

Master's thesis

Creative Design Management

2025

Liisa Sollo

Enhancing brand clarity and cohesion

– Challenge of ambiguity: Case OMICRON



Master's Thesis | Abstract

Turku University of Applied Sciences

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2025 | 64

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Enhancing brand clarity and cohesion

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This thesis examines approaches to brand identity when the brand is ambiguous, enabling the marketing team to produce more confident and aligned content. The commissioner was OMICRON electronics GmbH. The thesis aims to answer the questions: How to approach a brand identity in practical scenarios when the brand is ambiguous?, and how can a brand be effectively internalised and adopted within a company?

The research questions were addressed through theoretical models of brand building. Answers to the internalisation and adoption of the brand were employed through techniques of communicating the brand essence, internal branding, culminating in the power of a brand-led organisation. A synthetic framework was created from the theoretical section, reflecting the active brand process from building components to the recipient's perception. Analysis and interviews highlighted the importance of understanding the roles of terms and how underlying elements influence other components.

The result was a brand tool that supports more confident and aligned content production in marketing materials. The conclusion of the thesis is that branding requires discipline, clarity and simplification. Internalisation requires repetition and tangible tools. Strong brands must be approached in a tailored manner.

Keywords:

Branding, brand essence, brand identity, brand internalisation, brand clarity, brand tool, brand-led organisation

Opinnäytetyö (YAMK) | Tiivistelmä

Turun ammattikorkeakoulu

Creative Design Management

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Liisa Sollo

Brändin selkeyden ja yhtenäisyyden tehostaminen

- Monitulkintaisuuden haaste: case OMICRON

Tässä opinnäytetyössä tutkittiin lähestymistapoja brändin ollessa monitulkintainen, jotta markkinointitiimi voi tuottaa linjatumpaa sisältöä. Toimeksiantajana toimi OMICRON electronics GmbH. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli vastata kysymyksiin: Miten lähestyä brändi-identiteettiä, kun brändi on epäselkeä, ja miten brändi voidaan tehokkaasti sisäistää ja omaksua yrityksessä?

Tutkimuskysymyksiin haettiin vastauksia brändi-identiteetin teorialleista. Brändin sisäistämiseen ja omaksumiseen haettiin vastauksia brändin ytimen viestintätekniikoista, sisäisestä brändistä, kulminoiden brändijohtoisien organisaation voimaan. Teoreettisesta osuudesta luotiin synteettinen kehys, joka kuvastaa aktiivista prosessia rakennuselementeistä vastaanottajan tulkintaan. Analyysi ja haastattelut osoittivat termien tärkeyden ja miten taustalla rakoilevat elementit vaikuttavat muihin osa-alueisiin.

Lopputuloksena syntyi brändityökalu, joka tukee linjatumpaa sisällöntuotantoa markkinointimateriaaleissa. Tutkimuksen johtopäätös on, että brändäys vaatii kurinalaisuutta, selkeyttä sekä yksinkertaistamista. Sisäistämiseen tarvitaan toistoa ja konkreettisia välineitä. Vahvoja brändejä lähestytään räätälöidysti.

Asiasanat:

Brändäys, brändin ydin, brändi-identiteetti, brändin sisäistäminen, brändin selkeys, brändityökalu, brändijohtoinen organisaatio

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1 Introduction

A well-thought-out approach to brand building significantly impacts how it is perceived and internalised by all stakeholders, including customers, employees, and partners. Once successful adoption of a brand by all stakeholders occur, it transforms into a powerful force with many advantages. Brand clarity is crucial for creating a strong brand and sustaining a unified brand experience across all touchpoints. As a business grows, so does the need for clarity and brand cohesion. Laura Busche (Busche 2024, 39) a brand strategist and author of *Brand Psychology*, stresses that building a meaningful brand is more essential than ever as companies compete in crowded markets.

In this thesis, I wish to emphasise the significance of cohesive brand building. I will demonstrate through an internal research project and a real case study how an accessible brand can unlock significant potential when properly clarified and aligned. The commissioner of my Master's thesis, OMICRON electronics GmbH, serves the electrical power industry with innovative products and services. OMICRON is an Austrian B2B company and a global market leader in its field. I am employed as a Media Design Expert in the Central marketing team.

OMICRON developed their brand further in 2020, but the project remained incomplete. My thesis, a commissioned practical fieldwork, aims to address the ambiguity surrounding OMICRON's brand, which has led to internalisation problems within the Marketing team. The issue has been identified as stemming from an overload of fragmented information and inconsistent interpretations of the brand identity and the core purpose. Rich Karlgaard (Aaker 2014, Chapter 5) publisher of *Forbes* magazine, states that purpose-driven companies possess a significant competitive edge, as both employees and customers "are hungry for purpose" (Aaker 2014, Chapter 5). The research questions of the thesis are:

- How to approach a brand identity in practical scenarios when the brand is ambiguous?

- How can a brand be effectively internalised and adopted within a company?

The objective of this thesis is to find ways to approach the OMICRON brand. As the goal is to achieve clarity, the development task aims to bridge the gap and enable the marketing team to approach the brand identity with greater confidence and alignment. With my background in visual identities, I have always been interested in how brands visually and verbally communicate their story, personality and concepts to the outside world. Such initiatives come from the brand identity, and identity from the core of the brand. This thesis offers me valuable practical skills development in branding, not just in brand identities and, if successful, will provide important expertise that may eventually prove profitable for my commissioner.

Chapter 2 examines the foundations of brand building, highlighting the comprehension of terminology, distinction, culture, and brand essence. It provides a strong understanding of building brand identities through models, which serves as essential for examining the developmental work of the thesis, analysing gaps in the case study, and pinpointing enhancements. The chapter concludes with a framework for ongoing exercise. Whilst Chapter 3 investigates the power of inside-out communication in branding and the immense value of a living brands. The chapter offers crucial ways to adopt and internalise a brand within an organisation, positioning the brand at the heart of the organisation and thus naturally supporting its internal adoption. This chapter concludes with the first part of my development work, where I synthesise theory into practice.

Chapter 4, "Case OMICRON", thereafter concentrates on the research methodology of this thesis and a 'synthesised framework' underpins the analysis of the research design. The chapter continues the development of the case study and I introduce a tool developed in collaboration with a coworker utilising the inside-outside approach, supported by Chapter 3. Visual and verbal experimentation demonstrates the tool's application. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with key insights and recommendations for further brand development actions.

2 Foundations of brand building

The term “brand” wasn’t always included within the vocabulary of management. Initially defined as an origin marker and later as a differentiator, it has evolved into a meaning-making signifier. A strong brand may evoke emotions, deepen customer connection, and create identity and belonging. (Busche 2024, 38.)

How to build brand identities? This chapter discusses the models of David Aaker and Jean-Noël Kapferer, emphasising the essence of the brand. The chapter concludes with Marty Neumeier’s explicit approach for sustaining a brand as active and relevant after building its identity, encouraging for radical clarity between brand strategy and execution. This chapter begins by identifying a brand and clarifying the role of brand values and attributes to support my development task. The chapter continues defining the role and power of visual identity. As the theoretical framework progresses towards the conclusion of Chapter 3, the learned terminology and models of this chapter will be systematically arranged into components that outline the overarching framework of branding, its requirements and clarity to establish it as an ongoing effort.

2.1 The definition of terminology

Burleigh B. Gardner and Sidney J. Levy describe a brand as a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes instead of a label used to distinguish manufacturers of a product (Busche 2024, 40). From my perspective, due to its complexity, branding terminology is often misused, with terms like 'brand,' 'logo,' 'values,' 'core values,' 'voice,' 'personality' 'design,' or 'identity' being conflated across industries. Establishing clear distinctions in branding is difficult due to evolving buzzwords and shifting definitions, leading to muddled term across industries and cultures.

Effective communication and brand development require a nuanced understanding of these complexities. Marty Neumeier (2006, 15-16), author of *The Brand Gap*, addresses common misconceptions about what constitutes a

brand. He emphasises that brands are not logos or corporate identity system but emotional connection that gives products meaning. Neither a product. Marketing professionals often confuse managing brands with managing products, sales, or distribution. True brand management, he argues, is about managing an intangible "aura" that gives a product its meaning.

So, what exactly is a brand? Neumeier defines a brand as "a person's gut feeling about a product, service, or company" (Neumeier 2006, 16). It is a gut feeling because individuals, not companies or markets, ultimately define a brand based on personal perception. While companies cannot control this process, they can influence it by highlighting what makes their product unique. When enough people share the same perception, a brand is formed. (Neumeier 2006, 16). Jean-Noël Kapferer, a world reputed expert on brands, defines a brand not merely as a name but as a vision-driven identity that builds loyalty and advocacy through core values. Kapferer further adds that identity creates vibrant brands that can build advocacy, a real cult, and loyalty. (Kapferer 2011, 149). Following David Aaker, a leading figure in brand equity theory, views a brand as both tangible and intangible assets that shape consumer behavior and add value (Busche 2024, 40).

Encompassing a brand's intangible aspects, vision, tangible attributes, ideas, and messaging – Busche (2024) integrates these definitions into a holistic approach that has evolved over time to its present-day form. Busche describes a brand as story that resonates with consumers and is conveyed through visual symbols and strategic communication. This unique story ties a product with consumers' personal stories, a distinct personality, solutions a brand offers, and its position in relation to competitors. (Busche 2024, 46).

2.1.1 Role of brand values and attributes

The organisation is usually represented and driven by its values and core principles reflect an organisation's strategy and priorities (Aaker 2014, Chapter 5). In *Leveraging the Corporate Brand* publication, Aaker (2004, 8) summarises

that a values and priorities, and combinations thereof, underlie business strategies. In *Building Strong Brands* by Aaker (1996) one brand strategist believes that the values of the origination and a core identity need to correspond. The strategist observed that when the values and culture of an organisation are properly defined, the brand identity naturally follows. (Aaker 1996, 79.) Values also shape the brand's value proposition. Values bring meaning to the functional benefits that constitute a value proposition. Nonetheless, the dual challenges of identifying which organisational values align with a brand and finding effective strategies to gain recognition for those values in the marketplace. (Aaker 2014, Chapter 5.)

Neumeier (2017) characterises values as enduring beliefs or ideals shared by a culture that shape the behaviours of the cultures (Neumeier 2017, 257). Whilst core values may appear similar, they serve as the guiding principles that determine employee behaviour and collaboration within a company. Core values are interconnected with organisational culture and core ideology. (Neumeier 2017, 63). Neumeier defines brand attributes as “a distinctive feature of a product, service, or company brand” (Neumeier 2017, 32).

Riezebos & Van der Grinten (2012, 77) argue that a brand's memory node in one product class is associated with multiple attributes and, ideally, a few values. Additionally, effective positioning involves claiming unique attributes – known as points of difference (PODs) – that distinguish the brand from competitors. These attributes, when relevant to the target audience, can be leveraged as unique selling propositions (USPs) in brand communication. (Riezebos & Van der Grinten 2012, 80-81.) Attributes include product features and benefits, with features like packaging and design contributing to brand perception. For example, the dissolvable wrapping of Sun dishwashing tablets eliminates the need for users to touch the tablet. Riezebos and Van der Grinten emphasise that, a strong brand links values to multiple attributes, forming a visual map with cross-connections. Volvo links the value of 'safety' to tangible features like the safety cage and ABS brakes. (Riezebos & Van der Grinten 2012, 83–87.) The greatest B2B identities have multiple integrated and

profoundly realised attributes that are consistently and purposefully applied (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 6). Attributes are thus assumed to be connected to values, alongside the value proposition, forming relationships to potentially enhance the brand.

Ultimately, values and attributes are essential in defining and positioning brands. A brand becomes authentic and meaningful when organisational values align with the brand's identity. In addressing the challenges posed by Aaker, it can be observed that an appropriate way to enhance brand values in the marketplace is via attributes. In my view, the greater the number of interconnected parts, the more robust the brand and its identity will be. This form of clarification also facilitates internalisation for those communicating the brand.

