

## >> How to create irreplaceable brands

### *Branding connected to communications to build and manage value brands*

Madrid >> 08 >> 2018

---

Brands are a reflection of society and its reality, the dreams and concerns of its people and the communities they form. They portray us as a synthetic projection of ourselves to the outside world; they have given us an individual and collective form of communication that has transcended with eloquence and effectiveness for over a century. Today, major technological, social and economic changes are generating new forms of interaction with brands. The vast access to information, increasing number of outlets for interaction and consumer channels and social media dependence has led to more short-lived, unfocused, tactical and irrelevant brands.



Brands are becoming disjointed from society, with an unprecedented loss in relevance. Now more than ever, they must contribute true value or will cease to exist.

As a process, branding has found its culmination in institutionalization through guidelines. Its prior intellectual development rotates around a sequential production system focused on consistently replicating and systematizing to reach a large audience. But this necessary industrialization has a critical risk: taking away the soul, customization and focus on those to whom it is addressed. Although strategic branding should prioritize functional orientation to the market, it cannot be reduced to method or technicality and should involve creativity, ingenuity and intuition. Brands can become distorted in their orientation to the market when their implementation disconnects them from reality or by disconnecting from their targeted communities when being created. We can therefore conclude new branding may and should take the stakeholders it addresses into consideration from the start. But how can we connect brand doctrine and industrialization with experience to produce a greater conversion? In a greater connection of the business-brand-experience will lie the power to influence and make our brands irreplaceable.

Below we examine the core issues of a branding connected with communications that combine a balance between method and intuition or, in other words, how to combine intellectual development, design and standardization in the product to brand metamorphosis.

**BRAND DIAGNOSIS**  
There's no branding without analysis

A renowned physicist once said it is important to never stop asking questions. The brand forms part of that cycle, resulting in a live, changing identity that requires constant questioning; this is strengthened or weakened progressively over time as a result of small gestures. We should regularly analyze **our brand's health** to find the parallels between how we and others see ourselves. Only then will we discover "brand authenticity," in which we can draw up branding opportunities that are better connected to the reality in which it operates and permit us to make collective behavior more understandable in purchase actions, as well as in recognizing a company's reputation. The result is a **road map focused on the growth of the business**, setting a platform for successful communications. Any diagnosis project should start by looking for authenticity, which grants the project a real, attainable strategic horizon and helps accurately define the brand's future.

We identify the authenticity of the brand through five strategic analysis criteria:

"We should regularly analyze our brand's health to find the parallels between how we and others see ourselves"

**Reality**

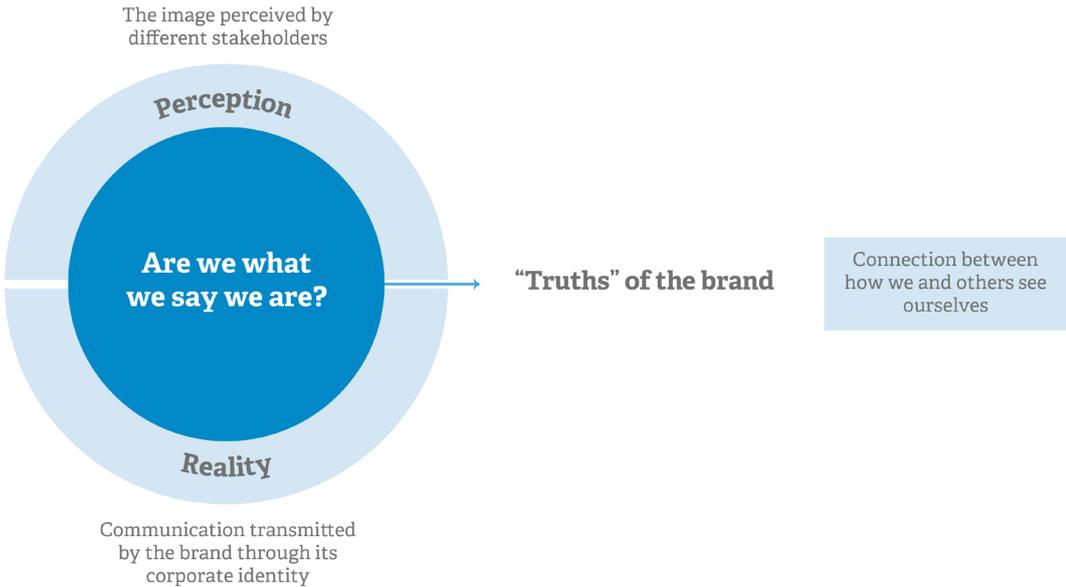
1. **Differentiation** (market). Ability to distinguish the brand, products and services above the competitive environment, in a globalized context where the limits between industries blur.
2. **Relevance** (stakeholders). Ability to offer the consumer value, being capable of interpreting their desires and behaviors, satisfying them by means of tangible and emotional benefits.

