca e quais seriam seus componentes principais. Além disso, as linhas de pesquisa existentes revelam conceitos e ideias que não foram incluídos anteriormente nos modelos de identidade de marca.

**Relevância / Originalidade:** Este estudo fez uma análise sistemática exaustiva da literatura de identidade de marca, destacando pesquisas relevantes e recentes que não foram consideradas pelos modelos atuais, além de conectá-las a construtos do *branding*. Também identificamos que ainda não existe um consenso em relação aos componentes e dimensões da identidade de marca.

**Contribuições Teóricas / Metodológicas:** Este artigo contribui para a literatura ao apresentar um novo *framework* para clarificar as interações da identidade de marca com outros construtos do *branding*, propondo que a identidade de marca tem um núcleo (essência de marca) e uma identidade estendida (composta por personalidade, relacionamento, simbologia e expressões culturais). Também propomos uma nova taxonomia da identidade de marca com duas dimensões: complexidade e tangibilidade.

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