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# How Brand Identity and Consumer Perception Influences the Marketing Strategies of the Apple Company

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# **How Brand Identity and Consumer Perception Influences the Marketing**

## **Strategies of the Apple Company**

**By Brandon Westervelt**

What Role Does Brand Identity and Consumer Perception Play in Influencing the Marketing Strategies of the Apple Company?

## **ABSTRACT**

The research in this paper focuses on the roles of brand identity and consumer perception in shaping Apple's marketing strategies and to what extent they are influenced. From going nearly bankrupt to becoming one of the largest companies in the world and a leader in the technology industry, Apple has leveraged its brand identity as a powerful tool to influence consumer perception. The Apple company focuses on its brand identity and has emphasized communicating it to its consumers.

While many companies focus on a single aspect of its brand identity, Apple takes a holistic approach by ensuring every aspect of its brand identity complements each other. Apple ensures its brand identity is present in its physical products, marketing campaigns, customer experience, and employees themselves. Apple's brand identity emphasizes the qualities of simplicity, innovativeness, exclusivity, and memorability within the minds of its consumers. This research is examined through the lens of the 5 P's of marketing: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and People.

## **DEFINITIONS: BRAND IDENTITY & CONSUMER PERCEPTION**

### Brand Identity

Brand identity is the visible elements of a brand such as the color, design, and logo that are used to identify and distinguish the brand inside a consumers' mind.<sup>1</sup> Brand identity is often confused with brand image as the two concepts are very closely related. Brand image is simply a logo or color associated with a company/brand, whereas brand identity focuses deeper and corresponds to the thought and intent behind the branding of a company. The primary goal of a brand identity is to cultivate a certain image of the company in a consumers' mind. It is used by companies to increase recognition, to differentiate from competitors, and to develop brand value and loyalty in customers.<sup>2</sup>

There are many methods that can be used to break down a company's brand identity; this paper will be applying the Brand-Identity Prism model created by J.N. Kapferer<sup>3</sup>. Kapferer broke down his model into two distinct sections: dimensions and aspects. The following is the breakdown of each dimension and aspect:

*Figure 1: Brand-Identity Prism model<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix A)*

### Brand Identity Dimensions

Kapferer states that there are two dimensions that exist in his Brand-Identity Prism model. These dimensions focus on categorizing each of the six aspects that he believes make up a company's brand identity. Each of these dimensions are connected to one to two of the aspects and serve to differentiate whether they occur within the company itself or within the market.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tarver. "Brand Identity."

<sup>2</sup> Keller, "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity"

<sup>3</sup> Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*

<sup>4</sup> Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*

<sup>5</sup> Pirvani, Awais. *Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model*,

### *Source vs. Receiver*

The first of the dimensions is 'the constructed source vs. the constructed receiver.'<sup>6</sup> The constructed source refers to the way a brand presents itself. This can be through the use of its products, how it communicates, its logo, and much more. The aspects of physique and personality connect most to this dimension. The opposite side of this is the constructed receiver, which refers to how customers view the brand. The aspects of reflection and self-image connect to this dimension.

### *Externalization vs. Internalization*

The other of these dimensions is externalization vs. internalization<sup>7</sup>, which refers to the social aspects that a brand has and whether they are directed externally – to its customers or internally towards its own organizational structure and incorporated into the brand itself. Externalization refers to all the outward content that a company creates that is visible to its customers such as logos, products, services, advertising, and more.<sup>8</sup> This connects it to the aspect of relationship. Conversely, internalization is all the input that goes into a company such as management, work policies, and company values which directly ties it to the aspect of culture. These dimensions serve to differentiate between external and internal factors, thus making it easier to understand the brand identity aspects, which will be discussed in the following section.

