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Corporate brands: what's new?

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Abstract

2001 marked the tenth anniversary of a seminal article on corporate branding written by the distinguished English advertising consultant Stephen King (1991). In this article King's contribution to the emergent theory relating to corporate branding in the context of recent scholarship is appraised. This article outlines the benefits and characteristics of corporate brands. It details the differences between product and corporate brands and summarises the relationships between corporate brands and corporate identity and corporate reputation. The author's survey of the business environment reveals there to be proliferation of new corporate branding types. As such, six new corporate branding categories have been identified which are termed*: familial, multiplex, shared, surrogate, supra* and *federal*. King's prediction that the last decade will witness increased importance to corporate brands does have a contemporary resonance. Looking ahead to the next decade, and picking up a theme of an earlier article (Balmer 1998) the author predicts that a new management area will emerge: an area that he calls "corporate marketing". It will be multidisciplinary in scope and will encompass organisational, corporate and visual identity, corporate branding, reputation and corporate communications.

Keywords: corporate brands, brand architecture, corporate identity

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Corporate branding: a tenth anniversary tribute

> "A new decade can at least prod us to look again at our marketing methods and, maybe, revise the text books. I think we need to."

No. This was not penned last year, but was written ten years ago by Stephen King (1991, p3): a former director of the WPP Group and one of England's leading advertising consultants of his generation. King's focus was on company brands and the above sentiments has a resonance with the contemporary literature on corporate branding: Aaker e Joachimsthalaer (2004), Balmer (1995,2001), Balmer and Greyser (2003), Balmer and Grey (2003), De Chernatony (2001), Hatch and Schultz (2001), McDonald *et al.* (2001) and Olins (2000). Alas, the majority of marketing and branding text books still tend to regard the management, maintenance and character of corporate brands to be the same as for product brands.

The author takes issue with this perspective.

Moreover, outside English circles, King's (1991) seminal article has not received wide recognition: for the main he remains an *auctor ignotus*. However, in the writer's estimation, King's work is deserving of a place alongside other English practitioners who, respectively, have provided insights in relation to corporate identity and corporate communications such as Olins (1978) and Bernstein (1984).

King's work is significant in several regards. First, his assertion that the company brand will become the main discriminator for many organisations in the period between 1991 and 2001 has a contemporary resonance. Second, King's comment that there needs to be a radical rethinking of brands at the corporate level has a parallel with Balmer's (1995) article on corporate branding and, clearly, influenced his article latter work see Balmer (1998 and 2001). Such a perspective is also starting to exercise the minds of marketing academics. King said the following:

> "In essence, brand-building in the 1990s will involve designing and controlling all aspects of a company, leading people and activities well beyond the traditional skills of the marketing department and the agencies that it employs. It will be a lot closer to the marketing of services (such as airlines, hotels, retailers, building societies) than to the brand building of the classic brands." King (1991, p. 6)

Exhibit One summarises King's (1991) conceptualisation corporate brands in the form of eight questions posited by the author:

EXHIBIT ONE: KING'S (1991) CONCEPTUALISATION OF CORPORATE BRANDS AS POSITED BY THE AUTHOR IN THE FORM OF EIGHT QUESTIONS	
What are the disciplinary underpinnings of corporate brand management?	many: it is multidisciplinary
Who manages the corporate brand?	the chief executive officer
Which group is a key element of corporate brand building?	personnel
Apart from the CEO, is there another, senior, position which requires a radical re-assessment in terms of corporate brand management?	the Director of Personnel should be seen as having an important marketing (corporate branding) function (see above)
Which are the most significant corporate brand audiences?	these are many. Focus is increasingly on the individual
Does the stakeholder group principle require adjustment in corporate brands?	important to appreciate that individuals belong to multiple stakeholder groups
What are the main channels of communication for corporate brands?	there are diverse channels of communication, co-ordinating such channels is difficult
What are the links between corporate brands and services marketing?	it is important to note that every corporate brand has a service element

What becomes clear from King's (1991) musings is that the management, and maintenance of branding as well as marketing, at the corporate level, requires a radical re-appraisal.

As a means of furthering the debate regarding corporate brands the writer will attempt to underwrite this task by addressing six questions:

(i) What is a corporate brand?
(ii) What are the benefits of corporate brands?
(iii) How do corporate brands differ from product brands?
(iv) What is the relationship between corporate branding and corporate identity?
(v) What is the relationship between corporate branding and corporate representation?

