Exploring Corporate Identity and Branding to Integrate Design

Ray Holland, Brunel University, United Kingdom
Chris Holt, Brunel University, United Kingdom
Busayawan Ariyatum, Brunel University, United Kingdom
Mornay Roberts-Lombard, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Abstract: This article examines the nature of corporate identity and branding and the rapidly increasing role of design-led branding, and argues that brands are an essentially visual experience. The debate about the relationship of marketing and design reveals widely held cross-cultural perceptions. Many design schools give wrong signals to corporations by producing artist designers with little business knowledge. Whilst leadership is established among the marketing community, designers acquire increasing awareness of strategic business, particularly those designers engaging with progressive post-graduate programmes. A comparative study, integration of arguments and the case study approach are followed. Case studies demonstrate the power and creative potential of designers to lead major branding/rebranding programmes. Both marketers and designers are converging in their agreement on the value of systems and holistic thinking, and investing much intellectual effort into defining problems and generating creative alternatives. Strategic designers are no longer strange lonely artists detached from the world around them, but ‘people people’, confident in their roles in multi-disciplinary teams. A synthesis of design–led branding research shows that education, thinking styles and other characteristics of designers and marketers are converging. Three conceptual views of the current relationship are offered to inform this convergence. An opportunity exists for marketing and design to explore convergence and create new cross-disciplinary models supporting collaborative working. Questions about such issues as cultures, semantics, added value to corporate brands, storytelling and leadership require more attention. The complex challenges of designing a corporate identity and building a corporate brand through designing a great customer experience, need high quality multi-faceted thinking.

Keywords: corporate identity, branding, design, marketers

Nature of Corporate Identity

More than one hundred years ago, in one of the most famous cases in company law, a corporation became established as a separate legal entity, Salomon v Salomon & Co Limited, 1897: separate from its members, its directors, its employees and its creditors. Thus it acquired the status of a ‘legal person’ and, like every human being, needed to develop its personality and identity. But, of course a company has no mind of its own, but is rather an abstraction. Its ‘mind’ can only be regarded as the collective minds of the stakeholders, and the questions and even disputes about their inherently contradictory needs and desires can be seen in the chronicles of court cases over the last century.

The balancing of the stakeholder interests falls on the board of directors which has much power, but also great responsibility to act in the best interests of the company. As a general
principle external stakeholders are entitled to assume, unless they know or have reason to suspect something to the contrary, that the directors are empowered to act on behalf of a company. Thus, the principal guardianship of the corporate personality/identity rests with the board of directors. Fundamentally, the corporate identity/brand is the personality of the company as an abstract being brought to life. The challenge remains to convince all stakeholders to engage with and trust an abstract entity.

In 1931, Procter and Gamble directors created an entire business function based on brand management (Crainer, 2000). By giving responsibility to a single individual they evolved to a systematic brand management approach. Slowly brand management became an accepted functional activity, and the devolution of responsibility for the corporate personality reflecting its identity shifted from the board of directors to the professional brand manager. Current trends reflect an emphasis on branding the organisation, since many of the world’s best known brands are companies rather than products (Baker & Hart, 2007). Since the early 20th century, brands have been brought to life in various ways, some have suffered stillbirth, some have undergone major surgery, some have soared and thrived. Marketers have lead the way, but the creation of enduring and highly successful brands can often be attributed to the special visual skills of designers who have a unique capacity to deliver the brand as a reflection of the human condition (Olins, 2007). Riezebos, Kist and Koosstra (2003) further argue that in a brand strategy, several instruments are used to achieve set goals. For several of these instruments, design plays a major role. Design can differentiate products (goods and services), create a unique selling position and arouse feelings of desire and interest. Whether it be technical performance, style, reliability, safety or ease of use, design can make qualities visible. Consumers can be influenced in their brand decisions by design, it is therefore advisable to handle this instrument with care.

In the first authoritative book on the subject of corporate identity, Henrion and Parkin (1967) wrote, “The planning and implementation of the design coordination and corporate image programme must be accepted as a top managerial responsibility. Success can only be achieved by close collaboration between management and designer.” It is clear that the broad concept of convergence between management and design was identified, even at this early stage in its history.