### Brand Identity Aspects

Kapferer states that there are six characteristics of a brand that are essential to creating a brand identity. He maintains that it isn't just the individual characteristics that are important, but rather how they work together to form a distinct and recognizable brand. His Brand-Identity Prism model breaks

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<sup>6</sup> Pirvani, Awais. *Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model*

<sup>7</sup> Pirvani, Awais. *Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model*

<sup>8</sup> Pirvani, Awais. *Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model*

down a company's brand identity into six aspects: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image.<sup>9</sup>

### *Physique*

The aspect of physique is the basis of the brand – the physical features – what does it look like? Feel like? It is what is evoked in the minds of the consumers when the brand is mentioned. Anything related to the brand from the product, logos, colors, to even the packaging used falls under the aspect of physique as they all serve to evoke a certain image in the mind of the consumer.

### *Personality*

Personality is considered to be the brand's character. This aspect focuses on the communication between a brand and its consumers, as these communications are what give a brand its personality. Writing in a specific style or using specific colors can emanate certain character traits to the consumer's mind. Additionally, celebrity endorsements can achieve the same effect as they are literally "giving flesh to a brand's character."<sup>10</sup>

### *Culture*

Culture is the system of values and beliefs in which a brand bases its products and communications on. This aspect is what serves as a link between a company's brand and its organization. A company's culture is often tied to its country of origin as well – a company created in the United States such as Apple will appeal to American values, whereas a company created in a different country will tend to have values that appeal to its own country.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Pirvani, Awais. *Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model*,

<sup>10</sup> Karasiewicz, Effect of celebrity endorsement in advertising

<sup>11</sup> Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*

### *Relationship*

Relationship is the aspect that symbolizes the connection between the brand and its consumers. This aspect is particularly important for companies who offer services as opposed to products, as services could even be considered a relationship between the ones offering it and the ones receiving it.

### *Reflection*

The aspect of reflection makes references to the stereotypes of a brand – What do its users look like? What are they known for? – and serves to be the main identification of the brand within the consumers' mind. Interestingly, Kapferer states that the reflection aspect does not need to actually represent a realistic image of the target group, but rather should present a group that will appeal to the members of the target group.<sup>12</sup> An example of this is the Coca-Cola company, which could describe its consumer base as late teens who hold values of being fun, sporty, active, and friendly. In reality, Coca-Cola's target market is much broader than this, however a majority of its consumers would find this stereotype to be appealing.

### *Self-Image*

The sixth and final aspect, self-image, refers to how the target market views themselves. This aspect serves to provide insight into why consumers buy a certain brand and how they view themselves because they are the ones purchasing it. An example of this is how a Porsche driver views himself as rich because he can afford to purchase such a fast car that he perceives as a luxury.<sup>13</sup> This is

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<sup>12</sup> Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*

<sup>13</sup> Pirvani, Awais. *Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model*,

the basis for consumer perception of the brand, as it shows how the consumers perceive themselves while purchasing the brand, which can then be broken down into how they view the brand itself.

### Consumer Perception

Consumer perception is defined as a marketing concept that encompasses a customer's impressions, awareness, and consciousness about a company or its brand.<sup>14</sup> The process of consumer perception begins the moment an individual is made aware of a certain product or brand. As the individual begins to gain information about said product, they begin to form impressions about it. Once these impressions then develop into opinions, the process has completed, as the individual now has a certain perception towards the product.

Throughout this process, companies attempt to influence what these potential consumers see through a mix of advertising, promotion, social media, and more to influence the individual. Everything a company does, from the color of its logo to the font it uses on the website influences the perception of its consumers. Even factors outside the control of the company can influence a consumers' perception such as the mood a consumer is in when viewing the product or what time of day it is. Because consumer perception can be so unpredictable, it is important for firms to devote a significant amount of energy towards ensuring consumers have a positive experience in order to foster a positive perception of its brand.

