



Research paper

The Brand Image of Public Universities: Theoretical Framework

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PAPER INFO

Paper History

Received March 2025

Accepted June 2025

New Public Management

Public marketing

Public branding

Brand image

Public institutions

ABSTRACT

In a context where public institutions must strengthen their legitimacy, attractiveness, and positioning, brand image becomes a major strategic orientation. New Public Management, which introduces private sector tools and practices into the public sector, has led to the emergence of public marketing. Operating in a competitive environment, universities seek a results-oriented approach, a focus on their stakeholders, and flexibility in adapting to changes within the national and international higher education ecosystem. Thus, emphasizing the concept of brand image allows universities to better position themselves in the higher education market, effectively promote their strengths to stakeholders, and enhance their overall performance. In the university context, this brand image can be shaped by various factors.

This article provides insights, through a literature review, into the foundations of New Public Management, public marketing, and public branding. In the second part, it reviews and presents the different theoretical approaches that highlight the diversity of perceptions regarding brand image.

Introduction

The diversity of Moroccan universities and the growth and evolution of the Moroccan higher education ecosystem gives every university no choice but to work on its brand image. In a digitalized world, and given Morocco's orientation towards digitalization, Moroccan universities face increased competition in terms of positioning in the minds of stakeholders, particularly students, potential students, researchers, and all components of their socio-economic environment. In order to further work on its reputation, every university is obliged to create and maintain its brand image.

A university's brand image is not just a tool for attractiveness but a strategic manner to address Morocco's structural, economic, and social challenges. Considering the role higher education plays in the creation of an educated society and a rich human capital that can contribute to the country's socio-economic development, the university assumes an important societal responsibility and must focus on creating a positive brand image ingrained in the minds of its stakeholders, ensuring their attraction and loyalty.

With the multiplicity of programs and institutions, every university must face differentiation challenges by adopting a well-thought-out strategy for a competitive brand image, which highlights the specific advantages of the university in question, such as programs tailored to the local needs of the region or strategic international collaborations.

On the other hand, advanced digitalization and globalization are a double-edged sword for Moroccan universities, exposing them to a broader audience to communicate their brand image while also placing them in the face of more intense competition. Digital marketing is thus considered a strategic lever for universities, allowing them to improve their visibility, interact with all their stakeholders, and meet their expectations and the changes happening in the world.

In this reflection, we propose to present the concept of brand image in universities and study the theoretical frameworks related to it. We will lay the necessary theoretical foundations to study and understand the concept of university brand image, based on a documentary analysis

1- New Public Management: transformative era for the public sector:

In a wave of modernization of management and following the evolution and globalization occurring worldwide, modern states are moving towards modifying and improving the public sector management, while aligning with the growing demands for 'transparency,' 'quality,' 'efficiency,' and 'competitiveness.' Thus, the term New Public Management (NPM) has emerged globally to make the public sector management more efficient, more effective, and more economical (Hood, 1991).¹ To understand this evolution, a brief historical overview is necessary.

The economic crises that the world experienced during the 1970s and 1980s marked a turning point and radical changes in terms of public management. The global economic slowdown had remarkable repercussions, particularly on tax revenues,

¹ Hood, C. (1991). "A Public Management for All Seasons?" *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3-19

public debts, unemployment rates, etc. These economic consequences led countries and institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank to reflect on and analyze the management model of the public sector, encouraging structural reforms.

A rise in criticism of the Weberian bureaucracy model (Max Weber) was also among the causes leading to the establishment of NPM. Indeed, the Weberian management model is based on a strict respect of rules and procedures, a hierarchical and pyramidal structure, and a focus on means rather than results (**Aamar and Berthier, 2007**²). With a world oriented towards digitalization, globalization, and technological changes, the Weberian model no longer finds its place and gives way to NPM. Thus, the new conception of public sector management based on the 3 Es: 'Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness' (**Urio, 1998**)³ – is the opposite of Weber's model, for whom 'bureaucracy,' a true ideal type, is the very condition for effectiveness through its rationalist dimension.

Historically, NPM first appeared in the United Kingdom in the early 1980s before spreading to all OECD⁴ countries and several developing countries. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the implementation of NPM was fast. Since 1984, In New Zealand, similar reforms emerged to address the severe financial difficulties faced by the country. The reforms impacted several parts of the public sector, notably the division of responsibilities (State Sector Act, 1988), accounting (Public Finance Act, 1989), local administrations (Local Government Act, 1989), and the civil service (Public Service Principles, Conventions and Practices, 1995).