And, finally, drawing on the writer's industry survey:

(vi) Does the branding typology require alteration in light of the increased importance attached to corporate brands?

Question One – ***What is a corporate brand?***

Corporate brands may be found in corporate bodies of every hue. These include corporations, their subsidiaries, and organisations in the public and not-for-profit sectors. The concept is equally applicable to countries, regions, cities and so on. It is a broader construct than that of "services branding" which, by its nature, focuses on service industries. Increasingly, corporate brands are transcending corporate boundaries and are being marshalled by organisations engaged in franchise and alliance arrangements.

The elements which fuse together to create a corporate brand consist of, according to Balmer (2001a), a quintet of elements which forms the acronym C^{2}ITE. As such, corporate brands are inherently, cultural, intricate, tangible and ethereal in nature. They also require total organisational commitment: see Exhibit Two and Two a:

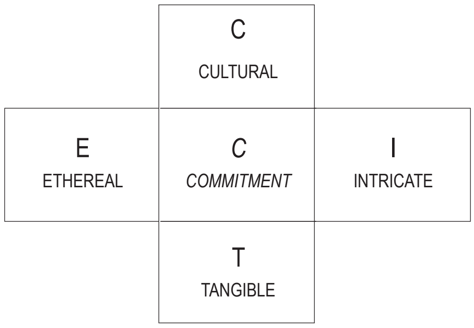


Exhibit two
The defining characteristics of corporate brands as conceptualised by the author

EXHIBIT TWO a): BALMER'S (2001a) CONCEPTUALISATION OF CORPORATE BRANDS	
CHARACTERISTICS OF CORPORATE BRANDS	***Referred to in the literature by:***
CULTURAL (Corporate brands tend to have strong "cultural roots". An organisation's distinctiveness invariably finds one of its sources in the mix of sub cultures found within organisations)	Balmer (1995, 2001a), De Chernatony (2001), Hatch and Schultz (2001)
INTRICATE (Inherently intricate in nature: it is multidisciplinary and dimensional in that it impacts your many stakeholder groups and methods and is made known via multiple channels of communication.)	Balmer (2001, 2001a), De Chernatony (2001), King (1991), Hatch and Schultz (2001), Olins (2000)
TANGIBLE (Includes: business scope, geographical coverage, performance related issues, profit margins, pay scales etc. Also includes architecture, logos, etc.)	Balmer (2001), King (1991), De Chernatony,(2001)
ETHEREAL (Includes elements such as "lifestyle and style of "delivery". Also encompasses emotional response to elements associated with the brand such as country of origin and industry.)	Balmer (2001a), Hatch and Schultz (2001), De Chernatony (2001)
***AND REQUIRES* COMMITMENT** (from all personnel, from senior management and in terms of resources such as on-going financial and communications support)	Balmer (1995, 2001a), De Chernatony (2001), King (1991), Hatch and Schultz (2001)

The following is the author's definition of a corporate brand:

> A corporate brand may apply to organisations, sometimes multiple, of every hue. Corporate brands are characterised by their cultural, intricate, tangible and ethereal elements and should demand total organisational commitment. In most instances, the conscious decision by senior management to distil the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition. This proposition may be viewed as a covenant with key stakeholder groups and networks. This covenant underpins an organisational efforts to *communicate, differentiate* and *enhance* the brand vis-à-vis with such groups. The organisation professes this covenant by means of a concerted communications message across multiple channels of communication. A corporate brand covenant requires senior management fealty and financial support. On-going management of the corporate brand resides with the chief executive officer and does not fall within the remit of the traditional directorate of marketing. Whereas corporate identity management requires congruency with the defining attributes of the organisation corporate brand management demands congruency with the corporate branding covenant.
>
> Adapted from Balmer (2001, p. 281).

Question two – ***What are the benefits of corporate brands?***

The benefits of corporate brands have been enumerated by a number of authors such as Balmer (1995 and 2001a), Lewis (2000), Hatch and Schultz (2001).