Consumer perception is important to marketers, as there is such a large potential upside to having a positive consumer perception. The first factor to consider is that consumer perception directly influences buying decisions. When a consumer is deciding whether to buy a product or not, having a positive perception of a company can often be the difference maker between making a

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<sup>14</sup>Mandivisvika, et al., *Advertising and Branding: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*



purchase or not. This is especially true when a consumer is deciding between two competitors, as they will most likely choose whichever they have the better consumer perception of.<sup>15</sup> The next strength of consumer perception is turning first-time buyers into repeat buyers through building customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is achieved when a consumer decides that they want to continuously purchase from a specific brand. Having a positive perception of the company is a requirement to achieve this and many companies attempt to do so through the use of its marketing mix.

## **MARKETING MIX & THE APPLE COMPANY**

### Overview

One of the key concepts in Marketing is the “marketing mix”. The concept of the marketing mix is largely credited to Harvard Business School professor Neil H. Borden and is the foundation for business marketing models today. The marketing mix is defined as “the blend of the four responsibilities of marketing – conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution – used for a particular idea, product or service.”<sup>16</sup> This serves as a conceptual framework for most modern-day marketers that works to serve consumers’ needs. By identifying the primary decisions that consumers make in their buying process, marketers can then change their offerings to suit their consumers needs. This framework can be used to develop both long-term and short-term ideas.

The first known mention of the concept of a marketing mix came from the Professor of Marketing at Harvard University, James Culliton in the late 1940s. In his article titled, *The Management of Marketing Costs*, Culliton describes marketers as “mixers of ingredients.” These marketers will sometimes follow a recipe, sometimes must prepare their own ingredients, and even at other times

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<sup>15</sup> Tartaglione, et al. “A Systematic Mapping Study on Customer Loyalty and Brand Management.”

<sup>16</sup> O’Guinn, “Advertising and Integrated Brand Promotion.”

experiment and invent ingredients never tried before.<sup>17</sup> This analogy refers to the fact that a marketing manager will have to mix the various components of the marketing mix – that everything sold will require a different mix of these ingredients, depending on various factors such as product type, market segment, target market, and more. The concept of the marketing mix is very similar to that of mixing a cake. Depending on what type of cake you want, the mixer will alter the proportions, ingredients, and time that goes into the cake. Similarly, the various ‘ingredients’ that go into a marketing mix can be altered from product to product.<sup>18</sup> It is up to the marketer to decide exactly what to input in order to best attract the consumer.

As time passed, the concept of the marketing mix was further refined, and although the general concept was there – marketers could not agree on what elements should be included in the mix until the concept of the four Ps of marketing began to emerge. Although Professor Culliton’s concept was very similar, it wasn’t until the year 1960 that the four Ps of marketing was first named. Professor E. Jerome McCarthy of the Notre Dame College of Commerce was the first person to suggest them which are: product, place, price, and promotion. McCarthy suggested these four specific variables, as they were the most common ones that appear to consumers and thus should be considered by marketers when writing a marketing strategy.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Ps of Marketing**

In the modern day, there are many concepts of the marketing mix such as the four Ps, the seven Cs, and more. This paper we will be focusing on the concept of the four Ps. The marketing mix

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<sup>17</sup> Culliton, “The Management of Marketing Costs.”

<sup>18</sup> Hodder Education, *Introduction to the Marketing Mix*

<sup>19</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

originated from the single P (price) of microeconomic theory.<sup>20</sup> However, as the marketing scene evolved as a result of high competition, marketers were also forced to improve upon their approach towards consumers. This led to the introduction of new Ps, as marketers began to consider new factors that could affect consumer decision making.

