



St. Petersburg School of Economics and  
Management

Research and Study Group  
Innovations in Culture and Arts

Saint Petersburg  
2022

# Brand identity – brand image gap in luxury settings

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## Research motivation

A company may have a unique vision, superior product, strong management and an efficient distribution system — yet if it is not able to convey the core benefits of the brand to its target audience it will ultimately fail (Nandan, 2005).

According to Beverland (2003) luxury brands exist in an exclusive market niche that is mostly driven by unique marketing phenomena.

While classic brand are summarized by their promise or positioning, luxury brands have an identity, distinctive intangible aspects (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012)

Brand success in the market depends on the choice of brand identity, the usage of identity developing image, and the guarantee that image adequately transfers brand identity, chosen by a company, differentiating it from competitors and responding to a desired consumer equity (Park, 1986).

RQ: How brand's management perceptions (referred to as identity) and consumer perceptions (referred to as image) differ in luxury settings?



**Brand identity:** is everything that a company wants to be associated or interpreted as its brand (Roy & Banerjee, 2007).

These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers (Srivastava, 2011).

Source	Brand identity components
Aaker (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• product</li><li>• organization</li><li>• person</li><li>• symbol</li></ul>
Kapferer, J.N. (1986, 1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• self-image</li><li>• relationship</li><li>• reflection</li><li>• self-image</li><li>• relationship</li><li>• reflection</li></ul>
de Chernatony (1999); Harris & de Chernatony (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• brand vision</li><li>• brand culture</li><li>• positioning</li><li>• personality</li><li>• relationships</li><li>• presentations</li></ul>



**Brand image:** is what customers feel about the company when they think of it, or from their experiences (Bernstein, 1984).

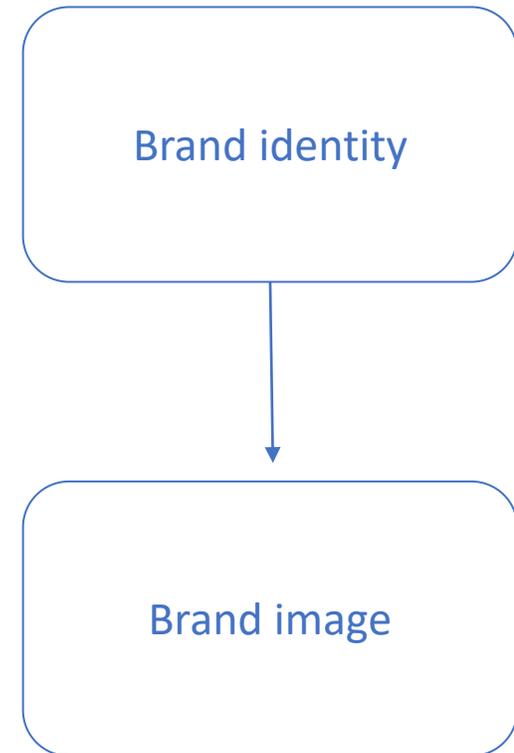
It is also described as the way in which a particular brand is positioned in the market, i.e. how the consumer perceives the product (Nandan, 2005).

Source	Brand image conception
Park (1986)	Consumer understanding of a complete brand set (functional, symbolic and experience image) developed by company.
Keller (1998)	Brand conception, reflecting associations in consumer's consciousness.
Aaker (2002)	How is the brand conceived by a consumer?

## Identity as an antecedent of image:

A brand's message is "wrapped" in terms of its identity, and it is "un-wrapped" by the consumer in the form of its image (Nandan, 2005). It is one of the main dimensions that influence and shape the image of a brand (Wijaya, 2013).

Brand identity has to be transferred to consumers; however, it should be noted that in some models brand image is not presented as a final result (Janonis et al., 2007).





## Identity-image gap research gaps:

In existent research on identity-image gap, brand identity is obtained from publicly available secondary sources, not directly from brand representatives (Ross & Harradine, 2011; Galli et al., 2019; Dimitrova et al., 2018).

In corporate branding research the gap is measured through personification: comparing perceived and intended personality, which is only one facet of brand identity prism (Davies & Chun, 2002; Verčič & Verčič, 2007).

The extant literature was also examined for sets of questions, used to measure the identity-image gap, however no validated options were found.

Constructs were built by having in-depth discussions with brand communicators (advertising agencies) (Roy & Banerjee, 2014), and proposed interview questions were created by compiling a brand identity chart with identity statements (Ross & Harradine, 2011). In both cases questions or brand statements were created to fit specific food or fashion brands and can't be generalized to fit the luxury brand research.

We seek to assess brand identity and image in luxury settings simultaneously using a qualitative approach.