According to **Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000**,⁵ NPM has affected many other countries such as the United States with the Government and Performance Results Act of 1993, which introduced a performance-based management system; Canada, which reformed its federal civil service in 1994 and introduced a results-oriented system in 1997; Japan, which reformed its administration in 1996; Germany, which did the same with the Moderner Staat - Moderne Verwaltung program in 1999; and Belgium, which reformed its public management in 1994 and established the "Copernic" plan for the Modernization of the Federal Administration in 2000. International mechanisms also exist, such as the public service charters adopted by African countries in 2001 and by Ibero-American countries in 2003.

To summarize, and focusing on the intensity with which NPM has impacted countries, it is important to distinguish, according to **Mönks (1998)**,⁶ between strong reforms (in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, some Canadian provinces, etc.) and more flexible reforms (in the United States, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, etc.). There is no single NPM

² Amar, A., & Berthier, L. (2007). *Le Nouveau Management Public : Avantages et Limites. Gestion et Management Publics*, 5, Décembre 2007.

³ URIO, P. (1998). « La gestion publique au service du marché ». in M. Hufty (éds), *La pensée comptable : État, néolibéralisme, nouvelle gestion publique*, PUF et Les nouveaux Cahiers de l'IUED, Paris et Genève, pp.91-124

⁴ Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development

⁵ Pollit, C. & Bouckaert, G. (2004). « Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis », Oxford: Oxford University Press

⁶ MONKS J. (1998), « La nouvelle gestion publique : boîte à outils ou changement paradigmatique ? », in M. HUFTY (éds), *La pensée comptable : État, néolibéralisme, nouvelle gestion publique*, PUF et les nouveaux Cahiers de l'IUED, Paris et Genève, pp. 77-90.

system but several systems, the scope and content of which depend on the culture and specificities of each country (Schedler and Proeller, 2000⁷).

Thus, the main idea of NPM is that management methods from the private sector can be transposed to the public sector. As the public sector is seen as inefficient, excessively bureaucratic, rigid, costly, self-centered, non-innovative, and having an overly centralized hierarchy, it is necessary to increase the maneuvering margins of managers to better respond, at lower cost, to the expectations of citizens. Citizens are now seen as clients (consumerist logic), while administrators become true managers.

Thus, NPM allows for the modernization of the public sector by aligning with the technological and digital trends occurring worldwide and also contributes to improving the image of the public sector.

2- Emergence of public marketing:

The question of the applicability of marketing in public administration has generated several academic debates. While some experts believe that marketing is only applicable to the private sector, there are other ideologies that argue marketing is compatible with the public sector, provided it is properly adapted.

Since NPM is a management principle aimed at transposing private sector management methods to the public sector and involves a set of radical changes in the dogmas of public administration (Ferlie, Ewan, 2017), public marketing is similarly oriented towards the same strategy and is considered a strategic management tool that reinvents the relationship between public institutions and their stakeholders, based on principles of transparency, results, personalization, and efficiency, while strengthening the image of these public institutions. As a result, the public sector is obliged to align its missions and objectives with NPM. Thus, the adoption of public marketing enhances the management capacity of this sector to better serve citizens and various stakeholders.

Over the years, the term “marketing” has undergone remarkable evolution, starting from a definition that limited marketing to a profit-generating activity for businesses, to a more global definition allowing all organizations and administrations to use and adhere to it, while placing the consumer at the center of its concerns and strategies.

The American Marketing Association defined marketing in 1985 as *'the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.'* In 2004, the concept of marketing was redefined to state that marketing is *'an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to consumers, as well as managing customer relationships in a way that benefits the organization and its stakeholders.'* This latter definition emerged from the integration and prioritization of customers in strategy. The evolution of the marketing concept did not stop there, as it

⁷ SCHEDLER K., PROELLER I. (2000), *New Public Management*, Berne, Haupt, 299 p.

received another definition in 2017, considering marketing as '*the activity, a set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for consumers, clients, partners, and society as a whole.*'

According to various authors, the applicability of marketing to the public sector is feasible, while considering the specificities of each administration and adopting an approach suited to its missions and contexts. Based on the advent of NPM in Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1980s following the economic crisis they were experiencing, and using universities and hospitals as examples, **Kotler and Levy (1960)** ⁸stated that marketing could be applied to any organization as long as it has products and clients.