### Product

One common misconception in marketing is that a product *must* be a “thing.” In fact, rather, the thing that a marketer is selling is the satisfaction or use derived or expected from the purchase of the product. A consumer does not buy a product for its own sake, but rather for the satisfaction derived from its use.<sup>21</sup> For example, a consumer does not buy a cellphone for the precious metals in the backing. They do not buy it for the electrical wiring that is encased in the phone. In fact, most consumers probably do not even know how a cell phone works. However, it matters not to them so long as it does the tasks they expected it to when purchasing. Additionally, a product can also be a service. The main difference between a product and a service is that while a product can be tangible or intangible, a service is always an intangible – it is not something that one can feel or try before paying for it.<sup>22</sup>

Another aspect of this first P is the idea of product creation. Whenever a new use for a product is discovered, many new consumers are brought into the market believing it to be a new product. A perfect example of this is the numerous uses of a lemon. On its own a lemon is essentially just a sour fruit. However, through the use of another P – promotion – a lemon gains many other uses such as lemonade, mixed drinks, diet supplements, cold remedies, lemon pies, salad dressing, and much

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<sup>20</sup> Goi, *A Review of Marketing Mix: 4Ps or More?*

<sup>21</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

<sup>22</sup> Hodder Education, *Introduction to the Marketing Mix*

more.<sup>23</sup> This is what can be referred to as product creation. What was once just a single product, has been transformed into something considered 'new' simply because a new use has been discovered.

### Place

Place is arguably one of the most important of the four Ps, as it determines whether a consumer can even get their product or not. The location where products are made readily available is essential to consumers as they must get it before they can enjoy it. Many marketers make the mistake of thinking that product creation is the only important step to the marketing mix, however distribution (or place) is just as important. The simple truth is - consumers can only use a product if they are in possession of it.<sup>24</sup> For example, a consumer in Los Angeles would not get much value out of owning a cell phone that is currently in China. Even if the phone is completely assembled, fully charged, and ready for use – it is of no value to the consumer due to the fact that it is not in the right place.

### Price

Price may not always be the determining factor to whether a consumer purchases the product, however it is almost always a qualifying factor. This is due to the fact that every product is affected by price. In a bare sense – price is the monetary value that is attributed to a product. Any transaction in our modern economy can be thought of as an exchange of money – the price – for 'something else.'<sup>25</sup> Surprisingly however, many consumers in the modern day are not focused on the price itself. Rather, consumers are focused on what they can *save* rather than what they are spending. This is why sales and discounts are so popular now. In most pricing structures a product is given a 'list price' or the

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<sup>23</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

<sup>24</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

<sup>25</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

price which the consumers are normally expected to pay.<sup>26</sup> Marketers can then inflate this list price but offer a large discount to give the illusion to consumers that they are saving more than they actually are through the use of promotions.

### Promotion

In the broadest sense, promotion can be considered as any method of informing, persuading, or reminding consumers about the marketing mix.<sup>27</sup> The goal is to remind the consumer of the other three Ps of product, place, and price.

Each represents a different stage of a marketer's attempt to sway a consumer to buying their product. The first step, informing, is when a marketer is simply trying to spread the message of his product or service. They attempt to attract attention and *inform* consumers of the existence of their business. However, markets are complex, and competition is often high among firms. Thus, for marketers it often becomes necessary for them to turn to *persuasion* instead of mere informing. They would need to talk up the competitive advantages of their product and convince consumers why their product or service was superior to their competitors. The final stage in this sequence is to *remind* consumers. Even after a consumer has been satisfied by a firm's service, the work is not done. Consumers are constantly subjected to competitive influences, thus advertisements, signs, organizations, and more are necessary to gain repeat business.<sup>28</sup>

### People

Beyond the scope of the 4 P's of the marketing mix, many marketers have suggested that there is a hidden fifth P that has emerged and should be considered part of this marketing mix as well. This

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<sup>26</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

<sup>27</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

<sup>28</sup> McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*

fifth P is "People" – the employees of a company, as they play just as big a role in a company's marketing mix as product, price, place, and promotion.