3. **Clarity** (brand). Ability to communicate with precision the position, value proposition and trade offer through different conversation territories generating understanding and connection.

**Perception**

4. **Authenticity** (internal vision). Ability to maintain the core element of the brand, demonstrating honesty and transparency.
5. **Credibility** (external vision). Ability to generate confidence through the value proposition, understanding the brand's permits and its degree of flexibility.

Figure 1. Dimensions of analysis of brand diagnosis



Source: own elaboration

## BRAND STRATEGY

### What we are and what we want to be

**In defining who we are, why we exist, how we think and what we offer our audiences, the Brand Matrix compiles the most important strategic elements defining the brand and being shared with employees to empower, align and inspire people involved in business management, building a sound brand culture focused on the future.**

With regard to the challenges companies face when announcing their goals, a strategic brand position precedes any effective communications position. Since brand strategy is linked to business strategy, it is an essential catalyst of the new communications. In archery, the most precise three light feather arrow with a perfect shaft and most sharpened tip will be of no use if we do not taut the string and aim in the right direction. In an enterprise, the brand must likewise be a driving force translating its business model and facilitating its communication and ability to work simultaneously in the long, medium and short term with precise direction and a pre-defined target. Branding analyzes and strategically repositions brands to integrate and align their communication functions with the corporate strategy; this is the only way to significantly reach stakeholders with good results.

Part of the loss of relevance we previously mentioned is due to the idea we can underpin our brand with renovated aesthetics, an efficient interface and modern content without looking into the internal and human element projected by our company, service or product. This approach does not satisfy the universal authenticity of the genesis of a brand, which permits development over time. In a world dominated by a

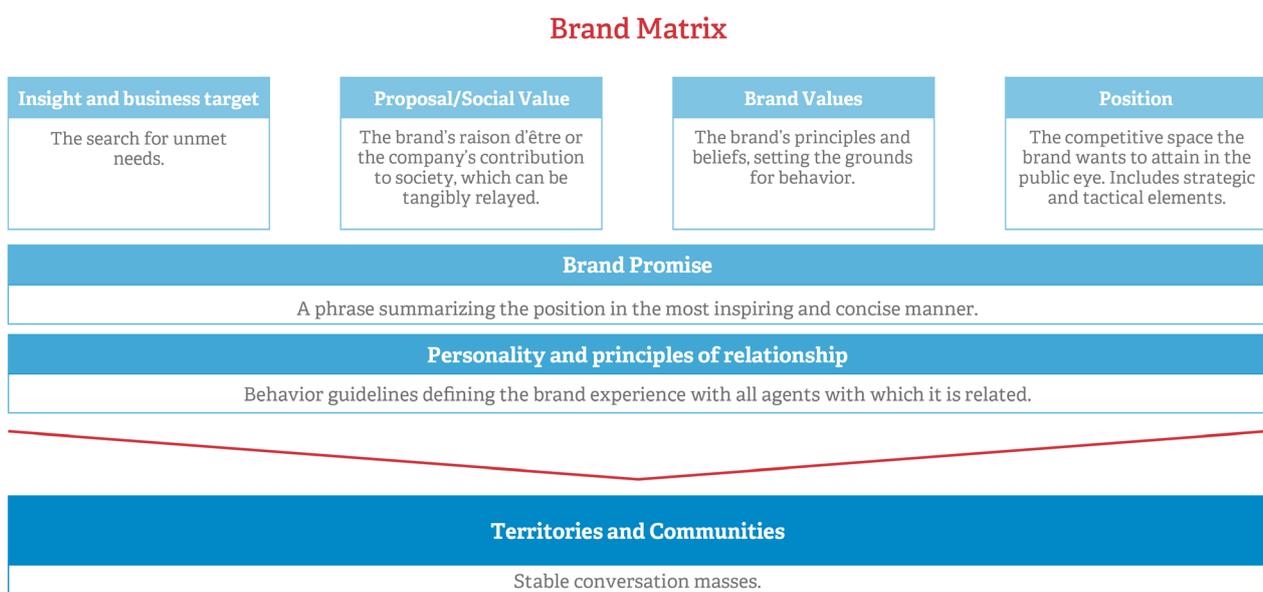
desire for adventure and exploring the outside world, detecting a **key insight and a differentiating purpose facilitates the identification** of a clear, social need deployed in a brand strategy maintaining course with timely precision. Irreplaceable brands produce leaders with proactive content, highlighting their advantage over reactive brands whose communication strategies tend to reflect an uncontrolled defense.