Recent research, undertaken by the London-based image research consultancy, MORI as reported by Lewis (2000) found that strong corporate brands offered distinct benefits in terms of:

a) public profile
b) customer attractiveness
c) product support
d) visual recognition
e) investor confidence
f) communicating core values
g) staff motivation

The author, Balmer (2001a) has distilled the benefits of corporate brands into three, principal categories (see Exhibit Three and Three a) namely that they should:

(i) c*ommunicate*
(ii) d*ifferentiate*
(iii) *enhance*

The framework may be viewed as a simple, pragmatic, framework for evaluating corporate brands.

Exhibit three.
C + d + e: a framework for assessing the benefits of corporate brands

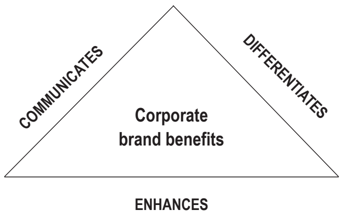


Exhibit three a):
The benefit of corporate brands adapted from (Balmer 2001a)

Does the corporate brand COMMUNICATE?	clearly and consistently the immutable distinctiveness of the corporate branding covenant
Does the corporate brand DIFFERENTIATE?	the corporate brand in the minds of customers and other key stakeholder groups and networks
Does the corporate brand ENHANCE?	the esteem and loyalty in which the corporate brand is held by key stakeholder groups and networks, including customers.

Question Three – ***How do corporate brands differ from product brands?***
To date, many practitioners and scholars have failed to make a clear distinction between product and corporate brands. This is a matter of no small concern since a corporate brand can be a company's most important strategic resource. The implication from this is that a failure to effectively manage and invest in a corporate brand is a cardinal error for many companies.

Corporate brands differ from product brands in several, crucially different, ways. They differ in terms of management responsibility, disciplinary roots, formation, focus and in terms of communications, in crucially important ways.

It is the task of senior managers, and consultants, to note these differences and to confront the challenges which these present. Exhibit Four outlines how King (1991), Balmer (1995, 2001a) and Olins (1978, 2000) conceptualise the differences between the two branding types, that is, between corporate and product brands.

Exhibit four:
a comparison between product and corporate brands as conceptualised by [a] King (1991), [b] Balmer 1995, [c] Balmer (2001a), [d] Balmer (in this article), [e] Olins (1978), [f] Olins (2000)

	PRODUCT BRANDS	**CORPORATE BRANDS**
MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY	*Brand Manager/Marketing Director* [A] [B] [C]	*Chief Executive Office* [A] [B] [C]
FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	*Marketing* [A] [C]	*Ceo's Office/Production Director/Personnel Director/ Communications & Marketing Director/Brand Designer* [A]
GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY	*Marketing/Brand Manager* [A] [B] [C]	*All Staff* [A] [B] [C]
DISCIPLINARY ROOTS	*Marketing* [A] [B] [C]	*Multidisciplinary: particular emphasis on marketing, organisational behaviour, human resources strategy and communication [A] [B] [C]*
BRAND GESTATION	*Short Time Scale* [D]	*Variable Time Scale* [C] [D]
STAKEHOLDER FOCUS	*Mainly Customers* [A] [C] [E]	*Key Internal and External Stakeholder Groups and Networks* [A] [C] [E] [F]
VALUES	*CONTRIVED* [C]	ASPIRATIONAL [D] and may be based on the mix of sub cultures within the organisation
COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS	Marketing Communication Mix [C]	Total Corporate Communications: [A*] [C] [F] (* King implies as much but does not use Balmer's TCC construct)
		Primary: *Performance of Products & Services; Organisational Policies;* *Behaviour of CEO and Senior Management* *Experience of Personnel & discourse by personnel*
		Secondary:*Marketing & other forms of controlled communication*
		Tertiary: *Word of Mouth*
DIMENSIONS REQUIRING ALIGNMENT	*PERFORMANCE, PROMISE,* [D] *PROMOTION, PERCEPTION, PROOF* [D]	*CORPORATE ATTRIBUTES/COVENENT/ CULTURE/COMMITMENT COMMUNICATON/ CONCEPTION/EXPERIENCE/ENVIRONMENT* [D] The above is known as "The AC^5E^2 Corporate Branding Framework™" see Footnote

Question Four: ***What is the relationship between corporate branding and corporate identity?***

> "Corporate identity provides the grit around which the pearl of a corporate brand is formed. "
>
> Balmer (2001a)

The author argues that there is in many, but not in all, instances, an inextricable link between corporate identity and corporate branding as evinced by the above quote. However, whilst both constructs can be important to organisations, there is a tendency to see corporate identity as analogous to corporate branding. This is wrong. As it is also erroneous to equate visual identity with corporate identity. To identity scholars this is all very curious since the centrality of identity in comprehending organisations is a hypothesis which has, for the last fifteen years been propounded by identity consultants and consultancies. With the rise of corporate branding, invariably been met by ambivalence, and, more often than not, by amnesia. This is particularly the case with corporate branding, aka corporate identity consultancies and, it has to be said, aka graphic design consultancies.