2.1.2 Connecting visual identity to a brand

In addition to the brand, the term 'design' is a multifaceted concept. Two unique approaches to corporate brand design have been introduced which are crucial to distinguish from each other. According to Balmer (2023, 99-100) Corporate Brand Structure Design focuses on brand architecture, while Corporate Brand Visual Design centers on the visual elements that represent the brand.

Corporate brand structure design focuses on the intra-organisational corporate brand architecture (corporate brand relationships within entities) as well as inter-organisational corporate brand architecture (corporate brand relationships across entities). Visual design is a crucial component of branding. Thus, from the beginning, "to brand" has meant creating a visual imprint. Visual identity creates ownership while providing identification and differentiation. It can also communicate and encapsulate the convention/promise of a corporate brand. Airey (2024, 112) highlights that visual identities can furthermore capture the essence of a brand. Thus, they are not merely about aesthetics. Design communicates a brand's values and purpose through visual language and impacts perception beyond aesthetics. Airey (2024, 261) explains further that, it integrates form and function, with each component serving a specific purpose.

This necessitates precise design thinking, clarity, and a profound comprehension of the brand. When executed effectively, visual identity elevates brand perception and distinguishes the brand from its competitors.

2.2 Brand identity models

Marković and Pollák (2022, 3) advocate for a unique and distinctive brand creation process for creating a memorable brand. It aims to be as tailor-made as possible for a particular subject. Consequently, there is no uniform template that can be applied to two different businesses. Numerous models exist for brand building, therefore in this thesis 'Brand identity models' term refers to the existing frameworks and concepts used to define, organise and build a brand identity and strategic vision. In my research on brand building, I discovered a wide variation of different approaches. I have tried to select modules for this thesis that support the discovery of the essence of the brand and the power and role of the internal culture. The following sections introduce frameworks by David Aaker and Jean-Noël Kapferer that lay the foundation for fundamental brand identity building. In particular, Kapferer illustrates the significant influence of an internal culture characterised by values and beliefs in sustaining and enhancing brand identity.

2.2.1 Aaker's brand identity model

Brand identity serves as a cornerstone of a brand's strategic vision, analogous to personal identity in its provision of direction, meaning, and purpose. It comprises a unique set of brand associations that a brand strategist seeks to establish or uphold, representing the brand's promise to customers. Brand identity fosters a meaningful relationship with customers through a compelling value proposition – whether functional, emotional, or self-expressive. Aaker organises brand identity across four key perspectives:

1. Brand-as-Product: Covering aspects such as product scope, attributes, quality/value, uses, users, and country of origin.
2. Brand-as-Organisation: Highlighting organisational attributes and the local versus global orientation of the brand.
3. Brand-as-Person: Encompassing brand personality and the relationship between the brand and its customers.
4. Brand-as-Symbol: Enriching the brand identity through visual imagery, metaphors, and brand heritage. (Aaker 1996, 62.)

Brand identity is further structured into two layers that directly tie to the goals of this chapter. According to Aaker, brand identity, as shown in Figure 1, comprises a core identity and an extended identity. This figure is called 'Identity Structure'. (Aaker 1996, 78).

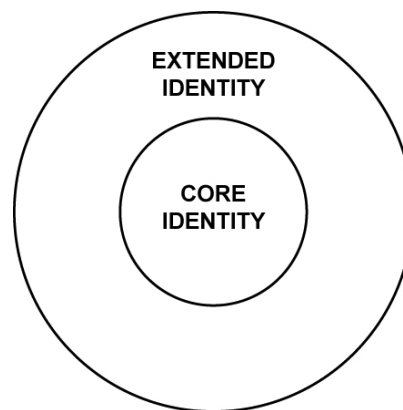


Figure 1: Identity Structure by Aaker (Aaker 1996, 78)

The Core Identity

With core identity being the timeless essence of the brand, Aaker (1996) describes it as “the centre that remains after you peel away the layers of an onion or the leaves of an artichoke” (Aaker 1996, 78). Ultimately, the core identity is built on answers to a number of difficult, introspective questions: “What is the soul of the brand? What are the fundamental beliefs and values that drive the brand? What are the competencies of the organisation behind the brand? What does the organisation behind the brand stand for?”. (Aaker 1996,

79.) The core identity requires unique and valuable elements. The core and value proposition are interconnected. (Aaker 1996, 79.) I believe the core identity, representing the brand's timeless essence, must reflect the brand's values, vision and mission. It should provide the central compass for internal and external communication.

The Extended Identity

However, the core identity alone often lacks the necessary detail to perform and influence as brand identity should assist a company in determining which program or communication are efficient and which may be misaligned (Aaker 1996, 80). Therefore, the extended identity (see Figure 1) encompasses additional elements, such as visuals, voice, and tone, to translate the core identity into tangible, actionable components. "It fills in the picture, adding details that help portray what the brand stands for" (Aaker 1996, 80).

2.2.2 Towards strategic brand building

While many brand strategy frameworks use numerous boxes or shapes to capture attributes, the popular Brand Vision Model prioritises desired brand associations with concentric circles, encapsulating the brand's central theme through a succinct brand essence (Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 8). David Aaker's Brand Vision Model (see Figure 2) evolved from his earlier Brand Identity Model, marking a significant shift in both terminology and focus.

Aaker recognised the need for a term that better encapsulated the aspirational and strategic nature of the concept. "Brand identity is the cornerstone of brand strategy and brand building" (Aaker 2014, blog post). Yet the term 'identity' often caused confusion as it seemed limited to visual elements like logos and design, lacking the energy and depth necessary for a brand's strategic foundation. By contrast, the term Brand Vision (formerly called Brand Identity) emphasises the forward-looking, dynamic, and comprehensive nature of a

brand's strategic aspirations. This change allows the terminology to better align with the broader intent of guiding a brand's future direction as the term 'vision' better captures the strategic, aspirational nature of the concept. (Aaker 2014, blog post). When a brand vision is well-defined, it achieves several critical objectives:

- Reflects and reinforces a business strategy.
- Differentiates the brand from competitors.
- Resonates with customers, inspiring loyalty and engagement.
- Energises employees and partners, providing a clear sense of purpose.
- Fuels innovative ideas for marketing. (Aaker 2014, blog post.).

In contrast, when a brand vision is absent or superficial, brands risk drifting aimlessly, leading to inconsistent marketing efforts and a diluted marketplace presence. This highlights why Brand Vision Model is a critical component of brand strategy. (Aaker 2014, blog post).

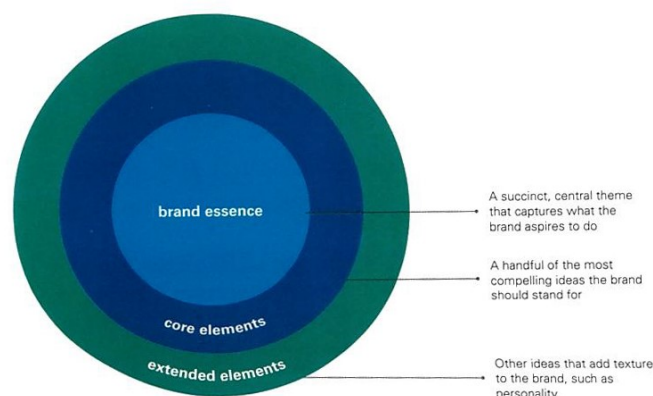


Figure 2: Brand Vision Model by Aaker (Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 8)

Aaker's redefinition from Brand Identity Model to a strategic Brand Vision Model signifies a more robust, strategic approach to brand building. The transition reflects Aaker's desire to equip brands with a framework that inspires clarity, innovation, and alignment across all touchpoints. (Aaker 2014, blog post).

2.2.3 Kapferer's Identity Prism

Kapferer (2011, 158) claims that brand identity has six interconnected aspects (see Picture 1), represented by the Brand Identity Prism, with brand essence at its core – the fundamental value it embodies. To transform into a “passion brand”, a company must possess depth, inherent drive, and a unique identity that embodies explicit values and aids customers in their self-exploration. Each facet of the prism symbolises a distinct aspect of a brand identification. The left aspect of the prism – physical attributes, relationships, and reflections – encompasses the brand's social and visible characteristics, whereas the right aspect – personality, culture, and self-image – symbolises the brand's interior, intangible qualities.

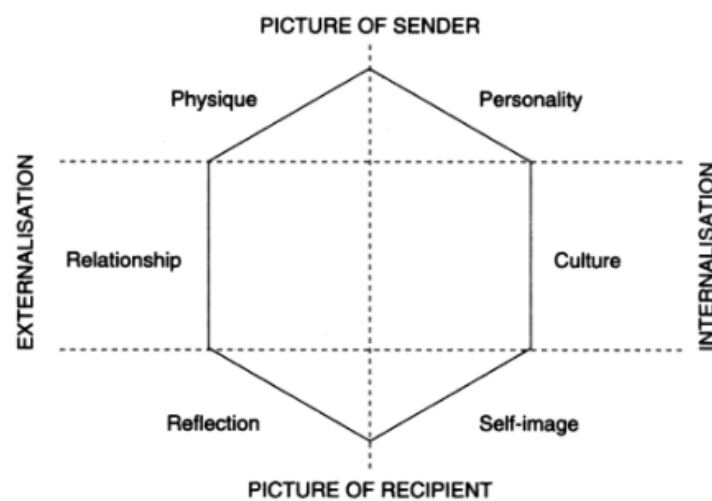
The initial aspect, **Physique**, pertains to the concrete qualities and physical aspects of the brand. It integrates objective characteristics – those that readily arise in consumer surveys. Kapferer emphasises that identifying the tangible attributes is the initial phase in brand development: “What is it concretely? What does it do? What does it look like?” (Kapferer 2011, 158). The second aspect is **Personality**. The brand cultivates a unique identity through communication, mirroring the tone and style of its advertising. Personality embodies the brand as a human-like entity, although it should not be conflated with the customer's reflection. Personality serves a psychological purpose, enabling consumers to either identify with the brand or project themselves onto it. This aspect delineates the brand's behaviour as if it were a person. (Kapferer 2011, 159.)

A Culture aspect is essential to the brand's identity and differentiates robust businesses. “The cultural dimension is essential for comprehending the distinctions among Nike, Adidas, and Reebok” (Kapferer 2011, 159). Culture embodies the principles and values that unify the brand throughout time, influencing its market competition and cultivating a community centred on common ideas. A brand's culture exceeds product attributes and serves as the foundation for fostering enduring consumer connection. (Kapferer 2011, 159.)

The fourth aspect, **Relationship**, emphasises the relationship the brand fosters

between itself and its consumers. This aspect is particularly relevant for service-oriented companies and retailers, delineating the brand's conduct and interaction during transactions, hence influencing consumer experience and expectations.

The fifth aspect, **Reflection**, signifies the representation of the brand's typical user. This evaluation focuses not on delineating the real target demographic, but rather on how customers wish to be viewed when utilising the brand. Effective advertising must depict an idealised consumer, resonating with their aspirational identity. Ultimately, the **Self-image** aspect pertains to the consumer's internal perception – how they view themselves in relation to the brand. Kapferer (2011) explains, for instance, "In buying a Porsche, for example, many Porsche owners simply want to prove to themselves that they have the ability to buy such a car" (Kapferer 2011, 161).



Picture 1: Brand Identity Prism by Kapferer (Kapferer 2011, 158)

These six dimensions collectively delineate brand identity and set the parameters within which a brand may evolve. The brand identity prism illustrates that all aspects are interconnected and constitute a cohesive, organised whole. Thus, brands prosper via ongoing communication. Incidentally, they may face obsolescence if they stay inactive or uncommunicative for an extended period. (Kapferer 2011, 163). Employing

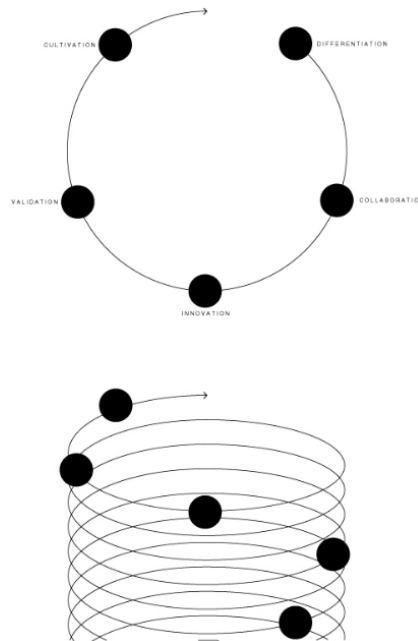
Aaker's Brand Vision Model alongside Kapferer's six-faceted approach facilitates the building of a multi-dimensional understanding of the creation of brand identities. Both promote the significance of the brand essence, advocating a purposeful approach from within the organisation and culture. Kapferer's model represents mirroring from the inner to the outer, whereas Aaker's model strongly embodies an inside-out technique that supports and reflects a business strategy.