Specifically, the employees who make up this element of the marketing mix are those who directly deal with the customer during any part of their transaction.<sup>29</sup> These employees are often on the 'front lines' directly selling the product, creating the service, promoting an offer, or helping customers with anything they might need. Since these employees are so visible to consumers, they become part of the process as a potential customer builds their perception of a company.<sup>30</sup>

Employees who deal with customers serve to also represent the brand of the company and contribute directly towards consumer loyalty. An example of this phenomenon is the case of phone companies. When customers of AT&T, MCI, and Sprint call its customer service, those employees talking to them become part of their respective company's marketing mix. Everything they say influences the customers' perception of the brand. In fact, research found that those customers who found the phone companies' customer service representatives to be not helpful were up to six times more likely to not consider this provider in the future.<sup>31</sup> Having employees who are unaware of their company's brand values can work to actively harm the company by lowering customer loyalty. Conversely, having employees who actively seek to embody the brand and values a company has set forth will strengthen a company's brand identity can become the differentiating factor towards building strong brand loyalty.

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<sup>29</sup> McEwen, "The Power of the Fifth P"

<sup>30</sup> Judd, "Achieving a Customer Orientation Using 'People-Power'"

<sup>31</sup> Judd, "Achieving a Customer Orientation Using 'People-Power'"

## **The Apple Company**

Often remembered as the creator of the personal computer, Apple went through innumerable changes and rebirths in order to become the company that it is today. First starting as a personal computer hardware and software company, Apple has transitioned throughout the decades to become a leader in technological creation and a major powerhouse in its industry. Now the world's largest publicly traded company at a net worth of over \$2.08 trillion today,<sup>32</sup> Apple continues to be a multi-industry leader in innovation and technology.

### Industry

The technology industry is considered to be the most valuable and fastest growing industry in the global market.<sup>33</sup> The technology industry is divided into two different sectors: hardware and software. The hardware side of the industry handles products such as personal computers, cellphones, music players, tablets, and other types of electronic devices. Conversely, the software side creates the software that these electronic devices use. The Apple company is unique in that it does business in both the hardware and software sectors of its industry.

### *Competitors*

Due to its unique business strategy in the technology industry of selling both hardware and software, the Apple company has a large number of competitors. On the hardware side, Apple competes with companies such as Microsoft, Google, Dell, Lenovo, Intel, Sony, Samsung, Xiaomi and more.<sup>34</sup> Conversely, on the software side, Apple competes with Microsoft, Google, IBM, and Android.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jbursz. *Apple becomes first U.S. company to reach a \$2 trillion market cap*

<sup>33</sup> Sharma, A Study of Consumer Perception While Purchasing Apple Products

<sup>34</sup> Sharma, A Study of Consumer Perception While Purchasing Apple Products

<sup>35</sup> Aljafari, Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy

Of these competitors, both Microsoft and Google compete the most with the Apple company due to also being in both the hardware and software sectors. However, to understand what makes the Apple company so unique, one must first know how Apple has gotten to the industry dominant position it is in today.

## History

### *Early Years*

The Apple company began when Steve Jobs met Steve Wozniak and the two began to build computers together out of one of their parents' living room. The first ever product created was named the 'Apple I' and from there, the Apple company began to grow exponentially.<sup>36</sup> The company incorporated in 1977 and announced its IPO a few years later in 1980.<sup>37</sup> While Apple initially had great success, doubling its revenue every four months for the first five years,<sup>38</sup> it encountered problems after releasing the first Macintosh computer in 1984. The product sold well in the beginning but failed to maintain this trajectory and soon was labeled as a failure. This would only mark the start of Apple's problems, as soon after one of its key executives Steve Jobs left the company.

### *Steve Jobs' Departure*

It is nearly impossible to mention the Apple company without mentioning the name Steve Jobs. As one of the co-founders of the company, Jobs was an integral part to the Apple company. However, in 1985, Jobs got into a conflict with then CEO John Sculley.<sup>39</sup> This led to Jobs leaving the company and selling all his shares except for one.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