Origins and evolution of brands

Brands began as ancient visual icons which represented the corporate identity of groups of people coming together or forming collectives, creating associations of one kind or another with a common set of rules, objectives and beliefs which display what might be described as ‘identity’ traits. Examples of such groups embrace ancient civilisations such as The Incas, The Aztecs, The Romans and The Egyptians. All four examples have left a very rich legacy of powerful ‘design’ themes which act as a visual identity in part or as a whole, and include the design of buildings, clothing, artefacts, jewellery and alphabets, as well as decorative patterns and styles. In other words, ‘identity’ has been a natural tendency of man and his/her collective institutions, who need to identify or brand themselves in a certain ‘distinctive’ way. More recent examples might include the many colourful tribes that once made up powerful and proud nations, and have since become assigned to playing more of a historic or symbolic role. Such tribes include the Aborigines in Australia, the Masai from Africa, the Inuit from Alaska and the Red Indians across North America – The Comanche, Sioux and Apache. The church is another interesting example which has designed recognisable symbols and created outward
signs of its intended message since the new world began. Such ‘iconic’ logos as the cross (Christian), the crescent moon and star (Muslim) and the Star of David (Jewish) are recognised by millions of people across the world. Over the centuries, this basic corporate design idea has also been applied to identify nations, the monarchy, armies and governments. Brand Identity came into its own in the UK during the Victorian Era Industrial Revolution. There was a proliferation of brands at this time, many with names and identities that have survived to this day. Such brands included Fry’s Chocolate Cream in 1866, Lifebuoy Soap in 1884 and Bovril in 1886 (Opie, 1999).

The quest for powerful symbols remains at the heart of the corporate identity, and brand managers are seeking designers who can understand and support the company strategy and brand values of the organisation. The objective is to ensure that the brand image reflects what the organisation is about (Best, 2006). Depending on the nature of a product (good or service), four brand attributes in which design plays a role can be distinguished, namely the product, the packaging, the corporate design, and the logo. Of these four design aspects, product design is the only attribute that may be classified as an intrinsic attribute; packaging, house style and logo are all extrinsic attributes. The reason why product design is an intrinsic attribute, is that when you alter the product design, you in part alter the product itself. When the packaging of a product is altered, the product itself will remain the same. It is advisable to register the distinguishing aspects of the form, colour palette, and/or layout of the packaging house style as a brand (Riezebos, Kist and Koostra, 2003).

Olins (1978) in his seminal work on “The Corporate Personality”, described the brand in its purest form as “a figment of the marketing man’s imagination.” He likened it to a ventriloquist’s dummy which can be picked up and put down again whenever they [corporate marketing people] feel like it. He added that the consumer can react to the dummy, but the dummy cannot respond by itself; it is manipulated by the company. He regarded attempts to define the differences between corporate personality, corporate image and corporate identity as, for the most part, trivial. Nevertheless, branding is essentially a visual experience, not just the symbolic core, but every aspect of the stakeholders’ touch points with the brand are essentially visual. Thus the entire experience has to be designed (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). It is important that the brand can be experienced through any point of contact with the company (Nagai, 2003). If there is no physical manifestation of the experience, the brand remains as abstract a concept as the ‘legal entity’ persona acquired when the company was registered. Handy (1997) observes that corporations not only have citizens, they are citizens, and they have both rights and responsibilities. He insists that companies are expected to behave decently. What is ‘decent’, is the delicate balance for brand leaders. Too decent may be equated to sluggish and boring, whilst too indecent may attract attention and media interest but disturb sensibilities. Perhaps the best known example of this is the Benetton campaign which clearly set out to generate controversy and divide opinion. Even good human beings are not expected to be flawless in their character so perhaps the concept of a flawless corporation is unrealistic, and the quest to design the perfect brand experience is undesirable.