Any product or service can fully develop into brand status if done through a rich social and cultural context, which implies that, in a connected branding strategy, defining the brand and its business target is just as important as the stable conversation masses (for example, in territories such as sports) in which the brand wants to have a story it can apply to **specific communities** (for example, runners/extreme sports athletes, etc.), thereby activating the story. The goal is to humanize the brand, execute it in a more relevant way and sophisticate our listening and intelligence system. Thus, we find the way the brand provides conversation environments, which already exist through storytelling and/or storydoing techniques to connect with communities favoring advocacy. The reality of a future, more segmented market will encourage new consumers to express themselves with an ever-increasing autonomous identity and intimacy against what remains a largely homogenous market, so the search for territories and specific communities will increase our credibility and improve the commitment of stakeholders, resulting in relevance and income.

The three fundamental levels to find the most fertile environment for communicating your brand are:

Level of differentiation / Level of relevance / Level of authenticity

Figure 2. Brand Matrix components



Source: own elaboration

## BRAND DESIGN

### The aesthetics of thinking

The purpose of design in connected branding is to focus on the user's needs and expectations (including aesthetic ones), using creativity to attain feasible, innovative and commercially viable solutions. By providing art to the function as collective interpreters, brand designers equally harness both impulsive and rational methods, because creating a brand is a harmonic connection of two core elements: strategy and design.

How has design moved from the drawing boards to the conference rooms of steering committees? According to UNESCO, creative industries are of increasing importance to post-industrial economies with a large knowledge component. The current situation shows how high world growth companies, such as Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Hermès and Nissan internally organize the design function, considering it a relevant feature of their management. Likewise, in Spain, publicly traded companies show better performance the more design-oriented they are.

Nowadays, like science and technology, design forms a core contribution to building the era in which we are immersed. Relations between people, cities, regions, states and continents would not be so frequent, intense and reciprocal if not for design acting as a powerful communications factor between differing communities. The internet would not be the source of knowledge it is today but merely the cause of disorderly and confused feelings if not described in terms of design: line, form and color. Design is already an essential tool for business improvement and differentiation—it is particularly important in the global culture in which we live and in markets and sectors where price competition is a thing of the past.