The author, for his part, is clear that there are however key differences beetween the two constructs.

One, key, difference is that corporate brands tend to encompass "ethereal" elements which are not so prominent in the identity mix. (Balmer 2001, Birkigt and Stadler 1986). Thus, whilst corporate identity is concerned with the question:

"What are we?"/"What we do?"

and its sister concept "organisational identity" is concerned with

"Who are we?"/How we behave?"

A corporate brand whilst it *may* be concerned with the above but may be seen to embrace issues associated with the question:

"What do we profess?".

As such, a corporate brand may be compared to an icon, but an icon in the sense of the Eastern Christian tradition which functions at two levels.

The first level is that of representation or as a signifier. In this case an icon (visual, verbal, oral etc) helps to identify the corporate brand. Here there is a clear link with visual identity and its role as an identifier. A good deal has been written about this *viz.*,Van Riel *et al.* (2001).

At the second level the icons act as windows to a belief system which represent the belief systems as encapsulated in the corporate branding covenant (the latter may be implicit or explicit). Thus, we enter a world of religion. Something which is potentially powerful but also, for the scholar and researcher, problematic. This might help explain why the world of the corporate brand as religion is seen to be so powerful. In the Orthodox tradition the creators of icons are seen to have a distinct ministry such is their role. Some have implied that in the corporate world creators of corporate brands are also seen as a type of priesthood. There are certainly iconoclasts in the corporate sphere.

Klein's book "*No Logo*" is one example of the above. Others can be found in the letter pages of the broadsheet newspapers such as *The Financial Times*. Jones (2001) provides an example of this. The latter questions whether it was sound business practice to project an business as a way of life (as a corporate brand). He remarked, " Branding is, in essence, the propagation of ideology and history is littered with catastrophes stemming from practitioners being taken in by their own ideology. "

The issues raised by corporate branding iconoclasts are worthy of reflection but fall outside the scope of this short article. One interpretation of such a perspective is that whilst corporate identity management is ethical corporate brand management may not be. The author is not wholly convinced by this perspective.

This may encompass one or more "aspirational", "lifestyle" or "style" elements which help to differentiate the brand from its competition.

Exhibit Five compares the two constructs and is shown overleaf.

Consider Coca-Cola. It is both a corporate and a product brand. As McQueen (2001) observes, the company has virtually one product. A product that nobody actually needs. In its sugar laden form, it is plainly bad. The Coca-Cola corporate brand is entirely dependent on marketing. The company's logo is the most familiar in the world. It is not so much the product but the values/system of beliefs which are attached to the brand that matter. As such, the Coca-Cola brand does not only symbolise a brown, sweet and refreshing drink but, moreover, has strong cultural overtones pertaining to the American way of life/Americanisation.

In contrast, the identity of the company owes more to the company's confederate roots rather than to the USA per se. Its headquarters are in Atlanta, Georgia, and its first advertisements featured southern belles sipping Coca-Cola.

The use of corporate branding is, of course far from new. Jeremy (1998) noted the importance that UK railway companies placed on branding in the 1830s. There was widespread use of coats-of-arms which not only served to distinguish one company from another but also stood for a quality of service which staff aspired to uphold and customers to expect. Corporate brands also helped to create barriers to entry and helped preserve first-mover competitive advantage.