**Marketers Brand territory**

As recently as 2003 Von Stamm writes of the continuing gap between marketers and designers when she writes “the lack of understanding of the differences leads many managers to view design and creativity as something close to black art, something which cannot be managed and is therefore better left alone”. Marketers do not trust designers with the brand.
Aldersley-Williams (2000) quoted in Balmer and Gray (2003) remarked that “designers talk strategy but like pretty shapes and colours.” He failed to acknowledge that there is a growing body of design management educators, researchers and strategists who are contributing valuable new thinking about using design as a strategic resource. Yet, six years previously, Aldersley-Williams (1994) further argued that it is imperative for designers, marketing and other managers to work together when creating corporate identity schemes. However, Powell (2007) is of the opinion that the problems remain current in identifying concerns by business owners and managers about ‘creative mavericks’. Therefore, despite all the evidence of visual roots of branding, marketers claimed the territory of branding. As recently as 1999, one of the major writers on marketing (read widely in business schools globally), dismissed design as a PR tool for logos, stationery, brochures, signs business forms, business cards, buildings, uniforms and company cars (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999). This is particularly surprising since Kotler and Rath (1984) published an article of great influence on the origins of design management thinking in which they made a well-argued case for design as a powerful but neglected strategic resource.

A review of a large selection of major marketing texts for business and MBA education reveals a dearth of material about the role of design, even at its most basic level. Marketing texts which offer an integrated evaluation of design and marketing are, by contrast, rare. An example is taken from The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding by Al and Laura Ries, both distinguished marketers (Profile Books, 1999) - Law16: The Law of Shape, and Law 17: The Law of Colour (sic). The only time the ‘design’ word is mentioned in these two chapters is ‘A great deal of effort has gone into creating elaborate symbols for use in logotypes. These have poured out of America’s design shops in great profusion and, for the most part, these are wasted’. The authors go on to say that most have little to do with creating meaning in the consumers’ minds. Bruce and Cooper (1997) showed how design interfaces with different parts of the organisation, and how the engagement builds to become an integral role in the delivery of the brand experience- see Figure 1.

**Figure1: The organisation’s need for design**

(Bruce and Cooper, 1997)

In industry, the number of marketing-led firms still far outweighs those who embrace design despite all of the evidence that design-led firms outperform others (Rich, 2004). Although the idea that general managers should learn from design managers was identified in 1998 (Lester,
Piore & Malek, 1998), the full potential of design has not been explored. However, there are
good examples of marketing and design cooperation. The designs and marketing campaigns
of the Classic Mac computer demonstrates integrated contributions of design, marketing and
other stakeholders that lead to great success.

Firstly, the name Apple, helps by differentiating the brand from other companies, e.g. IBM,
UNIX and Sun Microsystems. Apart from its user-friendly sound, the visual identity
represents several philosophies. The first logo was a drawing of Sir Isaac Newton sitting
under an apple tree with a William Wordsworth’s poem running around the border –
“Newton... A mind forever voyaging through strange seas of thoughts alone...” Although this
logo has been replaced, the underlying philosophy, “Think Different”, has been used as a
slogan since 1997. This kind of ‘joined-up’ thinking was shown to achieve vivid corporate
identity, vibrant corporate brand and added-value product brand.

The second logo was best described by Jean-Louis Gassée, the President of Apple Products
(cited in Linzmayer, 1999) as: “One of the deep mysteries to me is our logo, the symbol of lust
and knowledge, bitten into, all crossed with the colours of the rainbow in the wrong order.
You couldn’t dream of a more appropriate logo: lust, knowledge, hope and anarchy.” The
lust refers to the metaphor created by the story of Adam and Eve in The Garden of Eden
where Eve was tempted to take a bite from the forbidden fruit – the apple. Insightful visual
design thinking was demonstrated through all its details. For instance, a bite (or byte) on the
right hand side, which prevents the apple from looking like a cherry tomato. Further, the six
colours represent the colour capabilities, which were considered novel at the time. Even
though the logo has been updated recently using a metallic treatment to reflect the cutting
edge of digital technology, the main essence of the design is maintained (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Evolution of Apple Computer Logo Design

The success of the Classic Mac computer came from its superior design. This design formula,
combining a monitor and computer in a single unit, has proved to be successful even in the
present market, as the design of the iMac was based on the original Macintosh. The marketing
campaign for the Classic Mac was also considered evolutionary – an athletic heroine
portrayed the coming of the Macintosh as a means of saving humanity from "conformity."-see Figures 3 and 4.
Figure 3: The designs of Classic Mac and 1984 Marketing campaign

Figure 4: The new designs which represent Apple design philosophy
(For example, colours of iMac reflect the colours of the previous logo)

However, such fine examples remain a minority, and the communication and cultural gap between the two professions remain. Marketers, management trained in business school paradigm are generally better prepared to use their left brain (Pink, 2005). Designers from a design school paradigm largely use their right brains. Few are using their entire brain. Over the past 15 years at Brunel University where three of the authors are engaged, the Masters Design Strategy programme encourages students to do just that, embracing design thinking, design knowledge and design skills with an understanding of business, commerce, financial reality and stakeholder needs. Marketing is integral to the lecture programme and ways of combining design and marketing expertise are explained and encouraged.