Aesthetics have become a business target. Beauty is the sum of refinement, proportion, composition and

“Design is a bridge between strategic thinking and understanding. To connect with the market, it should always be geared at reaching the designed business objective”

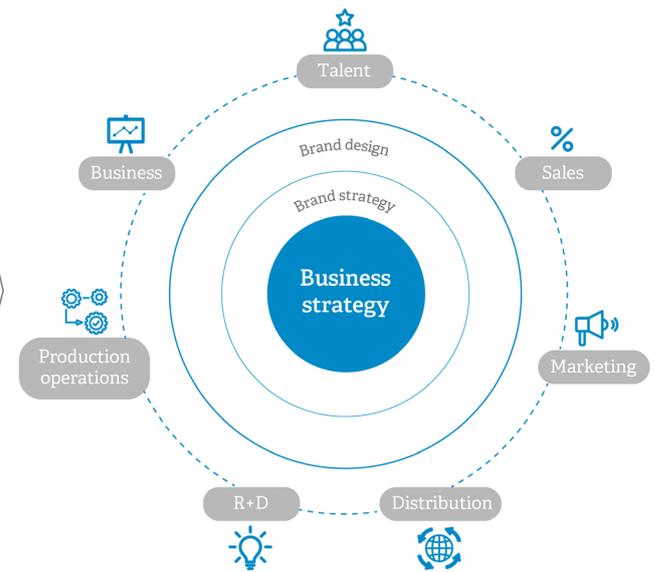
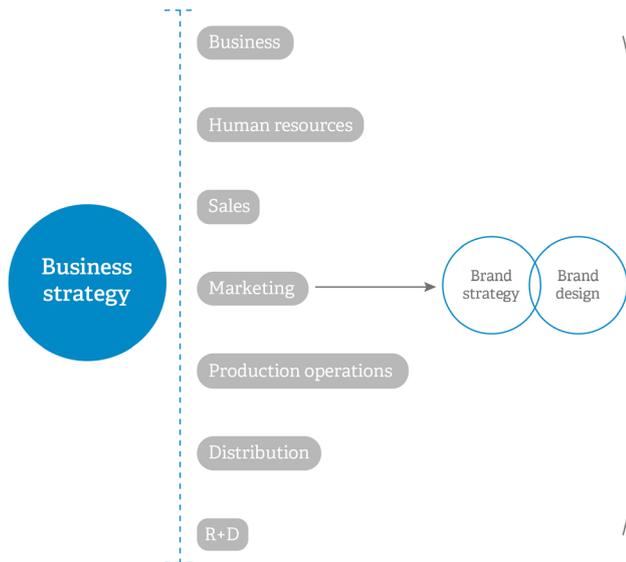
a careful combination of all that stirs and provokes admiration. Through powerful image and text combinations, designers generate desire, provoke reactions and inspire others. “The sublime and beautiful,” as Kant once said, is an introspective process. The designer systematically discovers a mixture of a kind of insight, creative impulse, talent and experience and projects it from a proposal. This intimate relationship between design and proposal is preceded by reason in the form of strategy. But sometimes aesthetics become voluble and arbitrary. Whether like a lighthouse or constant

glimmer along the road, strategy minimizes confusion and sets us on course to design; the strategy is then made comprehensible through graphics and language. Design is a bridge between strategic thinking and understanding. To connect with the market, it should always be geared at reaching the designed business objective. In “The Analysis of Beauty” (1753), William Hogart expounds on the proposal and origin of dominating aesthetics, applying rational principles to the study of art. From his work, we can deduce his concern to compose a formula systematically improving the result of the design to a more ambitious goal: the constant generation of influence. Little has changed since then, when creating a brand today has established a sophisticated procedure for design that symbolically and accurately translates an organization's corporate identity to generate a positive reputation. The days when design was used to make something more attractive are long gone. Nowadays, it is a way of thinking, a creative process that extends throughout an organization's departments, driven by a desire to better understand and satisfy consumer needs. If we understand design as an added value tool, we should develop capabilities for its management—not only in terms of aesthetic aspects but the transversal and integrative role design occupies in the enterprise. This is important for non-designers to learn.

Ultimately, connected branding pursues a balance between utility and beauty, as well as efficiency and emotion targeted at specific communities' needs and expectations.