On the other hand, in 1989, **Jérôme Bon** ⁹expressed his disagreement with the notion that public marketing is inferior to private marketing and with the idea that public marketing merely imitates and copies the experiences and practices of the private sector. According to his article, Bon confirms the applicability of marketing to the public sector based on the following criteria: the concept of non-market relationships, the pursuit of the public interest, public control, service personalization and quality, and citizen participation in the production process. Thus, Jérôme Bon emphasizes that the debate on the specificity of public service marketing is often biased, as it focuses generally on the 'public' aspect while neglecting the specificities related to the nature of the services. He advocates for a balanced recognition of the two dimensions, in order to develop effective and appropriate marketing approaches for public services.

In their book '*Marketing in the Public Sector: A Roadmap for Improved Performance*,' **Phillip Kotler and Nancy Lee (2007)** ¹⁰focus on the importance of establishing and maintaining a trust-based relationship with citizens in the public sector, while responding to their needs. This can only be achieved by adopting tools from the private sector. According to the two authors, adopting a trust-based relationship with citizens, investing in research, using modern marketing tools, and establishing a culture of evaluation are all elements that contribute to transforming public institutions into more efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly organizations.

According to **David Osborne and Ted Gaebler** ¹¹in their book (1992), and through the use of creative titles, the economic concepts applicable to businesses are also relevant for public organizations. '*A catalytic government, a competitive government, a results-oriented government, a consumer-oriented government, an entrepreneurial government, an anticipatory government, a market-oriented government, a decentralized government...*'

^{8 8} Kotler, P., & Levy, S. J. (1969). "Broadening the Concept of Marketing." *Journal of Marketing*, 33(1), 10-15.

⁸ Bon Jerome, 1989, Les spécificités du marketing des services publics, Politiques et management publics,

⁹⁹ Bon Jerome, 1989, Les spécificités du marketing des services publics, Politiques et management publics, pp :25-32

¹⁰ **Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2007).** *Marketing in the Public Sector: A Roadmap for Improved Performance*. Wharton School Publishing.

¹¹ David Osborne et Ted Gaebler. (1992). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

Judith Madill (1998),¹² from her side, highlights the growing significance of the marketing in the context of reforms inspired by the New Public Management and asserts that it plays an important role in the public sector management. According to her article, public marketing has the potential to transform the management of public services by improving user satisfaction, enhancing transparency and trust, and optimizing resources.

As for **Martial Pasquier (2009)**,¹³ he defines public marketing as a set of methods and techniques aimed at better understanding the expectations of citizens, designing adapted services, and promoting them effectively within the framework of missions of public interest. Pasquier emphasizes the strategic role of marketing in public organizations, going beyond its simple promotional function, viewing it instead as a strategic management tool focused on the citizen.

Whether through product/service marketing, social marketing, or political marketing, Madill, in her article 'Marketing in Government,' states that some government organizations are turning to specific applications of marketing to better achieve their objectives.

Thus, despite criticisms that perceive marketing and public administration as incompatible, the public sector has the capacity, through marketing, to better achieve its objectives while maintaining its essence centered on public interest to better serve citizens and various stakeholders. However, it is essential to recognize the specificities of the public sector and adapt to the constraints and missions of public administration.

3- Public brand:

Opinions differ regarding the adoption of a marketing approach in public organizations. Some authors argue that a market-oriented, customer-based approach is often seen as the main indicator of adopting a marketing strategy. However, other authors highlight certain limitations to this adoption by emphasizing various weaknesses.

According to **Hood (1995)**,¹⁴ this approach does not take into account the qualitative values specific to the public sector, such as legitimacy, loyalty, justice, equality, and continuity. These values prevent the success of a public institution from being measured only in numerical terms, as they also involve intangible dimensions. **Brewer (2007)**¹⁵ argues that a market-oriented approach places excessive emphasis on the customer, thereby marginalizing the political dimension of public institutions, which could weaken democratic governance. Finally, **Gromark and Melin (2013)**¹⁶ explain their position by

¹² Madill, J. (1998). "Marketing in Government." *Optimum, The Journal of Public Sector Management*, 28(4), 9–18.

¹³ Pasquier, M., & Villeneuve, J.-P. (2009). *Marketing Management and Communications in the Public Sector*. Routledge.

¹⁴ **Hood, C. (1995).** *The "New Public Management" in the 1980s: Variations on a Theme*. Accounting, Organizations and Society, 20(2–3), 93–109.