Conflicting views on Design
Designers are innovators and trendsetters who try to initiate change, to make a leap of imagination, and produce an idea. Design departs from the realm of pure aesthetics to create objects that serve human needs. Design reflects human needs and wants, as well as the dominant ideas and artistic perceptions of the time. The designer must accommodate economic, aesthetic, technological, and commercial constraints and arrive at a synthesis. He is a ‘creator of form’ who understands creation in the context of predefined imperatives established by other professionals, and places human values over technological ones (De Mozota, 2003). The common perception of designers is that their approach to their subject matter differs from the rational analysis and scientific rigor of the business disciplines. Designers are perceived by other functions with intrigue and frustration. Designers view design perfection as ‘a spiritual quest – a goal to be achieved in stages’ that lies in contrast with the output performance orientation of other functions (Beverland, 2005). To the majority of designers, the concept of ‘rational analysis’ is too deterministic. The reason being that they are strongly individualistic in their expressionism and vitality towards design (Heskett, 2002).
Molotch (2003) reports that designers are suspicious of market research because “market research isolates a product from the context of its purchase or use and cannot predict how it might catch on with time and exposure. Designers think they are the ones who project forward in terms of market preferences, whereas market research documents preferences in the present”. Despite the functional role of design within the realm of marketing, Von Stamm (2003) writes of the continuing gap between marketers and designers when she writes “the lack of understanding of the differences leads many managers to view design and creativity as something close to black art, something which cannot be managed and is therefore better left alone”. Marketers simply do not trust designers with a brand. They perceive the design function to be a subsection of marketing, focusing more on product development, whilst the latter is responsible decision making and management.

Marketing is perceived as both a way of thinking that focuses on satisfying customer needs, as well as a set of activities in which organisations apply this way of thinking in the world. Marketers think about ideas, goods and services that satisfy the organisation’s goals, as well as the needs of customers (Klopper, Berndt, Chipp, Ismail, Roberts-Lombard, Subramani, Wakeham, Petzer, Hern, Saunders & Myers-Smith, 2006). Marketing is furthermore perceived as a philosophy and a management orientation that stress customer satisfaction. It is a set of activities used to implement this philosophy. Marketing is therefore a process that anticipates and satisfies consumer needs by means of mutually beneficial exchange processes. Marketing wants to achieve this in a profitable manner through efficient managerial processes (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff & Terblanche, 2008). Marketing is by its very nature concerned with the interaction between the organisation and the marketplace, while design is an activity that translates an idea into a blueprint for something useful; whether it is a car, a building, a graphic, a service or a process. Table 1 below illustrates key conflicting views between marketing and design.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGN</th>
<th>MARKETING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovative through design</td>
<td>Systematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trendsetters</td>
<td>Trend supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>Profit orientated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative and original through design</td>
<td>Creativity and originality in marketing is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>according to personal preference</td>
<td>driven by the needs and wants of the target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertwined with design idea</td>
<td>Communicate design idea through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfy own design needs</td>
<td>Satisfy consumer needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not process driven (I.e. not structured or</td>
<td>Process driven (structured and systematic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systematic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-rational thinking, emotional sculptures</td>
<td>Rational thinking to inform the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not market research focused</td>
<td>Strong focus on market research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researchers own construct
Two tribes at War