Figure 3. Branding connected to business strategy

Before



After

Source: own elaboration



**Carlos Magro Martínez-Illecas**, Director of the Consumer Engagement Area at LLORENTE & CUENCA . Consultant expert in branding. He previously worked at the global brands consulting firm Interbrand for 12 years, where he led brand management and creativity projects for large consumer clients and large clients in the corporate area. For eight years, he also worked as art director for global advertising agencies such as Leo Burnett and Euro RSCG. Over the course of his career, he has worked for more than 60 national and international leading clients from more than 14 different sectors. He promotes branding as a speaker and professor for universities and business schools in the area of design, fashion and marketing. He also writes pieces for specialized media.

[cmagro@llorenteycuenca.com](mailto:cmagro@llorenteycuenca.com)



**David González Natal**, Leader of the Consumer Engagement Area at LLORENTE & CUENCA. David earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the Complutense University of Madrid and Global CCO from ESADE. He has worked for media such as El Mundo and Cadena Ser, and in the press department of the cultural organization Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid. Before heading the Consumer Engagement area in LLORENTE & CUENCA, he directed national communication campaigns for brands such as Heineken, Red Bull, Movistar and Ron Barceló for seven years as Senior Coordinator at the Actúa Comunicación agency. As global manager of the area, he coordinates eight markets in LLORENTE & CUENCA (Spain, Portugal, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Brazil and Panama) and has directed emblematic projects for Campofrío, Coca-Cola, Telefónica, Gonvarri, Bezoya and Sacyr. He has received more than 50 awards for his projects, including a Cannes Lions award, two Sol awards, numerous Gold Stevie Awards and several Communicator Awards, SABRE Awards, Mercury Awards and Premios Eikon. Natal is a storytelling lecturer for the master's program for Corporate Communications at Universidad Carlos III (Madrid) and the Global CCO at ESADE. He also teaches for the master's program for Visual and Digital Media at IE Business School and the master's program for Digital Communications at the University of Cantabria (Spain).

[dgonzalezn@llorenteycuenca.com](mailto:dgonzalezn@llorenteycuenca.com)



**Bárbara Ruiz**, Manager of the Consumer Engagement Area at LLORENTE & CUENCA. Specialized in the field of branding. She previously worked in different areas of different companies (finance, marketing and foreign trade) which allows her to adopt a holistic vision of brands understanding it as a promise of value that the whole company has to make real through the brand experience. She has taken part in strategic projects working in consulting firms for brands such as CaixaBank, LaLiga, Hitachi Cooling & Heating, Orange, Riu Hotels & Resorts, Foster's Hollywood, Licor 43, Pernod Ricard, Ron Barceló, among others. She has a Master's degree in Brand Management from MSMK, has studied at renowned universities such as Fordham University (New York, USA), Marquette University (Milwaukee), Johannes Kepler University (Linz, Austria) and Boston University (Boston, USA) as well as at ETEA (Córdoba, Spain) where she graduated in Business Administration.

[bruiz@llorenteycuenca.com](mailto:bruiz@llorenteycuenca.com)





**Developing Ideas** by LLORENTE & CUENCA is a hub for ideas, analysis and trends. It is a product of the changing macroeconomic and social environment we live in, in which communication keeps moving forward at a fast pace.

**Developing Ideas** is a combination of global partnerships and knowledge exchange that identifies, defines and communicates new information paradigms from an independent perspective. **Developing Ideas** is a constant flow of ideas, foreseeing new times for information and management.

Because reality is neither black nor white, **Developing Ideas** exists.

[www.developing-ideas.com](http://www.developing-ideas.com)  
[www.uno-magazine.com](http://www.uno-magazine.com)



AMO is the leading global network of strategic and financial communications consultancies, with over 940 professional consultants and offices in more than 20 countries.

The network brings together local market leaders with unrivalled knowledge of financial markets and cross-border transactions in the key financial centers of Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Providing sophisticated communications counsel for M&A and capital market transactions, media relations, investor relations and corporate crises, our member firms have established relationships with many S&P 500, FTSE 100, DAX 30, SMI, CAC 40 and IBEX 35 companies.

[www.amo-global.com](http://www.amo-global.com)