¹⁵ **Brewer, G. A. (2007).** *Citizen or customer? Complaints handling in the public sector*. International Review of Administrative Sciences, 73(4), 549–556.

¹⁶ **Gromark, J., & Melin, F. (2013).** *From Values to Value: Clarifying the Link Between Organizational Values and Corporate Performance*. Journal of Brand Management, 20(7), 534–546.

pointing to the lack of recognition of other objectives, such as profit. This approach may lead public institutions to adopt goals focused on profitability and financial efficiency, while neglecting their societal mission and the fundamental values of public organizations.

Talking about marketing inevitably leads to discussing branding, which was initially associated with the private sector, where it is considered a key element that adds financial value to products and services offered. Today, following the natural evolution of New Public Management (NPM), branding has been transposed to the public sector and integrated into a marketing approach. Based on the work of Urde and Melin, these scholars suggest studying branding to understand how marketing contributes to the transformation of organizations.

Although few studies specifically address the evolution of public sector branding, the analysis by **Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2017)**¹⁸ emphasizes that identity is essential for public institutions, as it conditions their ability to maintain a relationship of trust with citizens and strengthens the position of public organizations in an environment where transparency, legitimacy, and accountability are important.

According to Gromark and Melin, it is essential to analyze how marketing transforms public organizations through the new conceptual framework of brand orientation proposed by Swedish researchers Urde and Melin. This framework helps overcome criticisms of market orientation and provides a comprehensive approach to understanding marketing practices in public organizations by focusing on public branding.

Defining public branding in simple terms remains challenging due to the limited number of studies on the topic and the recent emergence of the concept. According to the French Agency for Public Institutions (APIE), public branding shares similarities with private branding, particularly regarding the key factors traditionally used to define a brand. However, it also differs in several aspects, such as its primary focus, brand expression, intended effects, target audiences, and strategic orientations.

Public branding is also considered a strategic tool that enables public organizations to strengthen their identity, build and maintain citizens' trust, and establish a lasting presence in society (**Dahlqvist & Melin, 2010**)¹⁹. As part of a strategy to enhance the state's intangible heritage (**Levy & Jouyet, 2006**),²⁰ public branding goes beyond being just a communication tool; it plays an increasingly crucial role in value creation and in shaping the reputation of public organizations.

¹⁷ **Brunsson, N., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2000).** *Constructing the 'new' organization: A discursive analysis of the change process in the public sector.* Public Administration Review, 60(3), 247-257.

¹⁸ **Brunsson, N., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2000).** *Constructing the 'new' organization: A discursive analysis of the change process in the public sector.* Public Administration Review, 60(3), 247-257.

¹⁹ **Dahlqvist, P., & Melin, U. (2010).** *The role of public sector branding in organizational change.* Public Administration Review, 70(5), 726-736.

²⁰ Levy, M. et Jouyet, J. P. (2006) L'économie de l'immatériel : la croissance de demain, La Documentation française.

The implementation of a public branding strategy must foster the trust essential for the proper functioning of institutions while enhancing their transparency and visibility. According to Urde and Melin, public branding reflects a strategic and organizational intent, serving as a management tool for public organizations and relying on fundamental values. The study by Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005) indicates that public branding helps restore citizens' trust, improves the visibility of public actions, and contributes to greater transparency in the management of public institutions.

In summary, according to the APIE, establishing a public branding strategy contributes to the modernization of public institutions while aligning with New Public Management. It provides clarity and meaning to the public organization's value proposition while positively impacting citizens, employees, and the institution itself.

4- Theoretical Foundations of University Brand Image

Public universities, like other organizations, face an expanding competitive environment. Attracting the best students and researchers, ensuring a strong position in the minds of stakeholders, and ranking among the top universities in international rankings are some of the reasons that drive universities to create and maintain a well-crafted brand image. Thus, this brand image impacts the external reflection of an institution and is considered a strategic element that guides the institution's direction. According to **Belanger & al. (2002)**, ²¹a strong brand image can easily influence student enrollments, the recruitment of staff, resources, and the capital available to the institution

Initially, defining brand image is essential in order to discuss its theoretical foundations. Towards the late 1980s, the concept of brand image underwent various studies, and different authors agreed on a set of complementary definitions that do not contradict each other, despite the large number of definitions that have been proposed.