Walker (1990) presented an analysis of designer and business manager attributes under selected headings which begged the question whether there was any prospect that the two cultures could effectively communicate and cooperate. A summary of his findings is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Summary of Walker’s (1990) “Two tribes at War”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Designers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Profits/returns</td>
<td>Product /Service quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational durability</td>
<td>Career building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Accountancy</td>
<td>Crafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numerical</td>
<td>Geometric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking styles</td>
<td>Serialist</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>Lateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Synthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-oriented</td>
<td>Solution-led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As recently as 2003, Von Stamm writes of the continuing gap between marketers and designers when she writes “the lack of understanding of the differences leads many managers to view design and creativity as something close to black art, something which cannot be managed and is therefore better left alone”. Marketers do not trust designers with the brand. Aldersley-Williams (2000) quoted in Balmer and Gray (2003) remarked that “designers talk strategy but like pretty shapes and colours.” He failed to acknowledge that there is a growing body of design management educators, researchers and strategists who are contributing valuable new thinking about using design as a strategic resource. Yet six years previously, Aldersley-Williams (1994) argued that it is imperative for designers, marketing and other managers to work together when creating corporate identity schemes. But Powell (2007) shows the problems remain current in identifying concerns by business owners and managers about “creative mavericks”.

James Dyson, famous for his revolutionary design of vacuum cleaners and other innovative products was scathing about marketers, when he wrote “The modern marketing man has neither the time nor the inclination to learn about the creation and manufacture of things he is meant to be making more attractive to the consumer. He simply applies his all purpose skills to selling more of what already exists and the world gradually bores itself to death “.
One of the authors of this article, Chris Holt, reports his experience of both frustration and cooperation working alongside marketing professionals during an 11-year period as Head of Design Management with British Airways. On the whole, it was felt that design was understood by most and teamwork and cooperation prevailed, each party bringing value to the task in hand, resulting in a better product output and a corporate identity that was supported and underpinned by all concerned. Two case studies were commissioned by British Airways (BA) recording the chronology and processes undertaken by BA’s own Design Management team during the creation of a worldwide integrated design-led communications campaign in 1996, and the reconfiguration of the company’s corporate identity in 1997. Alan Topalian (1999) published the identity case study in which he observes “It was decided that such a project should be sanctioned and Design Management were asked to prepare the business case. Considerable time and effort was put into the preparation of this business case by Design Management in conjunction with Marketing, Finance and other departments within the group. The identity gained Board approval in August 1996”.

Regarding the global communications campaign Topalian (1996) observed “Marketing condensed information generated into digestible form; Design Management helped to analyse feedback and advised how it could be translated into effective communications, and Market Research prepared presentations for the Directors. This is further evidence of the convergence between the design and marketing professionals in a major international corporation. However, it has been Holt’s experience that the general level of cooperation at BA is the exception rather than the rule, and there is often more tension than harmony between the two disciplines.

Whilst many design schools (including some who should know better) are still promulgating the idea that corporate identity is some imaginative logo, there are emergent strategic approaches to design–led branding and an increasing number of leading corporations learning to use design strategically for both internal and external branding. More than half a century ago, Brech (1954) in his seminal management book “The Principles and Practice of Management” observed that “if the product is “bad” to the extent that it is not in keeping with what the customer wants or needs, then unless this is realised promptly, the lack of communication between present day marketing and the ultimate consumer can be fatal”. He was remarkably prophetic about the importance of satisfying the consumer. The core of any good brand is the perceived quality of the company products and services, and they are integral to the complex web which constitutes corporate identity.

Young designers frequently ask the question that “if the product and service are good, why do we need marketers?” The principal reason for the question may be a lack of real understanding of each other’s role. Designers report that they feel undervalued, but they have to earn the respect of marketers by embracing a deep understanding of business. Sir George Cox, promulgated in a report that the UK Government called for all UK design schools to incorporate a basic understanding of business into the design curriculum. He also went further by recommending much more emphasis on multi-disciplinary education for creative enterprise (Cox, 2005).

Currently, the number of marketers far exceeds designers in their leadership of brands, but marketers may be encouraged to consider that they are indebted to designers for the creative
form and substance of all they represent. By integrating the design and branding strategy, all professionals can achieve a consistent brand experience for all stakeholders.

**Designers as their own worst enemies**

The majority of design schools throughout the world still educate designers with limited knowledge of business. Worse still, they allow young designers to believe they are artists and that they have the ownership of creativity as their birthright. All advanced industrialised nations educate more designers than industry needs resulting in a high proportion of these young designers finding it difficult or impossible to find work in their chosen field. This continues to frustrate designers who cannot understand why their best ideas get blocked (Reiple, 2004).