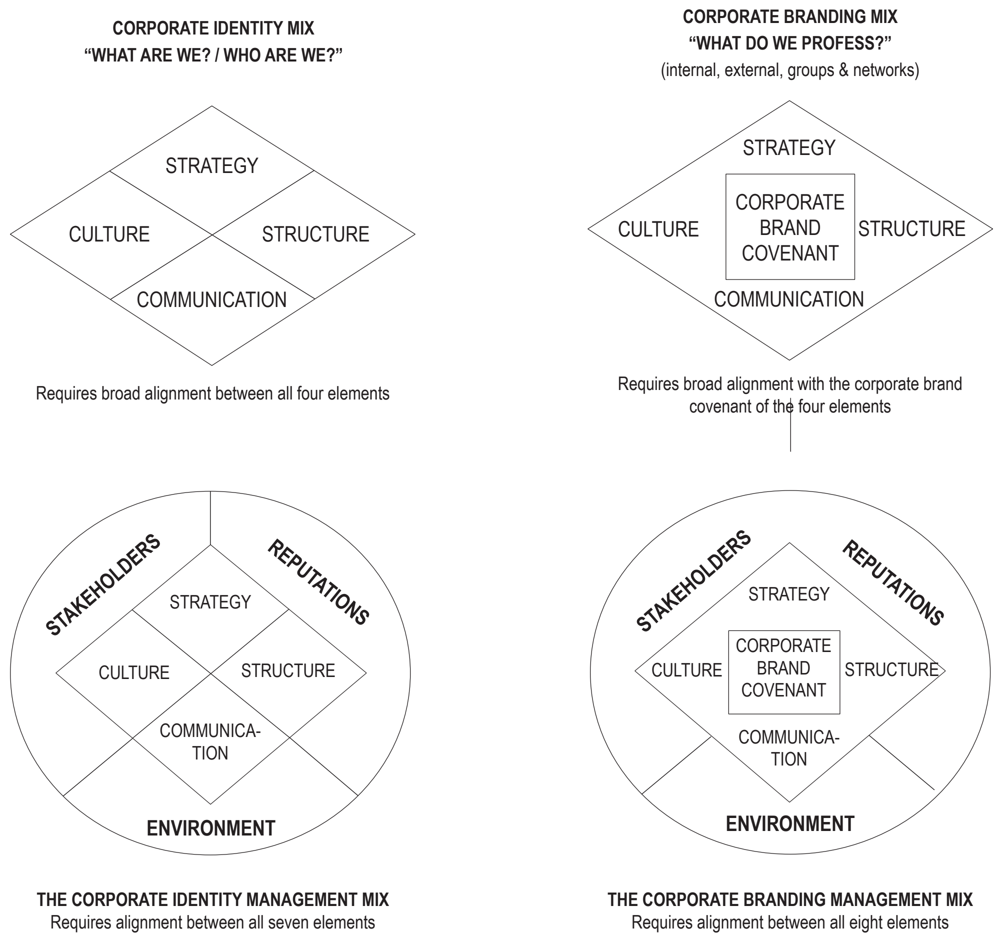
However, in order for corporate brands to thrive the brand's profession of faith had to be delivered – in other words underpinned by the identity. Sheffield's cutlery manufacturers were a case in point. They failed to suppport their corporate brands from American and German imitators who not only copied the cutlery manufacturer's goods but also, quite telling, their trade marks and, more importantly, the collective Sheffield brand name. (Sheffield was synonymous with bespoke and fine cutlery ware). At the same time they embraced mass production which, whilst led to lower quality, also resulted in lower risk. As such, there was confusion as to what the Sheffield mark stood for; confusion as to the branding covenant and, this led to a loss of faith.

Exhibit Five compares the two constructs, contrasting corporate brands with corporate identity.

Exhibit five: a comparison between corporate identity and corporate branding as conceptualised by the author

	CORPORATE IDENTITY	CORPORATE BRANDS
Applicable to all organisations?	Yes	No
Applicable only to one corporate entity	Normally yes	Can be multiple
Management responsibility	Ceo	Ceo
Functional responsibility	All functions	All functions
Disciplinary roots	Multidisciplinary	Multidisciplinary
Main drivers	Strategy, culture, vision	Branding covenant, culture
Gestation	Short	Medium/long
Stakeholder focus	Mainly internal. External stakeholders vary in importance depending on strategy	Mainly external. Internal stakeholders also important
Profile	Variable: low to high	Aim for the highest profile/ awareness of the corporate brand covenant stakeholder groups, particularly customers in target marklt(s)
Importance of controlled communication	Variable	Crucial
Importance of advertising & visual identity	Variable	Normally crucial
Key elements	Culture (sub cultures), strategy, structure, communication, performance, perception	The branding covenant, communication plus other identity elements such as (see below)
Key dimensions requiring alignment	Organisational attributes –(including sub cultures)/ communication/perception	Corporate brand covenant/ communication plus other identtry elements (including sub cultures)
Portability	Normally difficult	Variable
Financial goodwill	Variable: none to medium	Can be very high