## Research method:

In-depth semi-structured interviews with:

Luxury brand management (Cartier): prior arrangements

- Questions on the brand identity

Luxury brand consumers: snowballing technique

- Story + reaction: brief brand description followed by questions on its image



## Research method:

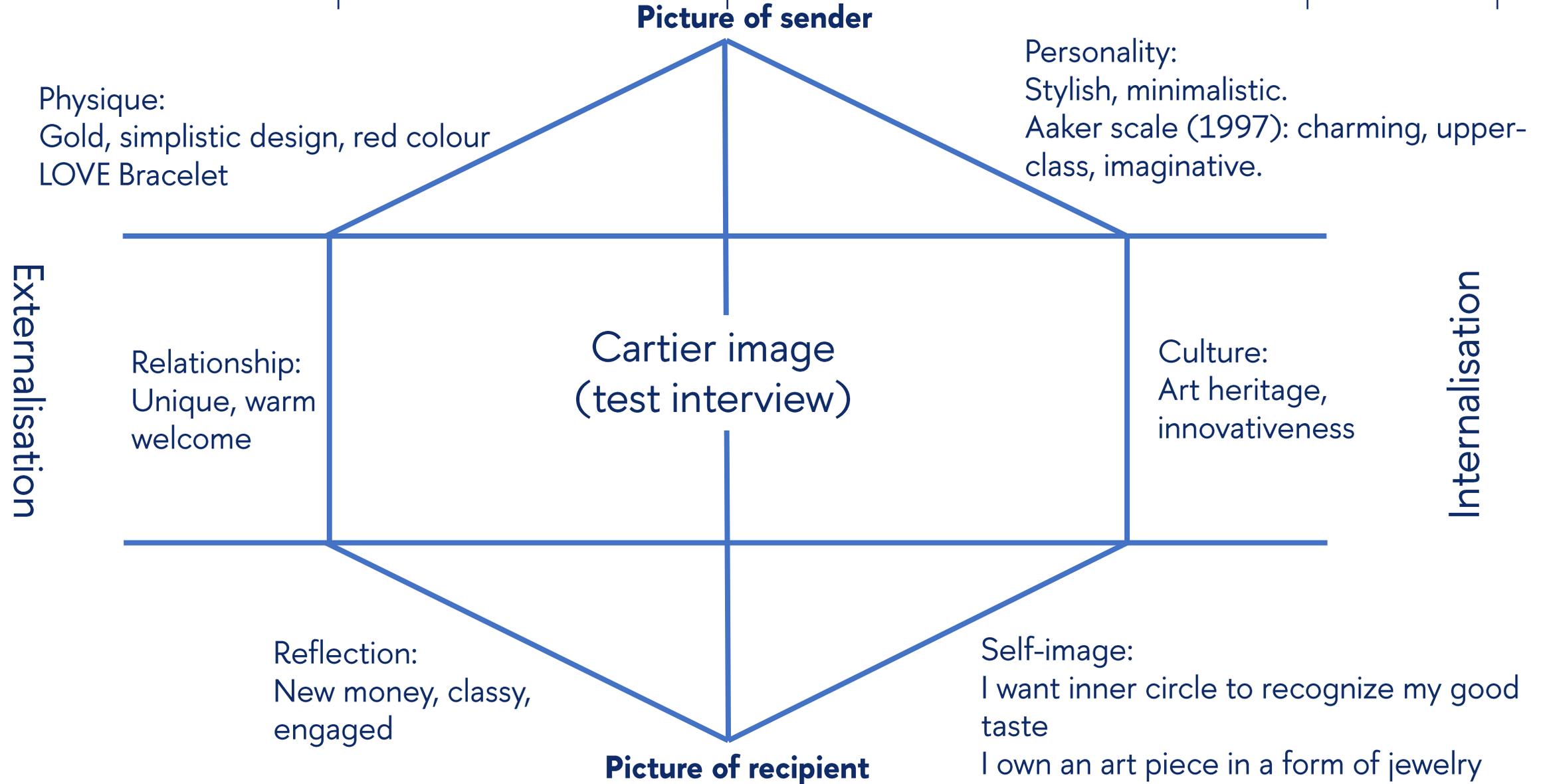
Interview questions (adapted from Kapferer, 2012):

1. Как вы можете охарактеризовать физические данные бренда? Какой продукт можно выделить как флагманский?
2. Как вы можете охарактеризовать взаимоотношения между брендом и потребителем?
3. Как бы вы охарактеризовали человека, который ассоциируется с покупкой бренда (не целевая аудитория!)
4. Какие черты характера вы ассоциируете с брендом? (Aaker's brand personality scale, 1997)
5. Как вы можете охарактеризовать культуру компании?
6. Какими утверждениями идентифицируют себя потребители бренда?

Пример Ralph Lauren: I belong to my time, I am fashionable, I am the elite.

Пример Lacoste: I am discreetly elegant, I am always correct although casual (Kapferer, 2012).

Перевод терминов: Домнин В.Н., Идентичность бренда—ключевое понятие бренд-менеджмента //Бренд-менеджмент. – 2009. – Т. 5. – №. 48. – С. 267.





## Research method:

The interview data is analyzed via nVivo to annotate, code the text and search for keywords (Rowley, 2012).

Data for each facet is analyzed for themes and keywords that are grouped and visualized in several ways:

- Word clouds;
- Brand perception map based on themes developed via interview data (Bunce, 2020).

Next steps:

- Finish collecting data by the end of October;
- Organize and analyze data till mid November;
- Submit the article to Journal of Services Marketing by the end of November.



## Conclusion

### Theoretical contribution:

- Contribution to brand development research: imply that consumers may not perceive the brand in a way that is intended (De Chernatony, 1999; Nandan, 2005; Janonis et al., 2007).
- Building brand identity theory: suggest not only a solution to prove that the gap exists, but a tool to visualize it;
- Since existent literature mostly excludes the luxury market and its specifics (Fionda and Moore, 2009) this study adds to the generalization of research methodology in luxury market research.

### Practical implication:

- According to Nandan (2005) firms can enhance brand loyalty by ensuring a balance between brand identity and brand image.
- Finally, this research helps to explain actual experiences of consumers with the brand.