J.N. Kapferer and J.C. Thoenig (1994) ²²define brand image as the set of mental representations that an individual or group of individuals associates with a brand or organization, which are both affective and cognitive. **J.J. Lambin's (1998)** definition aligns closely with that of Kapferer and Thoenig, stating that image is the set of mental representations, both cognitive and affective, that an individual or group of individuals forms about a brand.

B. Pinlon Labbé (1992) ²³distinguishes three levels of definition for brand image while integrating it into the brand identity:

- ✓ **Brand image itself:** This represents the consumers' perceptions of the brand in long-term, comparative, or communicative situations.
- ✓ **Brand identity:** Defined as the set of characteristics the company wishes to associate with the brand, reflecting the values declared by the strategic core.

²¹ Belanger, C., J. Mount et M. Wilson (2002), « Institutional Image and Retention », *Tertiary Education and Management*, vol. 3, pp. 217-230.

²² Kapferer, J.-N./Thoenig, J.-C. 1994: *La marque. Moteur de la compétitivité des entreprises et de la croissance de l'économie*. Paris: Ediscience internationale.

²³ Pinlon Labbé, B. (1992), *La mesure de l'image de marque : problèmes conceptuels et méthodologiques*, Université de Montpellier II ; thèse de sciences de gestion, 1992

- ✓ **Brand mediation:** This encompasses the characteristics disseminated by the company or through uncontrolled external sources.

According to the works of **C. Michon (2000)**²⁴, brand image perception is described as "a form of proximity that one perceives without it being a lived appropriation." As a mental construct, the image is defined as the set of perceptions an individual associates with a product, company, or person.

In 2003, **J.M. Décaudin**²⁵ also aligns with the definitions provided in the 1990s and considers that the image consists of the set of emotional and rational representations that a group of individuals associates with a product, brand, or company.

According to **DuBois and Jolibert (2005)**²⁶, brand image refers to the mental representations that a brand elicits in individuals. It encompasses cognitive dimensions (such as characteristics and quality), affective dimensions (emotions felt) and symbolic dimensions (values and identification).

The definitions given by researchers have continued to evolve over the years, while remaining complementary to previous research. Thus, in 2016, **Kotler and Keller**²⁷ consider that brand image corresponds to the set of mental and emotional associations that consumers attach to a brand, and which influences the way individuals remember and interact with the brand.

The literature has made it possible to define the various models for analyzing brand image to facilitate its theoretical framing.

a- **Brand association according to Aaker :**

Following the various definitions given by researchers, brand image represents all the affective and emotional representations linked to the brand. Aaker follows this view and confirms that brand image is built from a set of associations, organized coherently into subcategories, which can be both affective and cognitive. These associations, are linked to the brand by individuals through their personal experiences, repeated exposure to the brand's communication messages, and their history with the brand.

Additionally, brand image is a complex, multidimensional set of perceptions resulting from a memory-based elaboration by the consumer. Generally, it is considered to be a network of associations stored in the consumer's memory and mind regarding the brand in question (Aaker, 1991).

Building on this principle, **Aaker (1991)**²⁸ distinguishes 11 dimensions of brand image: product attributes, intangible product characteristics, consumer benefits, price, product usage, users, celebrities associated with the brand, brand personality, product

²⁴ Michon, C. La marque : son rôle stratégique au cœur du marketing. *Revue Française d marketing*, 2000, 176'1), p. 7-21

²⁵ Décaudin, J.M. La communication marketing, concepts, techniques, stratégies. Economica, 2003

²⁶ Dubois, P.-L., & Jolibert, A. (2005). *Marketing : Fondements et pratiques* (5e édition). Paris: Economica

²⁷ **Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th edition). Pearson Education.**

²⁸ ²⁸ Aaker, D.A. (1991) *Managing Brand Equity*. The Free Press, New York.

class, competitors, and country of origin. These dimensions help create a comprehensive understanding of how a brand is perceived and how it connects with consumers on various levels.

These associations can be classified into subcategories:

- Associations related to product or service attributes (perceived quality, specific attributes, product usage, etc.)
- Associations related to perceived benefits (functional, emotional, symbolic benefits)
- Associations related to the organization (image of the organization, country of origin, etc.)
- Associations related to the brand's personality and values
- Associations related to the consumers or users of the brand

b- Brand equity according to Keller:

In his 1993 research, Keller proposed a conceptual model for analyzing brand equity, based on brand knowledge. Relying on a consumer-centric approach, the author states that brand equity is the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to brand marketing” (Keller, 1993)²⁹. In other words, it explains the consumer's response to a branded or unbranded product or service.