Young graduate designers who have no credibility in understanding business, perpetuate the message that designers must be kept at a distance, used sparingly and only should be invited to help when it is recognised that artistic input is essential. The entire field of managing creative designers and creative design teams, especially multi-disciplinary teams, holds so much promise for design and marketing research. This problem is often perpetuated in consultancies and agencies where creatives (designers) are kept away from the clients, and where communication with the clients is confined to the company seniors, marketing strategists, or ‘suits’ (client liaison teams). If designers are to be taken seriously, they have to embrace marketing thinking from the outset.

In companies rather than consultancies the picture is often better. The emergent Design Management team not only creates a bridge with the Marketing Department (and others), but also acts as catalysts for all the manifestations of the corporate identity as realised through a rich and varied mix of design disciplines. They identify, brief and pull together teams of design specialists, adding value in the process. Such specialists might include interior designers, graphic designers, signage specialists, website designers, designers of work-wear and uniforms and others. Whilst marketing are often involved with many or all of these outputs, they do not have the training, knowledge or understanding of design to achieve optimum results. Such understanding of business for designing corporate identity can be acquired through research, from reading strategic documents and business plans to interviewing key stakeholders (Wheeler, 2003).

**Convergence of aim between Design and Marketing**

Organisations must start out with the needs, the realities and the values of the customer. Consumerism requires the organisation to define its goal as the satisfaction of customer needs. It demands that the organisation base its rewards on its contribution to the customer. Despite the emphasis on marketing and the marketing approach, marketing is still rhetoric rather than reality in far too many organisations (Wind, 2009). This is particularly true for high technology organisations where the design brilliance that created the new innovation in the first place, takes on a higher status in the organisation relative to the required marketing skills (Maciariello, 2009). Maciariello (2009) further argues that either implicitly or explicitly, the preference for design-related knowledge and skills becomes a type of core rigidity – a barrier to the cultivation of marketing talents and expertise.
Drucker suggested that the need for market information is particularly important for knowledge-based designs, as the ones seen in most design industries, compared to other types of designs may seem paradoxical, but knowledge-based designs are more market-dependent than any other kind of design. Careful analysis of the needs – and above all, the capabilities of the intended user, is essential. Therefore, for design innovative companies, the need to be market or customer orientated is particularly important (Uslay, Morgan & Sheth, 2009). Dutta, Narasimhan and Rajiv (1999) found a strong interaction between the technological and marketing capabilities of an organisation, where organisations with a strong research, development and technological base stand to gain the most from a strong marketing capability. They further argue that a strong marketing orientation is one of the most fertile sources of ideas for design innovation. Organisations in high technology markets need to excel not only at generating new design innovations that deliver value to the customer, but also at commercialising these designs. Not surprisingly, market orientation has been shown to lead greater creativity and new product performance in high technology organizations (Im & Workman, 2004).

The arguments above indicate that superior technology and design alone are not sufficient enough to achieve marketplace success for high technology organisations. Conversely, a strong market orientation without commensurate development of a strong innovative or technological capability can have a negative effect on new products and market performance. Taken together, these arguments suggest that a combination of effective marketing and superior design/technology capability is required for the highest levels of marketplace success in high technology industries (Baker & Sinkula, 2005 and Dutta et al., 1999). Designers realise that they need the marketing function to enhance their level of success. Why? The reason being that marketing provides a continuous interaction with the customer, ensuring that design innovation delivers value that customers find appealing (Beverland, 2005). There is therefore only one valid definition of organisational purpose, namely to create a customer. Any organisation has two – and only two – basic functions, namely marketing and innovative design (Maciariello, 2009).

Emergence of Design strategists
Many progressive design schools are however embracing business and, in particular marketing, very successfully. They are principally rooted in design management as a subject discipline, but since design management remains ill defined and rarely focuses on the strategic level of business, they usually have titles which do not include the word ‘management’. They reflect a growing view that “together design and innovation are in effect the drivers of any successful business” (Cooper & Press, 2003). Examples of such design-led courses in the UK, RSA and USA are:

**United Kingdom**
- BA Design Management and Innovation, De Montfort University, Leicester
- MA / PG Dip Design Entrepreneurship, De Montfort University, Leicester
- BA Design Management for the Creative Industries, University of Salford