2.3 Gap between brand strategy and brand execution

Once a brand identity is established, it must be continuously sustained. This section examines how brand building can be established as an ongoing exercise. Furthermore, as Kapferer stated in the previous section, brands require ongoing communication. The direction, progress and communication are guided by the brand strategy, whereas execution aims to fulfil the defined goals of the strategy. This section emphasises the necessity of bridging the gap between brand strategy and brand execution by introducing the concept of radical clarity – the practice of removing unnecessary elements to create actionable framework.

Marty Neumeier's concept of "The Virtual Circle" (See Picture 2) serves as a key framework, combining logic and creativity to ignite a chain reaction within organisations. This process progresses from differentiation to collaboration, innovation to validation, and culminates in cultivation. Cultivation involves questioning assumptions, challenging the status quo of a brand, and initiating the cycle anew. (Neumeier 2006, 158) With each round of the spiral, the company and the brand rise, distancing themselves from commoditisation and approaching sustainable competitive advantage (Neumeier 2006, 160). Neumeier (2006, 160) asserts that branding is conditional upon public image, functioning as a guarantee of reliable behaviour. Effective branding integrates company into society and generates opportunity for all stakeholders, including executives and customers. This chapter aims to deepen understanding of how

strategic design in brand building can contribute to meaningfulness by remaining the brand relevant and sustainable in an ongoing exercise.



Picture 2: The Virtuous Circle by Neumeier (Neumeier 2006, 161)

Discipline 1 Differentiate

At the very beginning, Neumeier suggests that brand builders ask themselves three fundamental questions: *Who are you? What do you do? Why does it matter?* Not everyone can answer these questions, and responses are often overly complex or incomplete, with many struggling even with the first two. Answering these questions requires clarity, ensuring that a brand filters out irrelevant information while focusing on what is truly different and valuable. Neumeier advises revisiting the question, “*Why does your product matter?*” (Neumeier 2006, 45–46). This discipline is comparable to Kapfer’s and Aaker’s notion of brand essence. Furthermore, the evolution of marketing has transitioned from a one-size-fits-all economy to a mass-customised one, shifting its focus from features to benefits, then to experiences, and finally to tribal identification (Neumeier 2006, 49). Neumeier explains that “selling has evolved from an emphasis on ‘*what it has*’ to ‘*what it does*,’ to ‘*what you’ll have*,’ and

ultimately to ‘who you are’” (Neumeier 2006, 49.) This demonstrates that differentiation remains crucial.

Discipline 2 Collaborate

The way a brand fits into its space is determined by its brand community. Branding today requires contributions not only from executives and marketing teams but also from a broad ecosystem. (Neumeier 2006, 63.) According to Neumeier (2006, 67) there are **three models** for managing brand collaboration:

- Outsourcing the entire branding process to a single full-service agency.
- Outsourcing strategic and creative brand development to a brand agency.
- Managing the brand internally with an integrated marketing team. (Neumeier 2006, 67).

While any of these approaches can be effective, Neumeier suggests a hybrid approach, such as combining a brand agency with an integrated marketing team. The internal stewardship model offers the advantage of building long-term brand knowledge within the company, though it demands a strong internal team to sustain it. (Neumeier 2006, 71).

Discipline 3 Innovate

Innovation and creativity, rather than strategy, is the spark that ignites passion and drives progress. (Neumeier 2006, 85). The innovator’s mantra – “When everyone zigs, zag” – emphasises creativity and fresh thinking. In branding, innovation does not necessarily involve reinventing the wheel but instead seeing it from a new perspective. Neumeier highlights that creative people describe how the world could be. (Neumeier 2006, 91). Kapferer's prism model

effectively utilises this disciplinary perspective. Examining six angular hexagons from various viewpoints can uncover new innovative perspectives.

Discipline 4 Validate

This discipline ultimately establishes the framework for ongoing practice. According to Neumeier, the traditional brand communication model is outdated. Transforming brand communication from a monologue to a dialogue is critical for success (See Picture 3). Companies need feedback. Feedback enlivens the communication, likening it to a theater performance rather a magazine. He highlights that feedback is immediate and unambiguous which allows to make appropriate changes “before the next performance” (Neumeier 2006, 116). Feedback plays a vital role in inspiring and validating innovation. While quantitative research has its place, Neumeier highlights the importance of qualitative research for uncovering epiphanies and breakthroughs. He suggests measuring a brand’s expression across five dimensions: distinctiveness, relevance, memorability, extendibility, and depth (Neumeier 2006, 139–141).



Picture 3: Validate: From monologue to a dialogue (Neumeier 2006, 115-117)

Discipline 5 Cultivate

Prior to on to Chapter 3 on ‘living brands from the inside-out,’ Neumeier (2006) emphasises the cultivation of living brands as one discipline that contributes to bridging the gap between strategy and execution. The concept of living brands embraces dynamism and evolution over uniformity and consistency. Nowadays, there is a preference for vibrancy and dynamism in branding, as opposed to strict uniformity and consistency. Therefore, alignment instead of consistency is

required. (Neumeier 2006, 146.) Living brands, like people, can allow some inconsistency as long as they retain their defining attributes (Picture 4). Neumeier (2006, 147) believes identity goes beyond look and mood. Friends and coworkers can recognize a person whether they're wearing a T-shirt or a dress shirt, serious or laughing. It demonstrates that identity is deeper than looks and feelings.



Picture 4: If People Can Change Their Clothes To Suit The Occasion, Why Can't Brands? (Neumeier 2006, 146-150)

This perspective enables the brand to exhibit greater flexibility and diversity, provided that its identity stays in line and the differentiating principle of "who you are" is thoroughly built. Prior to employing the models and terminology learned in this chapter to develop a unified overarching framework of branding, the subsequent chapter will present an additional technique: 'inside-out communication.' The chapter will examine the influence of a brand-led organisation in facilitating brand internalisation and adoption. In addition to flexibility and diversity, what does a living brand signify in practice? The following chapter will examine this concept more thoroughly.

3 Living brands from the inside-out

Few people or companies can clearly articulate why they do what they do. (Sinek 2009, 47). Aaker (2014, Chapter 14) states that powerful brands are built from the inside out. Simon Sinek's "Golden Circle" model provides an excellent framework for understanding why purpose plays a central role in the functioning of an organisation. As Wolfswinker & Enslin (2022, 75) also discuss traditionally, brand management has been perceived as concentrating on corporate and customer-facing brands. However, leading brands currently rely on employees to embody the brand's mission and values in their daily activities, thus turning into the intangible concrete. In this chapter, I aim to identify approaches to my second research question; how a brand can be effectively internalised and adopted within a company. To support strategic design and ongoing exercise, this chapter will address ways of successfully conveying the brand identity to employees through inside-out communication, leveraging internal branding and transforming into a brand-led organisation where every decision and action is guided by the brand. At the conclusion of Chapter 3, I will present a 'Synthetic reflection' on the theories I have examined in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

3.1 The Golden Circle framework

Simon Sinek's 'Inside-Out' philosophy focuses on starting with why (purpose) and aligning it throughout the organisation before extending it outward. The Golden Circle framework is a simple yet profound model that explains how great leaders and organisations inspire action. It's convincing proof of how much more can be achieved by starting everything with asking why. The tool has several possible applications, encompassing leadership, driving corporate culture, product development, recruitment, and sales or even marketing. (Sinek 2009, 46-47.) The framework consists of three concentric circles: WHAT, HOW, and WHY.

Sinek (2009) advocates for inspired leaders and organisations that begin with "WHY," speaking from the inside outward: beginning with purpose and subsequently addressing HOW and WHAT. This method aims to foster a more profound emotional connection with the message's receiver. When individuals comprehend the "WHY" of an organisation, they are naturally inclined to trust and endorse it, due to the believe that intentions influence individuals more than actions.



Picture 5: The Golden Circle (Sinek, Website)

The circle "**What**" is the outermost circle and represents what an organisation does. It includes the products or services they offer. Every company knows WHAT they do, and these are the easiest to identify. The middle circle "**How**" represents how an organisation does what it does. This may represent their distinctive selling proposition or differentiated value offer. The HOWs explain what makes an organisation different or better than others. (Sinek 2009, 46-47.)

The innermost circle "**Why**" is the most important and represents the purpose, cause, or belief that drives an organisation. 'Why' pertains not to the pursuit of profit; rather, that is just an outcome. 'Why' indicates the purpose, cause, or belief. It pertains to comprehending the reasons behind the company's existence. (Sinek 2009, 46-47.)

In Sinek's (2017) practical guide "Find your why" publication for individuals and teams, illustrates a typical scenario in meeting new customers, where most of us first tell them what the company does. Then, explain how it is done or the means to distinguish oneself. This is believed to win business, influence

opinions, or convince someone to take action. This rational pitch goes as follows: “We sell paper. We offer the highest quality product at the best possible price. Lower than any of our competitors. Wanna buy one?” (Sinek et al. 2017, 14). This proposal lacks distinction. Sinek (2017, 14) asserts that features and benefits fail to inspire. Conversely, profound values foster loyal and enduring relationships, enhancing the impact of the WHY argument. (Sinek et al. 2017, 14). This ‘Inside-Out’ communication technique is not just stronger, but it possesses a value that is ultimately more influential.

3.2 Benefits of internal branding

Internal branding is a key ingredient (Aaker 2014, Chapter 14) in bringing a brand to life within an organisation. Aaker (2014, Chapter 14) suggests testing organisational alignment by asking employees two critical questions: “What does your brand stand for? Do you care?” He asserts, “If your employees don’t answer both questions positively, there is little chance that the business strategy will be implemented successfully.” The primary goal of internal branding, according to Aaker, is to ensure employees understand the brand vision and also that they genuinely care about it. Busche (2024, 302) asserts that, “Internal branding is about reinforcing a brand’s essence among the human beings in charge of bringing it to life. It is crucial exercise in walking the talk—branding from the inside out”.

Drawing from Aaker’s ideas, internal branding encompasses more than integrating a vision into the workplace – it includes aligning the company’s purpose, mission, and values. Aaker outlines several key benefits of a strong internal brand (Aaker, 2014, Chapter 14):

1. Clarity and Guidance: A clear internal brand directs employees and ensures “on-brand” decisions, reducing risks of misalignment.
2. Inspiration for Innovation: A strong brand motivates employees to innovate and address gaps in brand delivery.

3. Enhanced Employee Advocacy: Energised employees become brand advocates, sparking influential conversations internally and externally.
4. Higher Purpose and Fulfillment: A brand with a higher purpose fosters a sense of meaning, increasing productivity and commitment.
5. Cultural Support: An activated brand reinforces company culture by aligning core values with customer and business strategies.

Aaker emphasises the essential importance of internal branding, especially during the launch of a new brand concept. A brand vision must be both actionable and credible, rather than a just empty promise. Internal branding necessitates two fundamental components: a distinct and persuasive brand vision that is achievable in the marketplace, and steady support from top leadership, who must acknowledge its significance in business strategy. In the absence of executive-level commitment, “the effort will not have legs”. (Aaker 2014, Chapter 14).