Thus, the brand is a node to which a set of other nodes (associations) are strongly linked. This network constitutes Keller's brand knowledge. He further defines it by breaking it down into two dimensions: attention and brand image.

- Attention: According to Keller (1993), Brand Awareness is a fundamental element of brand equity. It represents the intensity and strength with which a brand is anchored and positioned in the consumer's memory, determining his or her ability to recognize and remember a brand. Closely linked to brand awareness, brand equity comprises two key dimensions: brand recognition (the ability to identify a brand as a priority or to distinguish it from other brands), driven by aided brand awareness, and brand recall (the ability to remember a brand based on cues), driven by aided brand awareness. It thus plays a central role in the development and consolidation of brand equity.

- Brand image: According to Keller, this is defined as “the perceptions of a brand, reflected in the brand associations held in the consumer's memory”. Given the very diverse nature of brand associations, the authors were unable to reach a consensus on a typology of associations. The aim of these brand associations is to give the brand a certain meaning. Brand associations are also defined by Keller as “other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and containing the meaning of the brand for consumers”.

²⁹ KELLER Kevin Lane(1993), «conceptualizing, measuring and managing customer- based brand equity», in: Journal of Marketing, VOL.57(January), pp. 1- 22.

Keller, in his work, distinguishes three types of associations with the brand, namely:

- **Attributes:** These describe the tangible side of the product and the intangible side (product marketing: price, packaging, use, etc.).
- **Benefits:** These are the values that the consumer finds in the product or service used. They include functional benefits, which refer to the advantages the consumer gains from basic expectations. Experiential benefits, on the other hand, are related to the sensations experienced when using the product. Lastly, symbolic benefits are linked to personal needs satisfaction and social approval.
- **Attitudes:** This refers to the overall judgment that the consumer has about the brand.

In addition to the typology of brand image associations proposed by Keller, he defines three essential conditions for brand image associations to contribute to brand equity.

In the first instance, the strength of the brand's associations enables it to exist. This is a strong, active connection between the brand and its associations. Secondly, they must acquire the condition of uniqueness. A brand's associations must be unique to it, ensuring differentiated positioning in the consumer's mind. Subsequently, Keller also focuses on the fact that associations must be favorable and positive. Finally, cohesion between brand associations and shared meanings make it easier for consumers to remember the brand.

c- **The Kapferer Brand Identity Prism**

Historically speaking, the brand revolves around three central concepts: brand image, positioning in the consumer's mind, and brand identity. Since brand identity is a durable concept over time, as it is rooted in the brand's history and the multiplicity of products and services it encompasses, it is visible in all the signs emitted by the company or organization in its environment.

Based on these signs emitted by the brand through products, services, and communications, Kapferer confirms that brand image comes from the decoding of these signs by the consumer and suggests that a brand image is a reflection of brand identity. According to him, "the more stable the brand identity is over time, the stronger and more valued the brand is" (**Kapferer, 1991**³⁰). Thus, in 2000, he confirmed that brand image is based on brand identity (**Kapferer, 2000**).³¹ This is how Kapferer developed the brand identity prism model, which allows for the analysis of six facets of the brand, defining how it is perceived both internally and externally.

- **The physique:** This refers to the tangible and objective attributes of the product highlighted through communication.

³⁰ Kapferer, J.-N. (1991). Les marques, capital de l'entreprise. Editions d'Organisation Paris

³¹ Kapferer, J.-N. (2000). Re-marques: les marques à l'épreuve de la pratique. Editions Eyrolles.

- **Personality:** Brand personality relates to the human character traits attributed to the brand. It helps create and maintain an emotional connection between the brand and its audience.
- **Culture:** This represents the system of values in which the brand evolves and develops.
- **Relationship:** The brand is a relationship. It refers to the connection the brand establishes with its audience.
- **Reflection:** Reflection represents the image of the consumer that the brand aims to project. In other words, how the brand wants its consumers to be perceived.
- **Self-image:** This is how the consumer perceives themselves when using the brand. It represents the image they build of themselves.

It should be noted that these six facets interact with each other to enable the brand to communicate with its environment. Thus, the "**physique**" and "**personality**" facets define the sender, the "**reflection**" and "**self-image**" facets define the receiver, and the "**relationship**" and "**culture**" facets act as bridges between the sender and the receiver.