Exhibit five (a): conceptualising the differences between the corporate identity and the corporate branding mixes & management mixes



Question Five – ***What is the relationship between corporate branding and corporate reputation?***

This is an enormously difficult task to undertake. From the outset it becomes apparent that the links between the two concepts are very close. As a point of departure it may be useful to distinguish between:

(a) a corporate brand and
(b) a corporate brand *reputation*.

The former may be established relatively quickly. This is because organisational entities and identities can be created relatively quickly, so may the articulation of a branding covenant and the creation of a suitable communications platform (logo, house style, advertising plus other marketing elements). However, the *evaluation* of the corporate brand, in terms of the company's covenant with key stakeholder groups (the brand 'profession') and the resulting corporate brand *reputation* takes place, the author argues, *over time*.

Exhibit Six, below, illustrates the differences between the two constructs. Whilst Exhibit Six (a) broadens the notion that reputation can be found at several levels, namely with regard to:

(a) corporate brands: *"what we profess"* (an evaluation of the branding covenant)
(b) culture: *"how we behave"* (an evaluation of staff behaviour)
(c) corporate identity: *"what we do"* (an evaluation of the organisation's distinctive attributes)

Exhibit six:
Conceptualising the differences between corporate branding and corporate reputation

	Corporate brands	**Corporate reputation**
How evaluated?	Branding covenant (Plus identity, Communication, Experience)	Identity (Plus communication, experience)
Recognition sought by senior management	Positive associations with the corporate branding covenant (wide, consistent awareness among stakeholders of the values/ brand in the covenant)	Positive associations with the corporate identity. However, this may be variable since this may reflect the different needs of stakeholder groups
Possibility of consistency Re Perception	Possible (re awareness of corporate brand values/corporate brand covenants (covenant – what the brand stands for/promises)	Not possible. Multiple reputations among stakeholder groups and networks
Key features	Branding covenant	Experiences (and beliefs) re identity
Importance of ethereal elements	High	Variable
Importance of communication	High	Variable

Question Six – ***Does the brand typology require alteration?***

An examination of the contemporary business environment has led the writer to conclude that the existing branding typology requires a good deal of elaboration in order to accommodate the proliferation of new corporate branding types. Whilst the tri-partite typologies of Olins (1978), which focused on the visual identification of branding types, and that of Kammerer (1988), which concentrated on the link between branding and structural arrangements have, and continue, to serve the interests of practitioners and scholars well, the author concludes that they are now limited in scope.

Over the last eighteen months the author has attempted to capture the new corporate branding types which can be found in many business sectors. Using Olins (1978) tri-partite categorization of brands, an additional six, new *corporate* based, categories have been identified. The six categories are as shown in Exhibit Seven.

Exhibit seven: new corporate branding categories

NEW CORPORATE BRAND CATEGORY	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
FAMILIAL	The sharing/adoption of the same corporate brand by two entities within the ***same industry or sector.*** There is, sometimes, a geographical distinction.	*HILTON (UK)* *HILTON (USA)* *SHELL (UK)* *SHELL (NETHERLANDS)* *PRUDENTIAL (UK)* *PRUDENTIAL (USA)*
SHARED	As above, but operating in distinct and sometimes related, markets. Not usually geographically distinct.	*ROLLS ROYCE (Engineering/ Aero Engines) (UK)* *ROLLS ROYCE (car subsidiary of BMW)* *VOLVO (commercial vehicles, engineering – Sweden)* *VOLVO (car subsidiary of Ford USA)*
SURROGATE	A franchise arrangement whereby one organization's products/ services are branded as that of another.	*BRITISH REGIONAL AIRWAYS USE OF THE BRITISH AIRWAYS BRAND*
SUPRA	A quasi, "arch", brand used to supra endorse company brands. Particularly common within the airline sector. The brand is virtual in so far as it doesn't have a firm/tangible identity in the same way as a company does.	*"ONE WORLD" AIRLINE ALLIANCE* *"STAR" AIRLINE ALLIANCE* *"QUALIFIER GROUP" AIRLINE ALLIANCE*
MULTIPLEX	Multiple use and multiple ownership/rights of a corporate brand among a variety of entities in a variety of industry sectors. (Similar to the Japanese Keiretsu philosophy)	*VIRGIN* *VIRGIN ATLANTIC AIRWAYS* *VIRGIN TRAINS* *VIRGIN (FINANCIAL SERVICES)*
FEDERAL	The creation of a new corporate brand by separate companies who pool their resources in a joint venture to, in effect, create a new identity/ company.	*AIRBUS CONSORTIUM*