3.3 Brand-led organisation

I have now examined foundations of brand building by drawing on various identity models. As well as Simon Sinek's power tool to inspire stronger communication by emphasising reasoning. Strong brands communicate from within, reinforcing culture and the core identity that shapes the brand. Denise Lee Yohn (2014,3) Brand leadership expert argues that numerous organisations do not see their brand as fundamental to their operations, sometimes reducing it to a simple marketing or public relations instrument targeted at external audiences. In contrast, brand building involves operationalising the brand as an integral way of managing and growing a business. (Yohn 2014, 3). The comprehensive theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 and in this chapter aims to foster operationalisation with clarity. Thereby rearranging the brand across the organisation to facilitate a more comprehensive approach acts as a bridge to examine what it means to be a "brand-led organisation".

As before, brand is considered the responsibility of the marketing team in many organisations. However, today, brand is increasingly perceived as a lens through which the business strategy should influence all aspects of the organisation in more progressive, brand-led companies. (Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 24.)

Brand governance (see Figure 3) has undergone a transformation from centralised command and control to self-service, empowerment, and education. From the final stage of review approval to the strategic partner throughout the process. From a rigorous approach to a collaborative and iterative one. Guidelines over dynamically evolving applications instead of static PDF format. Additionally, from a generic one-size-fits-all approach to content that is customised for specific user groups. (Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 24-25).

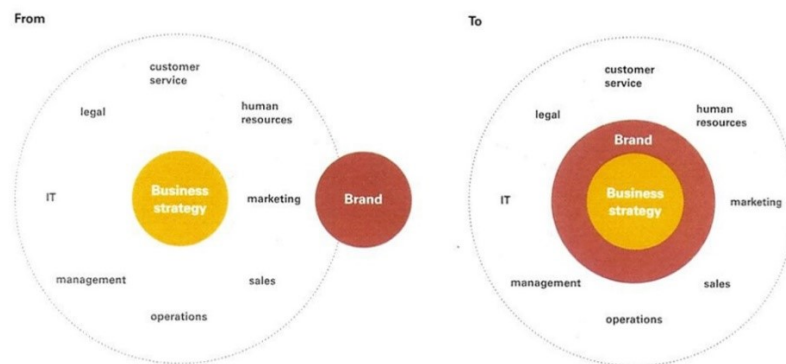


Figure 3: Brand from marketing function to lens for business strategy
(Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 24)

Furthermore, Yogn (2014, 4) claims that successful brands view themselves as strategic platforms. They delineate the core values and attributes that constitute their brands and subsequently transform these brands into their business. Implementing a brand in this manner generates outcomes by enhancing the fundamental business operating system. When executed effectively, brand building permeates corporate culture, enhances consumer value, and defines the company's interactions with all stakeholders.

While Wolfswinkel and Enkel (2022, 75) focuses on employee and internal branding which brings an interesting perspective on the ecosystem of brands.

They discuss approaches where a strategically aligned leadership team can ensure brand alignment, co-creation, loyalty and advocacy through people living the brand. The ecosystem approach transforms organisations into a brand-led organisation, where the field of strategic brand building has pivoted almost completely from being product-led to being brand-led and the key is a holistic stakeholder orientation. In brand-led stakeholder orientation, a brand emphasises its distinctive value, co-created through the collaboration of internal and external stakeholders within its ecosystem. Unlike previous brand-building efforts that primarily emphasised product or service qualities and advantages from a consumer marketing viewpoint. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 75). Central to strategic brand building is the relationship between the brand and its employees. The brand's success is dependent upon the extent to which employees identify with and internalise the purpose, reflecting its values via their behavior in all decisions and interactions at every stakeholder touchpoint. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 76.) They conclude this methodology of living the brand with foundational guidelines, as represented in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Foundational guidelines for living the brand (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 76)

The essential starting point of Figure 4 is a gain of clarity regarding the brand's purpose and the reason for its existence. Equally, how identity models from Aaker and Kapferer are applied. However, this necessitates that strategic brand

building is explicitly articulated inside a brand identity system. The system must encompass a purposeful brand positioning, supported by a particular personality and value set and working towards a meaningful long-term vision. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 77.) See Figure 5.



Figure 5: Living brands; Purposeful brand identity system (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 78)

Strategic leadership alignment becomes essential after a distinctive, compelling, and authentic brand identity system has been explicitly documented as the leadership's dedication to stakeholders. This congruence then extends to a variety of brand building platforms and touchpoints within the brand's ecosystem (Figure 4), with a focus on the development and investment in both the employer brand and the internal brand. According to their framework, brand coherence is promoted by congruent brand building across these platforms, which is illustrated in Figure 4 as the space in which all brand building activities take place. This coherence provides a solid foundation for the implementation of the principles and practices that are essential for effectively embodying the brand. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 76).

The terminology 'A Living brand' signifies brand-aligned behaviors and high levels of brand engagement by employees during their daily work (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 77). A living brand is achieved when a distinctive and compelling purpose turns into an organisation's primary objective and natural way of thinking and acting, "a living brand philosophy, so to speak",

across all brand, employer and internal brand touchpoints a meaningful brand is brought into existence. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 81.) This can be demonstrated when the organisational brand, employer brand, and internal brand collectively convey coherent brand messages, behaviors, and experiences to all stakeholders.

Brand coherence is achieved when all internal and external, formal and informal brand building platforms and contact points align, so that brand stakeholders experience the brand as true to its purpose and values. Stakeholders are a customer, an employee, a supplier or community stakeholder. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 81.) The ultimate impact of this alignment is the immense value of company brands. As Brian Resnick – Director, Global Brand + Communication Services Deloitte states “A strong brand binds us internally and it differentiates us externally” (Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 24). The final section summarises the theoretical framework and visually demonstrates how all previously learned concepts and terminology can be integrated into a cohesive synthesis that fosters clarity, common purpose, engages individuals and sustains continuity.

3.4 From theory to practice: Synthetic reflection

According to the theoretical framework, I can argue that branding is not a singular event but a continuous, disciplined and dynamic process. A systematic and consistent approach must be adopted. I have developed my own interpretations of theoretical learnings and terminology into a unified overarching approach (see Figure 6). For clarity, a comprehensive list of terms and a simplified concept map of essential elements of brand identity building is provided in Appendix 4. The concept map summarises interconnected elements.

Upon examining the theory, I identify the subsequent stages in the system as significant: 1. Differentiation, 2. Influencing, 3. Delivery of messages, 4. Alignment of brand angles, 5. Cultivation of alignment, and ultimately leading to

6. The recipient: perception of the brand. Returning back to my research question; 1. “How do you approach a brand identity in practical scenarios when the brand is ambiguous?” is theoretically simple to address. It is necessary to revert through the Differentiate cycle until every component are clarified and cohesively integrated. It is crucial to understand how underlying elements influence other components to avoid fragmentation.

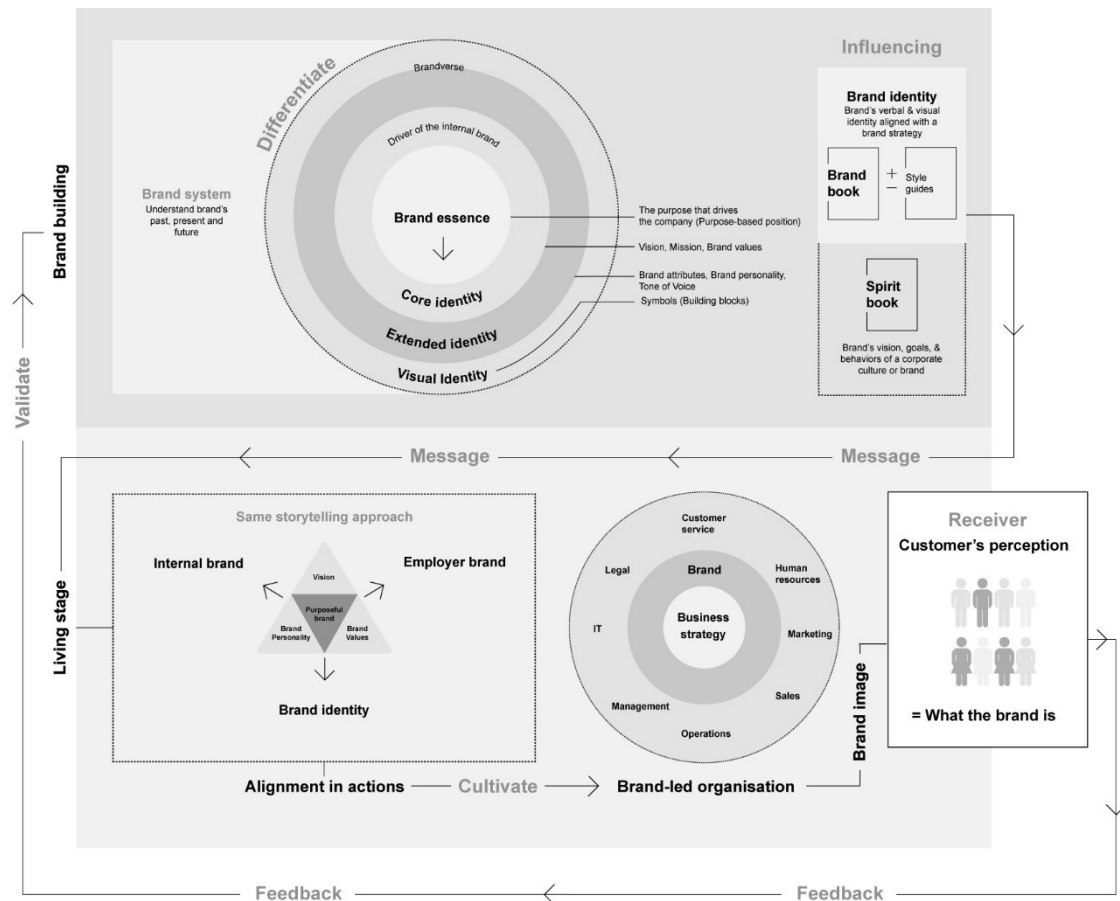


Figure 6: From theory to practice: Synthetic reflection (applying Busche 2024, 273; Aaker's Brand vision model: Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 8; Neumeier 2016; Neumeier 2017; Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 75-81; Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 24)

A careful examination of the Figure 6 reveals that the notion of “Differentiation” is reinforced by Busche's brand system which encompasses the brand's historical, contemporary, and prospective dimensions which functions as an internal branding resource. (Busche 2024, 273). Differentiation in this approach

is further enhanced by Sinek's Inside-Out methodology to add influential value and integrates the Aaker Brand Vision Model. Aaker's method is designed to foster a clear and compelling brand vision to direct strategy and communication. This approach also bridges the gap between internal brand and external expression. Thus, an idea of an external and internal brand should be avoided. The approach ensures alignment begins from within where the culture embodies the principles and values that unite a brand over time. The brand essence fundamentally delineates the shared purpose, emphasising the organisation's existence. It resolves confusion by ensuring that all efforts stem from the same foundational purpose.

The core identity comprises the organisation's vision, mission and brand values, constituting the internal brand. The core identity guides all decisions and actions via mission and values to achieve the vision. Brand values function as guiding principles that influence employee behaviour and shape the organisational culture that forms an integral part of the brand identity. The alignment of brand values and identity ensures the brand is authentic and meaningful. Attributes thereafter reinforce brand values and influence brand positioning, ultimately acting as a unique selling proposition in brand communication.

Extended identity, conversely, integrates the more adaptable component that can adjust readily – such as when a brand travels a new market or targets a distinct audience. These components may encompass brand attributes (ideally associated with the brand values outlined in the core identity), brand personality, and tone of voice. This corresponds to the 'how' of the Golden Circle.

Furthermore, core and extended identity allow to establish a brandverse. It is constructed to capture a brand's story, values, and personality, conveying its essence through an immersive, multi-sensory way (Busche 2024, 191). It nurtures verbal and visual expression. Such as, establishing a framework for visual identity. Effective brand symbols engage the imagination of the brandverse (Busche 2024, 191). By clarifying these components, the brand's visual identity can be crafted to elevate and distinguish the brand. I consider

visual identity separately since branding and visual identity that reinforce the brand message can only be established once all of the above factors are clarified. Visual identity and brand identity mutually reinforce one another, and consistency will facilitate the adoption of both.