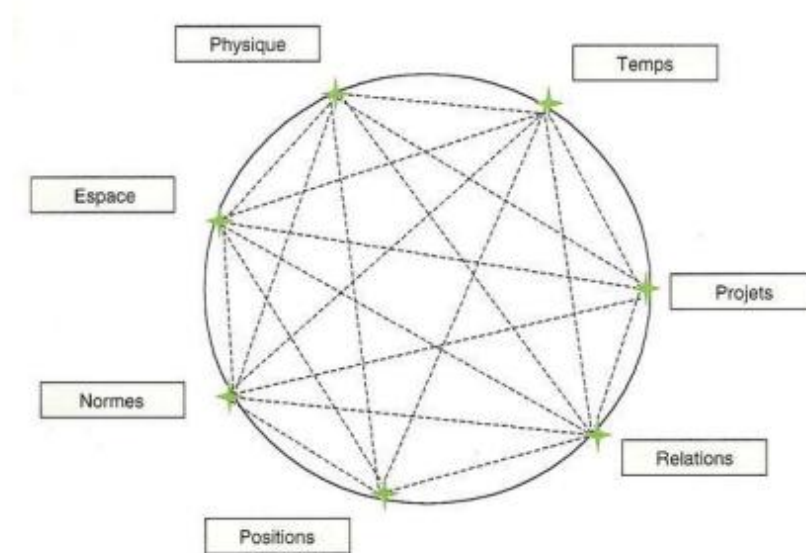


The Kapferer Brand Identity Prism

d- The Imprint Method Prism:

The difficulty in developing brand identity for organizations arises from the fact that a brand can acquire multiple identities and, consequently, develop various brand images. In a rapidly changing competitive environment, brand image is far from static. Based on this concept, Marie-Claude Sicard suggests that brand image can be understood through the lens of the "imprint method" and has developed the brand rosace. Marie-Claude Sicard's method enables the analysis of brand identity

in both the public and private sectors by manipulating and interconnecting seven communication poles. These elements help in understanding how a brand constructs and communicates its identity.



The Brand Rosace, Sicard

- ☐ **The Physical Pole:** It includes the tangible elements of the brand (name, logo, design, taste, etc.).
- ☐ **The Spatial Pole:** This refers to the real or imagined space reserved for the brand (physical stores, buildings, or symbolic locations).
- ☐ **The Temporal Pole:** It corresponds to the brand's temporal dimension, including its past, present, and vision for the future.
- ☐ **The Positional Pole:** It defines what the brand is and what it claims in terms of values and promises.
- ☐ **The Relational Pole:** It reflects all the connections the brand establishes with its consumers and audience.
- ☐ **The Normative Pole:** It analyzes the normative and ethical framework in which the brand operates.
- ☐ **The Projective Pole:** It relates to the brand's aspirations and ambitions for the future.

Over time, this brand rosace has become a management tool for organizations to develop the brand identity. In this sense, Sicard states: *"The advantage of reasoning through connections from the 7 poles is to clearly highlight the global dimension of brand identity and to make concrete that intuition we tend to forget: in the brand system, everything is connected, so even the smallest action has an impact on the whole"* (Sicard, 2011³²).

³² Sicard, M.-C. (2011). Identité de marque : La méthode de référence en marketing qualitatif. Editions Eyrolles, p : 256

Conclusion

Through this literature review, we have explored the foundations of New Public Management, public marketing, and public branding in order to analyze their role in the construction and management of the image of public institutions. These concepts, while distinct, are complementary and converge towards a main objective: how public institutions shape and project their identity to citizens and stakeholders.

The examination of various theories and authors' contributions has highlighted the diversity of approaches to the brand image of public institutions. Some studies emphasize the importance of consistency and differentiation in building a strong image, while others stress the growing role of digital tools and public interactions in shaping this image. The theoretical framework explored has thus helped identify the main variables influencing brand image, whether they are cognitive, affective, or experiential.

Ultimately, this theoretical analysis forms an essential foundation for understanding the dynamics at play in managing the image of public institutions. It also opens up avenues for empirical research aimed at measuring the impact of public marketing and digital strategies on the perception of institutions, particularly in the academic context. Drawing on these theoretical foundations, it becomes possible to consider concrete actions to strengthen the attractiveness and legitimacy of public institutions through a strategic management of their brand image.

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