**South Africa**
- National Diploma in Clothing Management, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg.
- National Diploma in Fashion Design and Marketing, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth.
• Masters of Technology (MTech) degree in the following specialisation fields at the University of Johannesburg, Tshwane University of Technology and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology:
  ✓ Architectural
  ✓ Clothing Management
  ✓ Fashion Design
  ✓ Fine Art
  ✓ Industrial Design
  ✓ Interior Design

In the USA there are excellent strategic design–led courses, and in their report “Lessons from America” the UK Design Council particularly singled out the following courses for their use of design as a problem solving tool in a multi-disciplinary environment:
• Dual degree programme (Master of Design: MD and Master of Business Administration: MBA), Illinois Institute of Technology (Alexis & Zia Hassan, 2007)
• Collaboration between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: MIT and Rhode Island School of Design: RISD (Eppinger & Kressy, 2002).
• Stanford University D-School – a collaborative environment for graduates of all disciplines to use design thinking as a problem solving tool.

Design-Led Branding
So, having established a significant growth in design and branding strategies in education, industry and consultancy, what is different about a strategy developed by designers? The following vignette illustrates the unique value of design into the corporate brand.

Case of BMW Motors
The brand identity of BMW or Bavariaische Motoren Werke AG (Bavarian Motor Works) roots is in its origin. The roundel logo, which has not been changed throughout the company’s history, was derived from its predecessor company, Rapp Motorenwerke. The colour and check pattern represent the Arms of Bavaria (see figure 3). Evidently, the design has been used to communicate BMW’s distinctive identity and values (e.g. superior engine technologies) through all touch points. The cross in the centre of the badge is said to represent an aircraft propeller, derived from the early days when the company designed and built aero-engines. One of the best examples of design thinking is the company’s headquarters building in Germany, which represents the inline-4 cylinder engine of a car.

It was the sporty sedan, BMW 700 that defined its identity and personality (see figure 6). Up till now, BMW designs have been following these character traits (GPI Group, 2007). The focus on design was emphasised through the so-called “e-code” – a short name for Entwickling (Evolution and Development in English) which is the main driver behind the E-series. Moreover, the attention to design detail is the key differentiator of BMW products.
Opportunity for a new paradigm based on convergence of Design/Marketing thinking

The convergence of cultures represents an opportunity for marketing and design to build collaborative models for the development of products, services and brands. Selecting from the above table the education of marketers emphasising words and designers emphasising visuals, the real vision for powerfully communicated corporate brands lies in the integration and potential creative synergy. Both marketers and designers are converging in their agreement on the value of systems and holistic thinking, and investing much intellectual effort into defining problems and generating creative alternatives. Strategic designers are ‘no longer’ strange, lonely artists detached from the world around them, but “people people” confident in their roles in multi-disciplinary teams. An example of research demonstrating such benefits may be found in Ivins and Holland (1999). Three views of the current relations between marketing and design are offered below:

Figure 7: Evolution of Design and Marketing relationship
Possibility of integration
The convergence is revealed as a natural phenomenon [Figure 7[3]], but important questions arise about how to proceed. Questions about such issues as cultures and semantics need attention, and in building the models, further questions about added value to corporate brands, storytelling, narrative and leadership need to be explored. The complex challenges of designing a corporate identity and building a corporate brand through designing a great customer experience, need high quality multi-faceted thinking.

Conclusions
The article makes a case for integration of successful development of corporate identity and brands, and identifies challenging issues to achieve a greater understanding and ultimate convergence of the marketing and design disciplines. It is important to begin with a thorough investigation of practices and educational provision. This is essential in relation to education, since a relatively small number of progressive design schools are ready to engage in developing a new paradigm. An agenda of issues to be addressed to further explore the potential benefits of cooperation, needs to be drawn up and the authors offer the following framework for future study.

• A comparative study of the practices and benefits of marketing-led and design-led corporate identity and corporate branding.
• Investigation into the characteristics and cultures of design and marketing environments.
• Evaluation of the processes and models used by marketing and design for strategic branding.
• A study of the semantics of the two disciplines: key terminology used by both disciplines.
• Evaluation of cross-disciplinary teamwork to develop new models to support creative teams.
• Development of more multi-disciplinary courses – particularly at postgraduate level-which integrate design and marketing [and other functional areas] thinking.

References