Upon completion of this cycle, it establishes a brand identity, which is “common sense: a codified collection of shared elements (things in common) that are activated through a range of visual, verbal, and aural qualities (elements of sense)” (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 6). Common sense is what’s needed to distinguish B2B brands (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 6). Creation of the brand identity should lead to a tangible brand book or extensive version including style guides which are now maintained in digital format for convenient updates and accessibility for each employee. It is essential to understand that a spirit book delineates organisational culture. Whereas the brand book regulates the brand strategy, key messages, and style guidelines of a brand (Neumeier 2017, 33). Brand identity, through its tangible instruments, functions as the bridge for communicating the brand and integrating the desired brand message into the company culture.

In the living stage, the major objective is to assure that internal brand, employer brand and brand identity are aligned. This is demonstrated when they collectively convey cohesive brand messages, behaviors, and experiences to all stakeholders, which is facilitated through simultaneous storytelling. This storytelling is underpinned by a ‘Purposeful brand identity system’ (refer to Figure 5), which is clearly articulated in a tangible form in the brand building section. This straightforward strategy should be the foundation for establishing a clear direction towards a living brand. The conclusion to be made from this is that the elements of the triangle – brand values, brand personality, and vision directed by “purposeful existence,” are crucial for outlining brand identity in the brand building section. This addresses the second request question, “How can a brand be effectively internalised and adopted within a company?” Initially, by employing the Inside-Out methodology. Next, it requires an integrated attention to all three angles illustrated by the triangular arrangement in the Figure.

Furthermore, concrete stakeholder education on brand identity is essential for internalisation.

A systematic brand building reinforces rather than constrains by providing clarity. Given that, this framework is designed to maintain a genuine and meaningful branding that promotes long-term success and necessitates discipline, clarity and simplification in a systematic form. Clarity facilitates consistency and consistency ensures alignment. This fosters internal cohesion and reinforces external brand authenticity. I perceive this figure as an invisible route through which brand message flows coherently, and where the desire is to cultivate it a harmonised and aligned way. As well, this figure indicates where any ambiguity or fragmentation of information contributes. When it is at its optimal state, it creates a brand ecosystem (refer to Figure 4) where a cohesive brand message and storytelling touches every touchpoint in alignment with all stakeholders. Nonetheless, commitment and willingness from strategic leadership team to a brand-led organisation is required. This ensures that each team implements and builds on the brand principles.

When everything that governs the brand is aligned, documented according to a tangible brand identity and stakeholders are oriented to it, it ties internally with the brand and ultimately supports producing harmonious external communication that intends to connect and differentiate externally. These influence the features and ideas consumers identify with the brand in their perceptions. By establishing a brand image for a company. The recipient perceives the brand and thus defines what the brand really is. This continuity is sustained by attentive listening and the integration of feedback. By harnessing feedback, it enlivens and enriches the next performance. Thus, “initiating the cycle anew”.

4 Case OMICRON

This chapter expands on the development task in further detail. I examine the research topic and evaluate both secondary and primary research data around the case study. A tool developed in collaboration with a colleague for the marketing team is introduced. The tool serves as an experimental framework to explore methods to approach the OMICRON brand. This chapter aims to offer practical ideas for my commissioner, supported by visual and verbal examples demonstrating the application of the tool. The established "synergised framework" supports this chapter and provides more enhancement suggestions.

4.1 Understanding the challenge

The primary research problem addressed in this thesis is the lack of clarity and guidance surrounding the OMICRON brand, which has resulted in confusion within the Central marketing team. A brand development project initiated a few years ago was not entirely finalised. Despite the organisation's enormous effort to define its brand, team members feel overwhelmed by fragmented information and inconsistent interpretations of the brand identity. This has led to difficulties in effectively utilising the brand in the creation of marketing materials. Ultimately, inquiries such as fulfilling verbal and visual communication in accordance with the brand arise.

The absence of a cohesive framework or practical tools for team members to internalise and apply the brand identity is a significant contributing factor. This in turn makes orientation challenging and ambiguous. Whilst the existing internal resources encompass valuable information, they are spread across multiple documents and lack actionable guidance. This has resulted in team members relying on their own interpretations, which has resulted in misalignment in the tone, messaging, and visual representation of organisation's marketing materials. Moreover, the brand's integration into daily workflows is further complicated by the noticeable exception of two sets of values, the corporate

values and the brand core values (Appendix 1). Team members are uncertain about the relationship between the values and their role, and what values to apply in marketing. This ambiguity creates a gap between the brand's intended identity and its execution, affecting both internal cohesion and external communication. Addressing these challenges requires a profound understanding of how the current materials and processes fall short, as well as identifying practical solutions to streamline brand communication and ensure alignment.

4.1.1 Research design

The research design involved a qualitative approach, focusing on the exploration of the OMICRON brand. The research involved reviewing internal documents and communications about the organisation and the brand to gather secondary supportive data and conducting semi-structured interviews to obtain primary insights into the OMICRON brand. Secondary data was collected from a range of internal documentation, brand communication materials, including intranet pages, company presentations, and documentation about the brand development project. The sources were chosen based on their accessibility to employees for independently interpreting the brand. The company does not have a brand book; thus, it was not included in the materials analysed. The interviews and tools were executed as an internal project in collaboration with a colleague, and we subsequently consulted on the approach to be taken.

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with six participants, including senior level stakeholders. Participants were selected based on their long tenure at the company and their relevance to the research topic. All participants were involved, to some extent, in brand-related activities. The interviews were conducted in-person. A quantitative aspect was incorporated into the first question.

The collected data were tabulated, and key patterns and themes were identified from the responses. Secondary data were synthesised in alignment with the

intended purpose of the documents and their relevance to the requirements of the marketing team concerning brand internalisation for marketing activities. Particular attention was given to identifying gaps in the data to gain an insight of potential deficiencies that may be causing the lack of internalisation and the nature of the overwhelmed marketing team.

4.1.2 Findings of secondary data

I first present the analysis of the secondary data materials and the key deficiencies that emerged from the examination of these materials. During the analysis and comparison of the materials, I focused on the lack of depth in the communication of information and the need for establishing connections to create a comprehensive understanding of the brand. For instance, company presentation primarily addresses the current facts and characteristics of the brand, which are important when discussing the company and the brand. However, I noticed that the brand voice is absent, which hinders the ability to interpret and distinguish the desired brand elements that could illuminate them.

Although the materials contain valuable historical information and details about the brand's background, they do not provide sufficient practical tools and instructions for internalising the brand. The most significant content deficiency I observed was the absence of educational materials within the internal documents, which are essential for effective brand internalisation, orientation and implementation. Currently, the materials describe what the company does, but the content has not been shaped into practical, easily applicable materials, such as training, a brand and guidebook, that would clearly outline how the brand wants to be used in various situations. As addressed by Sinek in Chapter 3, by concentrating on the 'why', anyone may create a profound emotional connection with the message's recipient. As Sinek (2009, 64-66) asserts individuals may comprehend extensive quantities of complex information, including facts and attributes, although this does not influence behavior. The internal materials tend to focus on facts and features, that leaves the sensory side out.

The documentation and presentation materials from the brand development project primarily focus on the results and conclusions of the brand. One of the major issues in this research has been understanding the roles and meanings of two different value sets, corporate values and brand core values, within the context of the brand. The materials from the brand development project lack a connection between these values.

The key issues identified in the materials are fragmentation of the accessible internal materials and inconsistency in how they relate to each other. Another common deficiency in the materials is the absence of a 'how-to' approach, which would be particularly crucial for the marketing team in the development of creative concepts, content and advertisement. In conclusion, the two value sets might be perceived as unusual, indicating fractures in the core identity. It can be stated that the absence of key extended identity elements, such as a tone of voice, leave a gap in the purpose of a brand to differentiate itself from others. By not providing practical guidance and educational materials, such as brand book and trainings, the process of adopting the brand has been weakened, leaving space for materials and content to be created in a variety of styles. The observation of gaps in the Brand Vision Model shown in Figure 2, emphasises that the brand's potential remains underutilised.

4.1.3 Findings of primary data

The interviews with selected partners were conducted to complement the review of existing materials, providing deeper input to address uncertainties and open questions within the marketing team. In this thesis, six internal stakeholders were interviewed to gather these valuable perspectives. The interviews revealed consistent themes and reasons why the brand has remained ambiguous. We also gained new insights on how the second value set should have been named to avoid confusion. The ideas and insights also helped me retrospectively interpret their role in the extended identity (Refer to Figure 6) during the development of this thesis.

The first interview question asked participants if they could name all six brand core values. The question was designed to gauge the level of familiarity and internalisation of the brand's core values among stakeholders. The participants were able to recall an average of only 2.8 out of the 6 brand core values. This score indicates a substantial gap in familiarity with the core value, suggesting that they are not well internalised or communicated within the organisation. Several participants noted that the corporate values were easier to recall and more prominent in their minds compared to the brand core values. This suggests that the corporate values are more integrated into the day-to-day activities and culture of the organisation.

The second question asked, "Why do we need two sets of values?". Based on the participants' responses, it can be stated that the existence of two sets of values within the organisation is a result of both historical development and external guidance during the brand development project. Interviews revealed that the corporate value 'humble' and brand core value 'funky' were discussed as contradictory to each other during the brand development project. One interview partner shared with us that he perceived the brand core values as more comparable 'attributes' while another proposed the term 'brand principles' instead of brand core values, given that the initial value project played a significant role and were better integrated in the organisation. One participant also stated that they rely on the corporate values when making decisions, which are in nature of more guiding and actionable. A common view emerged from the interviews: the corporate values serve as the foundation for internal guidance and cohesion, while the brand core values are designed to shape external perception and branding.

The third interview question asked participants whether they believe all employees have effectively internalised the brand core values. This question aimed to assess the perception of how well the brand values have been adopted across the organisation and to identify any potential gaps in internalisation. Four responses out of six were directly negative. One respondent observed that as the organisation and teams expand, awareness

diminishes, and knowledge itself decreases. Meanwhile one participant highlighted a gap in the repetition of these values in daily business. The main reasons of the challenges in internalising the brand core values included their sheer number, lack of awareness and understanding, insufficient communication and reinforcement, their abstract nature, and a perceived lack of ownership, especially following the departure of the main project leader of the brand development project.

We inquired about the continuation of the brand development project and its status, as the secondary material related to the project appeared to be rather a preview of the results and deficient in tangible guidance, particularly on the obligations of the marketing team. We found out during the interviews that the continuation of the brand development project faced significant setbacks due to several factors. The unforeseen impact of the Covid-19 pandemic forced the company to redirect its focus and resources. Furthermore, the departure of the passionate project lead resulted in a loss of momentum and priority. The teams were overwhelmed with other urgent priorities, leading to the project's deprioritisation. Consequently, the second phase was not properly executed, and there was a lack of detailed knowledge and ongoing commitment. This combination of challenges ultimately hindered the project's progress and continuation.

Reflecting on the challenges and patterns of the development task in the synthesised Figure 6, I compiled a list of challenges that can be addressed (visual representation in Figure 7):

1. The purpose is undefined, which undermines the brand essence.
2. There are two value sets whose respective roles are unclear and contradictions fragments them, undermining the core identity and creating unclarity.
3. The extended identity is undefined, which undermines an identifiable and distinctive brand communication style.
4. Gaps in the inner frameworks may undermine the visual identity and thus prevents further development of full capacity.

5. An undocumented brand identity contributes to the prevention of influencing at full capacity. This encourages own interpretation, ambiguity and makes internalisation more challenging.
6. Incohesive brand identity results in unclarity and message gap.
7. The message gap prevents the 'same storytelling approach' between the three different angles by limiting the power of cultivating the same approach. This in turn increases the range of ambiguity, own interpretations, internalisation issues and ultimately challenges the ability to validate what is consistent and aligned in marketing materials.
8. The analysis and circumstances surrounding the components suggest that the complete potential has not been realised.