The advent of new corporate branding categories challenges a number of assumptions which have underpinned our understanding of corporate brands, to date. For instance, the notion that a corporate brand is underpinned by one collective corporate identity. As exhibit seven shows various groups of companies can also use and profess the values encapsulated by the corporate brand. The other key difference is that the belief system associated with the corporate brand requires congruency in terms of employee values, company activities and performance, communication and strategy. Thus, whilst there are many similarities between corporate identity and corporate brand management there are crucial differences in that:

(a) corporate brand management requires congruency in strategy, structure, communication and culture in terms of "What we are (will be) and What we do (will do)". Also in terms of perception, stakeholders and the environment whilst

(b) corporate identity management requires congruency re strategy, structure, communication and culture in terms of "What we profess (what we promise. Also in terms of perception, stakeholders and the environment

Exhibit eight explains the difference between the traditional conceptualization of corporate brands with the most recent conceptualization.

Exhibit eight:
the conceptualisation of corporate brands: What's new?

	Past	**Present**
Applicable entities	*Typically* one *entity* *(Normally corporations)*	*Typically one entity* *But, increasingly, used by* multiple *entities*
Subsidiary brands	*Trend towards absorption within the company brand*	*Some subsidiary corporate brands seem to have considerable worth (jaguar, go-airline)*
Culture	*Perception to be underpinned by a single company culture*	*Underpinned by the mix of sub cultures within the organisation or organisations*
Products and/or services	*Typically produced by the owner of the corporate brand*	*Increasingly products and services are outsourced*
Gestation	*Medium to long*	*Medium to long. However, some corporate brands have had a short gestation (and life) such as dot. Com companies*
Corporate branding structure	*For the main, simple*	*Instances of complexity*
Communication	*Advertising and other parts of the marketing communications mix*	*New and mutiple and expanded channels of communication.* *Greater importance of tertiary communication* *(Word of mouth* *Competitor & media "spin")*

Conclusion: Looking ten years on.

In 1991 King opined that company brand would become increasingly important. For the main, his prediction has come to pass. What of the future? What might the position be in 2010? What is clear it that the last five years have witnessed a cross fertilization of ideas between different disciplinary, national and ontological traditions with regard to identity studies. The same is beginning to happen with regard to corporate branding studies. We have witnessed a number of traditional marketing constructs being operationalised at the corporate level. There has been a shift from marketing to corporate communications; from product image and reputation to corporate image and reputation; and from product brands to corporate brands. This presents both problems and opportunities for practitioners and scholars in equal measure. It is a problem in so far as the traditional conceptualization of marketing practice and theory has been too narrowly conceived to accommodate such developments. It is an opportunity in that the above developments offer the potential for a new, multidisciplinary, area of management to emerge which will embrace developments in corporate reputation, communications, identity and branding studies and practice. The author is of the view that the umbrella title of corporate marketing might usefully serve as an umbrella title for this new area of management. However, whilst this area will draw on marketing precepts it will, as I have indicated, be multidisciplinary in scope and will require a radical reappraisal and repositioning in the mind set and activities of scholars, consultants and managers. The imperial certainties of the past will need to be put aside for all us, from whatever discipline and from whatever line of work. As they say. Watch this space!

For the meantime I hope that this article has helped to show that the lineage of corporate marketing scholarship is not a recent phenomenon but one that has an enviable tradition among both practitioners and scholars in England viz. Ind (1998). Moreover, that King's observations on corporate brands has a resonance some ten years on. Although, as this article has shown the corporate branding construct is of greater complexity than King envisioned it is clear that his article did and still does show us the way ahead.

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