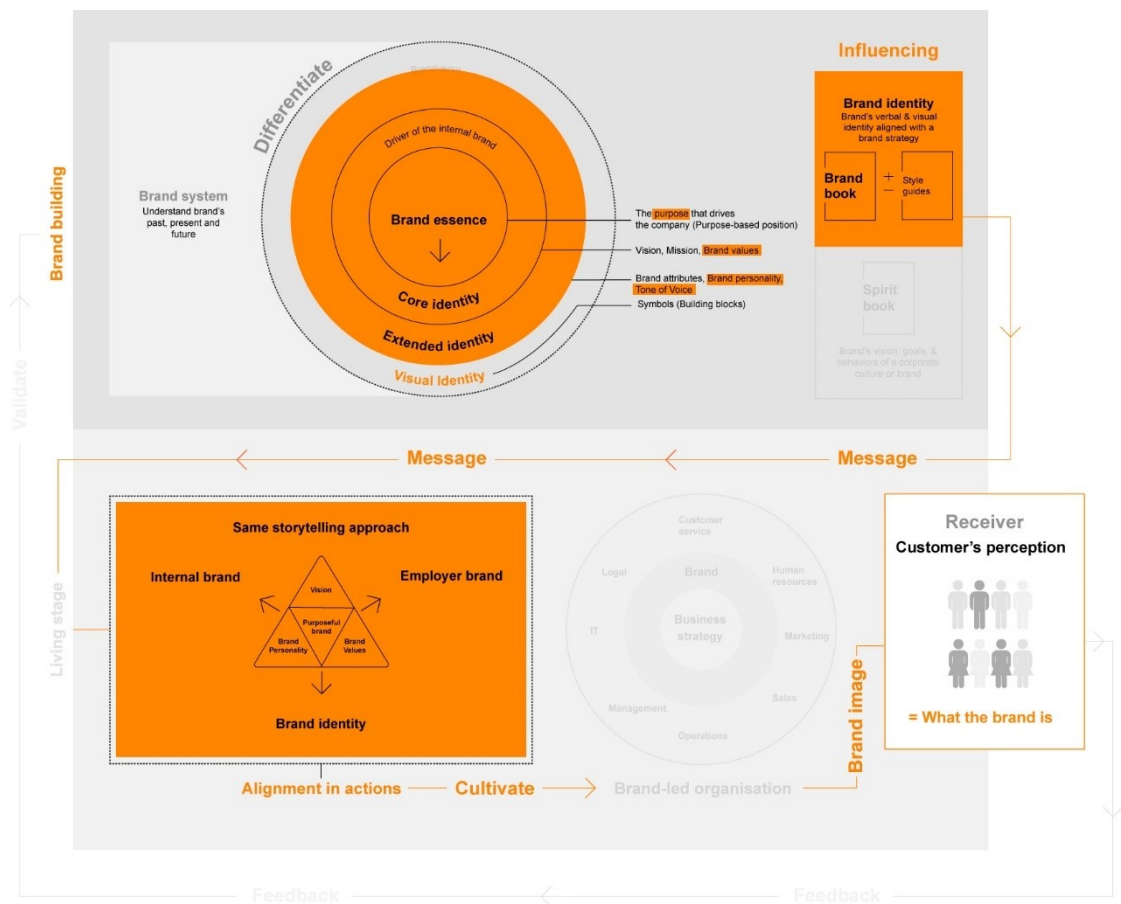


Figure 7: Applied synthetic reflection to the case study

4.2 Techniques for enhancement

The aforementioned challenges lead to clear enhancement ideas for this thesis. Reflecting on the Brand Vision Model and the Brand Identity Prism, there is room for reinforcement at the core. To strengthen the brand, the essence of the brand needs to be reinforced, by describing what the brand aims to achieve beyond making a profit. Utilising Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism, brand value misalignment affects the intangible attributes within the brand. One participant noted that the challenge of having too many values can dilute their impact and make them harder to remember. It is therefore advisable to align the brand values effectively, suggesting a more aligned cultural aspect to enhance the core identity, which is the driving force behind a strong internal brand. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand how brand and culture are intertwined, as they are not separate. Therefore, the Golden Circle approach is suggested. Drawing on theory, it is advisable to link brand values and attributes, for example, to make it easier for the marketing team to communicate the values in their daily work, thus reducing the need for self-interpretation.

There are two options to consider for the existing brand core values: Utilise the results of the interviews and change the brand core values to the term 'Brand Principles' to avoid confusion between the two sets of values. While a more advanced opportunity is to exploit their true nature and transfer them into an extended identity that supports the development of a more holistic brand system. Thus, they can be used to create a brand personality and tone of voice. This, in turn, enhances the brand communication style and provides a cohesive approach not just for the marketing team, but for all stakeholders. The advantage is that it minimises term repetition and ambiguity, ensuring that brand values appropriately guide company priorities and decision-making. As the interviews showed people need to hear things multiple times to remember them. Furthermore, transforming them into the brand personality will enhance alignment with the 'Purposeful brand identity system' of living brands (refer to Figure 5), whereby personality serves as a crucial component.

The absence of internalising the brand proves that it requires action. Therefore, ongoing brand development activities are recommended, as one interviewee stated, "from a sociological standpoint, ongoing engagement with the values is essential for them to be effective". Furthermore, a closer look of Figure 7 and the gaps suggest that the customer's perception of 'what the brand is' may differ from an external viewpoint, thus preventing the full potential of the brand being reached. As Neumeier (2006, 16) states a brand is formed, when enough people have the same perception. Therefore, it's vital to learn the common perception and by understanding it, it can inform and shape the desired influencing if required.

To implement the suggested improvements, the following actions are recommended:

1. Reinforce the core: Clearly communicate the brand essence (organisation's 'why')
2. Adopt a focused approach: Simplify the values by adopting a more focused approach with fewer values to ensure they are easier to remember and internalise. Consider both the corporate values and brand core values.
3. Communicate from the inside-out: Turn the Culture aspect into a force by starting from within. This not only supports internalisation but also strengthens the brand.
4. Connect corporate values and attributes: To complement brand values, take advantage of the brand attributes of the company and interconnect them. This will help internalise the values and make it easier to communicate them in the marketplace.
5. Adjust terminology: Consider renaming the brand core values to either "Brand principles" or,
6. Use Extended identity: By interpreting the nature of the brand core values, create a brand personality and tone of voice from them. This will enhance their integration into brand communication and their function

within the organisation's brand. Furthermore, enhances alignment with the 'Purposeful brand identity system'.

7. Emphasise continued engagement in brand development: Highlight the importance of repetition and continuous engagement to help employees adopt the brand. Utilise tangible assets, such as a spirit book and a brand book, to facilitate the internalisation of the brand.
8. Customer's perception: Understand their perception of the brand. It will facilitate lead in the appropriate direction.

4.3 The OMICRON Brand Pentagon

A practical development exercise was completed as part of the internal research project with my colleague to test the aforementioned development ideas. In this experiment, we chose techniques that did not necessitate major changes inside the organisation as the focus group consisted only of the Central marketing team. Due to the intention was to first examine the effectiveness of this approach with the limited group. In our experiment we employed Simon Sinek's Golden Circle methodology to organise the input. We clearly communicated the brand essence and applied only the brand core values.

This brand tool has been developed for simplicity, reducing the volume of information. The primary objective of the instrument is to facilitate communication from within to the outside world. Figure 8 on the subsequent page presents a simplified representation of the Golden Circle model within the theoretical framework of this thesis. The inner cycle encompasses the ultimate purpose behind all actions. The 'How' cycle clarifies how the brand communicates. It reflects style and tone. The 'what' delineates the content being conveyed.

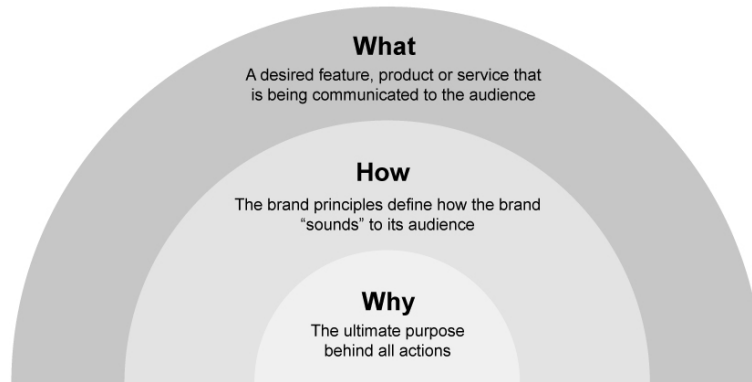
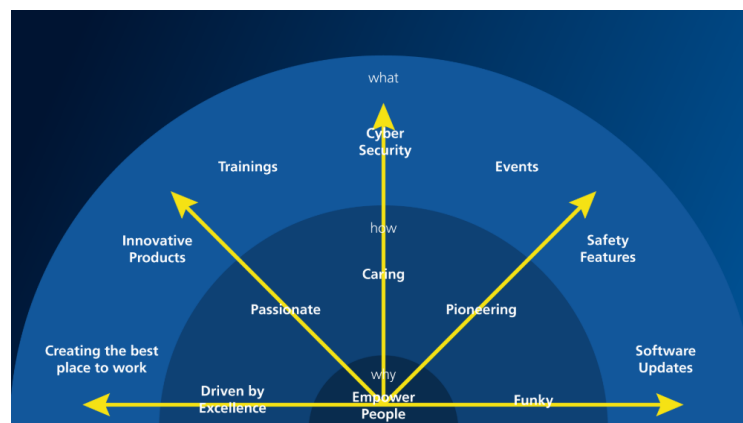


Figure 8: Applied Golden Circle in theoretical scenario



Picture 6: Applied Golden Circle in practical scenario (OMICRON 2025, Brand Tool recording)

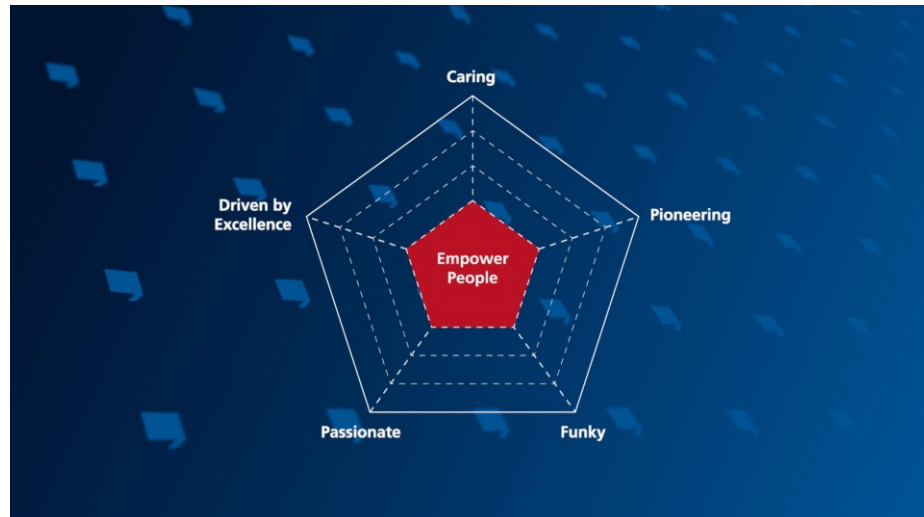
Picture 6 from above demonstrates the application of the Golden Circle in an actual circumstance. We positioned the OMICRON one-word equity at the center of the Golden Circle, refining it to convey a more precise meaning. The justification for this adaptation was to minimise redundancy between the term 'one-word-equity' and one of the brand's core value: 'empower' versus 'empowering people'. Another motive was to have a more profound understanding of the experimental 'core'. This is when the significance of meaningful branding becomes evident. The expression 'empowering people' is significantly influenced by the company's history, accurately representing the present day and the corporate culture. Therefore, utilising the Golden Circle concept, the core of the OMICRON brand, 'empowering people,' clarifies the

reasons for OMICRON's activities. This brand essence is located in the core of and must always be conveyed. Applying this to the development task, the general way of communicating sounds like this: “The Product X is 40% smaller and 30% lighter than its predecessor” (OMICRON 2025, Brand Tool recording) and this makes it easier to transport. In contrast, an inside-out message sounds like: “We believe that technology is at its best when it supports humans beyond its functional scope. We understand our users' needs and respond to them with every product. That's why we have tirelessly optimised every detail of the Product X so that it is now 40% smaller and 30% lighter than its predecessor. It fits comfortably in a backpack and enables cost- and time-effective testing even in remote locations” (OMICRON 2025, Brand Tool recording).

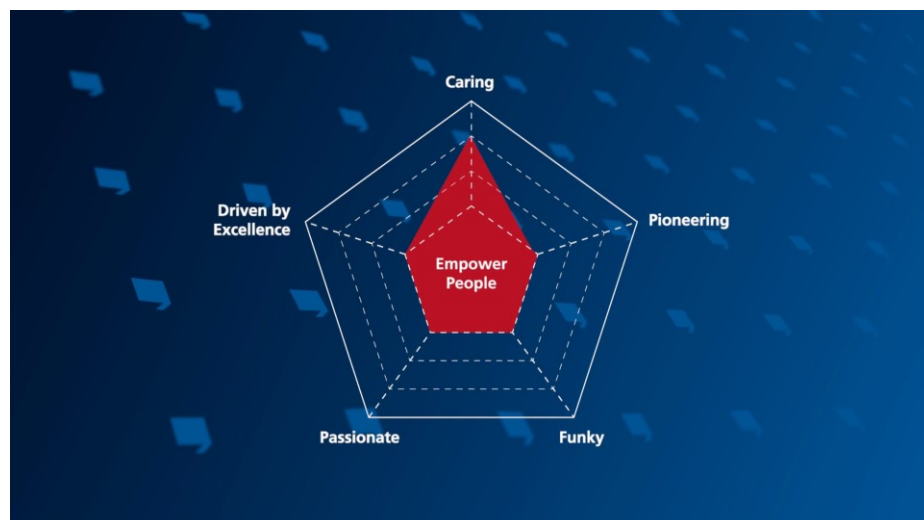
We set the brand core values in the centre, retaining five out of six values. To improve clarity and promote adoption, we designated the core values as 'Brand principles'. This section clarifies the methodology for conveying the brand essence, especially how OMICRON empowers people. To facilitate the retention of the five values, we created a streamlined interpretation of the original source materials relating to the secondary data to explain the 'how': “We empower people by being caring, passionate and driven by excellence. We dare to be funky and we strive to be pioneering.” In the 'what' section, we included all the activities of the company: events, marketing materials, products and services. The cycle of 'how' is manifested outwardly in communication style, emotion, and tone. Building upon Sinek's theoretical framework, we advanced the concept into a practical instrument known as the 'Brand Pentagon'. Refer to the concrete tool shown in Picture 7 on the subsequent page.

The tool's diversity and flexibility stem from its variability. Picture 8 emphasises a tone that conveys caring and empathy. A totally different setting might evoke the emotion or enjoyment in the desired message. It is possible to express many tones and concepts, such as that of a pioneering engineer in the field known for delivering the most entertaining stories. Subsequently, the arrows would indicate the pioneer and the unconventional. The scale can be defined

such that the pioneer serves as the primary message, while the personality of the fictional character is partially conveyed. This may serve as a simplified "framework" for a creative campaign. Countless alternative approaches are available, leaving creativity as the only limitation.



Picture 7: OMICRON Brand Pentagon – Scenario: 1
(OMICRON 2025, Brand Tool recording)



Picture 8: OMICRON Brand Pentagon – Scenario: 2
(OMICRON 2025, Brand Tool recording)

4.4 The applicability of the Brand tool

The tool is applicable to various marketing materials. Applying the Brand tool to such as brand pictures, the brand principles help guide the desired emotion and tone in the images. In the Brand Pentagon, an experimentally the red section signifies passion, driven by excellence and pioneering. A specific chosen category of photographs, i.e., for a specific campaign or part of a brand story on a brand book, could reflect a passionate customers in the field, at work. In this example, the imaginary location and set up can be a substation where the customer is using the test product during a commissioning a new substation. One design strategy to achieve this could be as follows:

The customer is deeply focused on their work, creating a dynamic and engaging activity. Close-up shots of a face in the photographs, capturing intense concentration, joy, or determination, can effectively convey emotions and passion. These images can be further enhanced using wide-angle shots or a fisheye lens to add depth and intensity, thereby emphasising the passion involved. High-quality, sharp images contribute to a sense of intensity and focus, distinguishing the passion in the scene. Introducing vibrant colours through the products can evoke energy and enthusiasm. The photographic environment, set in a high-tech substation, conveys a sense of pioneering and forward-thinking. Images may illustrate the engineers' long on-site workdays, utilising changes in daylight from sunrise to sunset and into the late evening to underscore their dedication and passion to completing the task.

Supportive storytelling in alignment with the brand principles enhance the images in the desired context. Furthermore, the people seen in the images might be more precisely characterised. For instance, by employing alternative brand principles to enhance the characterisation of the individuals and the narrative. The tone of voice will therefore be determined accordingly. The scale of the project influences the specificity of the tool utilised to define the details; larger projects desire more precise approach.

As practically examined, this tool can serve multiple purposes within marketing, ranging from smaller initiatives (see Appendix 3) to larger projects. Including the development of such as visual concepts, product promotion, photography projects, article writing, or advertising campaigns. This customised tool is defined to ensure alignment on the brand content.

The OMICRON brand possesses a remarkable number of brand principles, finding it challenging to emphasise them simultaneously. However, as Neumeier asserts in Chapter 2, 'living brands,' like people, can afford some inconsistency if they retain their defining attributes (see Picture 4, 23). As the organisation consists of several brand principles, this tool effectively enhances them and demonstrates its practical usefulness. Critically thought the tool provides an extensive range of options for communication style and expression. The question arises: is it too extensive? Thus, in my view, one has to establish an endpoint to clarify its extent. Notably as the tool doesn't as such establish what values are employed in the decision making. The tool concentrates on expressing the brand principles. Which might be considered as a defining factor for decision making in brand communication. Therefore, this thesis proposes to assess the need and evaluation of other development proposals as well (section 4.2.).

In my view, a brand identity must be clearly defined and documented, even if the Brand tool is already in existence. As discussed in the section 2.2.2. 'Towards strategic brand building', according to Aaker (2014, blogpost) a well-defined brand identity aligns with business strategy, distinguishes from competitors, engages customers while motivates employees. It drives innovative ideas for marketing and other initiatives.

Simultaneously, a documented identity sets the conditions for the brand's communication and expression. A strong foundation and adoption ensure more alignment, allowing the Brand tool to offer even more confident branded content for variety of applications.

5 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to achieve clarity and find ways in which the OMICRON brand and its brand identity can be easily approached and adopted within the marketing team. Chapter 2 revealed that the power of a brand lies in its distinction, culture and essence. There are many approaches for brand building and each organisation must identify its own, as Marković & Pollák (2022, 3) also argued that there is no uniform template that can be applied to two businesses (13). The gap between strategy and design can be bridged with various disciplines to enhance brand building and daily management. Chapter 3 explored how to approach a brand from the inside-out and the immense value of living brands, advocating for a holistic 'brand-led organisation' ecosystem. Chapter 3 concluded with the developed process synthesising the theoretical framework with my personal interpretation.

Chapter 4 presented an effective Brand Pentagon tool established from primary and secondary insights gained from the internal research project. This framework successfully resolved my first research question. The Brand Pentagon is a diverse tool utilised in various content development methods that leverage the OMICRON brand. It not only offered clarity but also enhanced usability and simplicity. Its simplicity aids in internalising the brand, a primary problem observed in this research. Its versatility facilitates innovative thinking from new perspectives, revealing its potential to enhance cohesion within the brand. Furthermore, it also inspires and facilitates creative thinking. The tool allows the creation of diverse content; however, the theory endorses alignment above consistency. This, thus, enhances the concept of living brands.

The ambiguity and extent of brand terminology discussed in the theory section suggest careful term selection. It is crucial to distinguish the two value sets. I recommend prioritising the topic, as the theoretical part underscores the significance in decision-making and internal culture. Both are identified as crucial elements of core identity in brand theory. Throughout the tool's development, it was ambiguous which values influence decision-making in

brand communication. I suggest classifying the 'Brand principles' within brand personality due to their nature. The developed 'synthetic' framework (Figure 7) and a thorough examination in Chapter 4 argue for a clear systematic structure. This may diminish the interference between the value 'humble' and 'funky' when their functions differ. Furthermore, this will eliminate the potentially ambiguous term 'principles', which might result in misunderstandings. Brand values that are part of the core identity could instead be strengthened by linking them to brand attributes. This strategy would enhance their tangibility, facilitating successful communication of brand values in marketing. Consistent framework ultimately guarantees that the surrounding components are mutually reinforcing.

The Brand Pentagon was designed as an experimental framework; I encourage investigating its effectiveness retrospectively by properly implementing it in the organisation's branding activities. I believe OMICRON has significant potential to adopt a 'Brand-led organisation' approach, owing to its esteemed history and excellent work culture. Consequently, I endorse a more accurate alignment with my 'synthetic' framework. This would enable the 'immense value' discussed in Chapter 3 to be fully realised. Ambiguity proves that branding requires discipline, clarity and simplification, therefore, internalisation requires ongoing repetition and tangible tools. This prevents fragmentation. A well-thought-out brand building approach shapes stakeholder perception and loyalty, generating measurable value and cultivating trust, recognition, and emotional connection. Strong brands must be approached in a tailored manner.

My goal was to expand my knowledge of brand development. I gained valuable practical branding skills through this research. I developed a structured and comprehensive understanding of brand building and its role in organisations. I also acquired knowledge on enhancing its effectiveness through different techniques. I have always valued purposeful visual identities, and through this work, I also successfully established the role of visual identity within branding. With this level of knowledge, it is possible to develop strong brands while effectively integrating visual identity. By utilising the right elements from the core and extended identity, brands can be strengthened cohesively and strategically.

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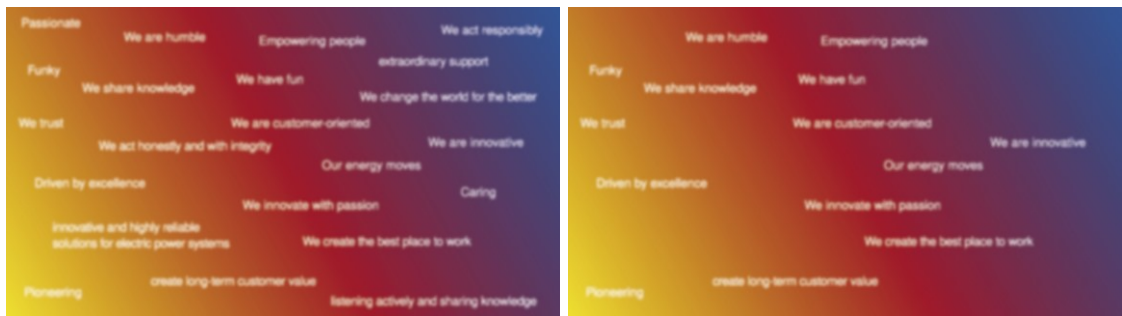
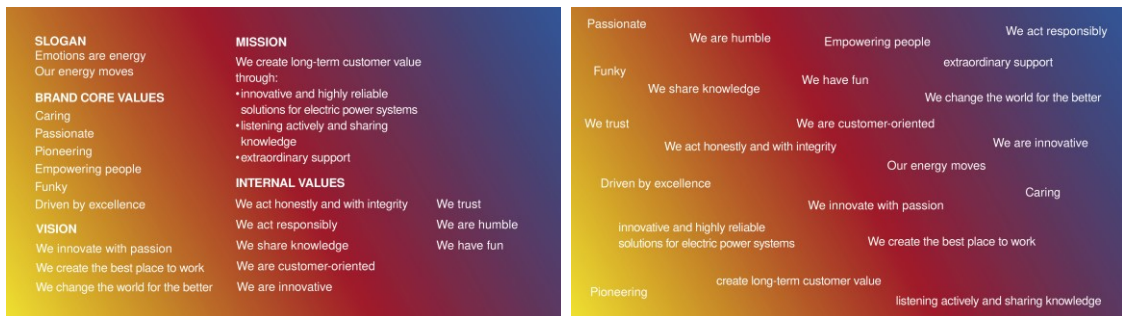
Unpublished references

OMICRON 2025, Brand Tool recording. Format: Video.

OMICRON 2024, Internal research project. Format: Presentation.

Brand assets

Attached below are the materials from the internal project from which the research problem arose. The four different images illustrate how the listed amount of information looks rather disorganised at the team's end; memory becomes clouded when thinking about it and eventually only some of it is remembered. (OMICRON 2024).



Stakeholder interview questions

Primary data of the research design

Question 1: We asked some colleagues if they could name all the brand core values by heart, and no one - including us - has managed it yet. Can you do it?


Question 2: Why do we need two sets of values?

Question 3: Do you personally have the impression that all OMICRON employees have internalised the brand core values?


Question 4: What happened to the planned second phase of the project?

Brand Pentagon – Examples


Visual examples produced for internal purposes during the project. (OMICRON 2025).




ENERGY TALKS
Discover our episodes




A suitable image for the Brand Pentagon and the message




ENERGY TALKS
It's like an audio book for electrical engineers




A suitable image for the Brand Pentagon and the message




ENERGY TALKS
Expert knowledge to take away

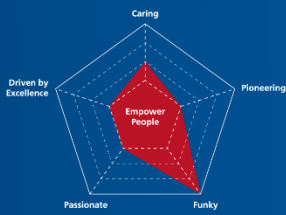



A suitable image for the Brand Pentagon and the message

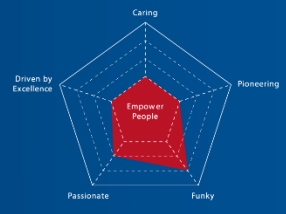


ENERGY TALKS
Expert who can keep up









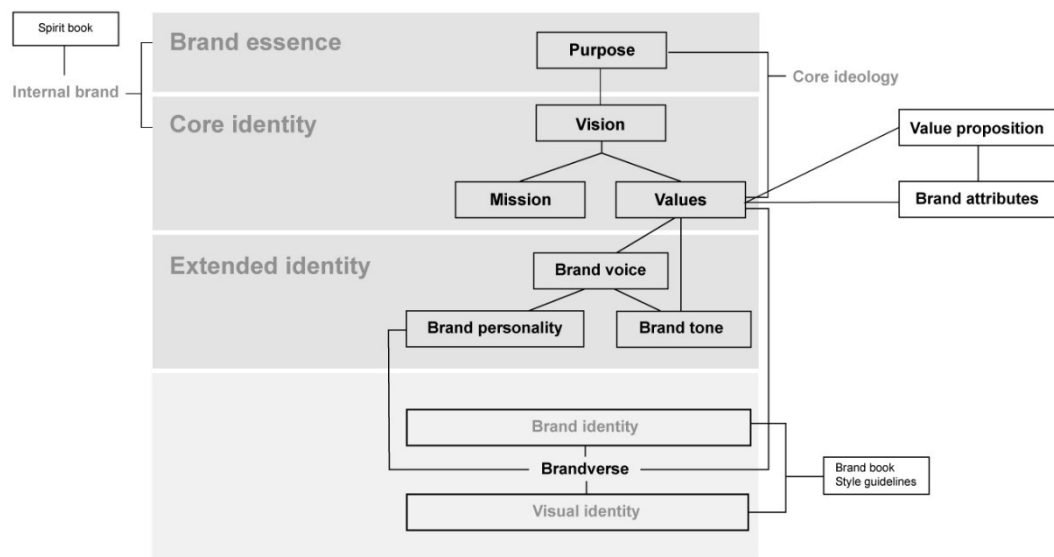
Picture idea:
A picture of a cute baby in a crib, having a bedtime routine. His pyjamas resembles an electrical engineer's work clothes and he listens with a happy face to a story on his headphones before falling asleep.

Picture idea:
A girl leaves a coffee shop with a takeaway coffee in her hand and an electrical engineer standing behind her looking at her intensely.

Picture idea:
Behind a passionate runner, there are two engineers on the running track who keep his running pace.

Terminology list

This list contains the terminology utilised in my thesis together with their definitions. The condensed concept map focuses the essential terms and concepts within this thesis, which I believe reflect the key elements of brand identity building in a simplified form.



Brand = a reputation based on personal (customer) perception. (Neumeier 2006, 16 / p. 10). It is a vision-driven identity that builds loyalty and advocacy through core values. (Kapferer 2011, 149 / p.10). Its tangible and intangible asset shapes consumer behaviour and add value. (Busche 2024, 40 / p. 10).

Brand alignment = linking customer experience and brand strategy (Neumeier 2017, 31).

Brand attributes = a unique feature of a product, service, or a brand (Neumeier 2017, 32).

Brand book = “a publication or online resource that regulates the strategy, key messages, and style guidelines of a brand” (Neumeier 2017, 33).

Brand building = “the process by which a company creates or improves customers' knowledge and opinions of a brand” (Cambridge Dictionary 2025). In this thesis, brand building is specifically defined as the creation of a strong identity through the use of key foundational components.

Brand coherence = all interactions, whether internal and external, consistently embody the brand's purpose and values, ensuring stakeholders truly experience the brand in every contact (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 81 / p. 30).

Brand development = “the process of improving a brand or improving customers' knowledge and opinions of a brand” (Cambridge Dictionary 2025).

Brand ecosystem = Framework of all brand building platform and touchpoints, aligned with the brand's purpose and identity, ensuring consistent and coherent brand experience for all stakeholders. (Figure 4, p. 29).

Brand essence = a static concept (Kapferer 2011, 128). The essence of the brand encapsulates the central theme of the brand (Wheeler & Meyerson 2024, 8).

Brand execution: process of implementing a brand strategy across all interactions to provide a cohesive and genuine brand experience.

Brand governance = stands for the extensive array of activities and procedures organisations employ to oversee and regulate the presentation and utilisation of their brand, both internally and externally.

Brand identity = a unique set of brand associations or codified collection of shared elements that a brand strategist seeks to establish or uphold, representing the brand's promise to customers. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organisation members. (Aaker 1996, 62 ; Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 6). It is the foundation of brand strategy and brand building, fostering a significant relationship with customers through a compelling value proposition. (Aaker 2014, blog post ; Aaker 1996, 62).

Brand identity system = explicitly articulated inside a brand identity system. The system must encompass a purposeful brand positioning, supported by a particular personality and value set and working towards a meaningful long-term vision (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 77).

Brand image = a collection “of features and ideas customers associate with a product or brand” (Cambridge Dictionary 2025 / p. 35).

Brand management = managing an intangible “aura” that gives a product emotion resonance and distinctiveness (Neumeier 2006, 16). It’s the ongoing process of defining a brand’s positioning, identity, and message (Busche 2024, 63)

Brand personality = the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (by Jennifer Aaker) (Busche 2024, 23).

Brand strategy = is a systematic development plan that aligns with the business strategy (Neumeier 2017, 43).

Brand tone = the attitude and manner through which a brand expresses its values and beliefs (Frontify 2025).

Brandverse = constructed to capture a brand’s story, values, and personality, conveying its essence through an immersive, multi-sensory way (Busche 2024, 191).

Brand voice = the vocabulary, language, and distinctive perspective a brand use to communicate with its audience. Brand voice embodies the values. (Frontify 2025).

Branding = developing difference in order to make a product or service distinct from competitors (Slade-Brooking 2016, 14).

Corporate brand structure design = intra-organisational corporate brand architecture (Balmer 2023, 99) which is “a hierarchy of related brands or brand names, often beginning with a master brand, that describes its relationship to sub brands and co-brands” (Neumeier 2017, 32).

Corporate brand visual design = (visual) elements that represent the brand (Balmer 2023, 99)

Core / brand values = the guiding principles that determine how employees of a company behave and work together (Neumeier 2017, 63). Combination of values and priorities underlie business strategies (Aaker 2004, 8). Values form the core of a brand's identity, enhancing its credibility and uniqueness and they also shape the brand's value proposition (Aaker 1996, 77).

Core ideology = core values and core purpose in management (Neumeier 2017, 62).

Core purpose = a component of a core ideology that articulates a company's purpose beyond making a profit (Neumeier 2017, 62).

Employer brand = the employer brand encompasses the entirety of benefits and features associated with employment that an employer seeks to be recognised for, aimed at attracting potential skilled people to the brand (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 79).

Internal brand = the brand essence and core identity of a brand as seen and adopted by employees (p. 26), whereas,

Internal branding = the process of aligning employees with the brand's vision, mission, and values to guarantee their authentic commitment and advocacy for the internal brand (p. 26-27).

Inside-out approach = communicating from the inside out, applicable to several contexts including brand building.

Brand-led organisation = a brand building strategy which integrates the brand's values and vision into every aspect of its business strategy, ensuring that all departments and operations are aligned with and guided by the brand, rather than limiting brand responsibility to the marketing team (Wheeler ; Meyerson 2024, 24 / p. 27). The brand's identity system is crucial to the brand-

led organisation and guides all employer branding efforts. (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 78).

Mission = in this thesis, mission is to fulfil a vision together with values. (p. 33). According to Neumeier (2017, 157) mission is a 5- to 20-year organisational strategy to fulfil a purpose.

Product-led organisation = a brand building strategy which focuses on the features and benefits offered by a product or service from a consumer marketing viewpoint (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 75).

Spirit book = according to Neumeier (2017, 222) spirit book articulates “the vision, goals, and expected behaviours of a corporate culture or brand”.

Style guidelines = articulates the visual guidelines for a brand. According to Neumeier (2017, 228) style guidelines describes the graphic standards, such as trademark, typography, photography and colors.

Value proposition = “a business offering based on one or more benefits, whether functional, emotional, or self-expressive” (Aaker 1996, 62).

Visual identity = the graphic components of a brand identity (Neumeier 2017, 258). The design communicates a brand’s values and purpose through visual language (Airey 2024, 112).

Vision = according to Neumeier (2017, 258) is so called “an image of success” that guides the direction and drives future growth.

The Virtual Circle (By Marty Neumeier) = concept of radical clarity. The practice of removing unnecessary elements to create actionable framework between brand strategy and brand execution through five disciplines: Differentiate, Collaborate, Innovate, Validate and Cultivate. (Neumeier 2006 / p. 19-20)

A living brand = signifies brand-aligned behaviors and high levels of brand engagement by employees during their daily work (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 77). This requires that a distinctive and compelling

purpose turns into an organisation's primary objective and natural way of thinking and acting (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, Marković & Pollák, 2022, 81 / p. 30).

Brand identity models = in this thesis, this term is defined specifically to refer to the existing frameworks and concepts used to define, organise and build a brand identity and strategic vision. These include:

- **Identity Structure** (By David Aaker)
 - **Core identity** = represents the brand's timeless essence, accompanied by vision, mission and values (p. 14)
 - **Extended identity** = encompasses additional elements, such as visuals, voice, and tone, to translate the core identity into tangible, actionable components (Aaker 1996, 80 / p. 15).
- **Strategic brand building** (By David Aaker) = establishing and implementing a brand vision (formerly called Brand Identity) that corresponds with the business's strategy, distinguishes from competitors, appeals to customers, engages employees, and drives new marketing efforts. (Aaker, 2014, blog post / p. 16). Underpinned by the framework:
 - **Brand Vision Model** = a strategic framework encompassing components such as brand essence, core identity, and extended identity to guarantee alignment with the business strategy and resonance with customers.
- **Kapferer's Identity Prism** = a framework establishing brand identity through six interrelated dimensions, incorporating both the brand's social and visible traits (physical attributes, relationships, reflections) and its internal, intangible elements (personality, culture, self-image), with brand essence at its center (p. 17).