<sup>37</sup> Aljafari, *Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy*

<sup>38</sup> Aljafari, *Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy*

<sup>39</sup> Aljafari, *Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy*

<sup>40</sup> Aljafari, *Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy*



### *Financial Struggles*

This departure hurt the company greatly, as Sculley's business strategy at the time was not sustainable. Apple's competitors were able to create products with similar capabilities, but at the fraction of the cost. In addition, Sculley's strategy was to release dozens of major models with hundreds of different configurations for consumers to choose from.<sup>41</sup> This did not align at all with Apple's brand identity of simplicity; thus, consumers were left confused on what to purchase. Apple's sales suffered as a result, leaving the company's stock price at the lowest it had ever been in 12 years.<sup>42</sup> Sculley was removed as CEO in 1993 and a few years later Apple was still struggling to stay afloat in the industry. This all changed in 1997 when Apple acquired NeXT Inc., Steve Jobs' new company, and was appointed as the new CEO.

### *Steve Jobs' Return*

It is no exaggeration to say that *everything* changed when Steve Jobs returned to the Apple Company. Jobs demanded a full overhaul of the company, discontinuing anything that was deemed unprofitable. His new strategy was to align Apple's product offerings with its one of its central philosophies: simplicity. By creating unique products with simplistic designs, Apple was able to return to the market in force. Boosted by a \$150 million investment by Microsoft,<sup>43</sup> Apple released the iMac – a brand new unique computer that impressed consumers and helped the company to slowly regain its footing in the personal computer market.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

<sup>42</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

<sup>43</sup> Aljafari, *Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy*

<sup>44</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

### *Turning Point of the Apple Company*

The year 2001 marked the true turning point for the Apple company. It began with the introduction of the Mac OS X, a new computer firmware that was revolutionary due to its ease of use, innovativeness, and security that it brought to Apple computers. Following this, Apple announced the opening of its retail store chain to establish a direct connection to its customers. The final major event of the year was the unveiling of the all-new Apple iPod music player and Apple iTunes digital media library. These two new innovative products and services nearly doubled Apple's revenue from \$1.9 billion to \$3.2 billion in the span of a year, helped Apple to corner 76% of the music player market in three years, and sell over 10 billion songs by early 2010.<sup>45</sup> These major changes are what enabled Apple to grow to become a major player in its industry and has paved the way for them to enter new markets.

### *Apple in the Modern Day*

Since its immense success in 2001, Apple has continued to grow at a rapid rate. Even after the introduction of the iPod and iTunes, Apple continues to innovate and enter new markets. Apple introduced its first cellphone – the iPhone – in 2007, a major step up from the music player market. Following this, the company has also released a tablet – the iPad, the Apple Watch, and now even the Apple TV.<sup>46</sup> By utilizing the success it has gained from one market, the Apple company is able to leverage its consumer perception to successfully enter new ones.

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<sup>45</sup> Aljafari, Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy

<sup>46</sup> Aljafari, Apple Inc. Industry Analysis Business Policy and Strategy

## MAIN RESEARCH SECTION:

### SECTION 1: APPLE'S BRAND IDENTITY & CONSUMER PERCEPTION

#### Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Model

For this section of the paper, Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Model will be applied to the Apple company by breaking down how each of the six aspects are applied. It will then be surmised how these six aspects combine to form the brand identity of the Apple company.

#### *Physique*

The Apple company focuses on making its products design sleek and easy to use. Each of its products are easily approachable and have seamless integration with one another. When a new user of technology finally decides to get a phone, the last thing it wants is an experience that leaves them confused. Apple ensures this never occurs with products that are designed to be inviting and very simple to use. It designed the iPhones, iPads, and more with soft round edges and cool metallic colors intended to make the consumer feel entranced. It emanates both an innovative and simplistic feeling at the same time.

#### *Personality*

The personality of the Apple brand designed to be memorable. It focuses on making an impact upon the consumer psyche through ad messages that transcend simple product features. In its advertising campaigns, Apple rarely focuses on the product itself, but rather the message it is trying to convey along with it. The Mac was not described as just a computer, but rather "The computer for the Rest of Us." The iPod wasn't simply described as a new device used to listen to

music, but rather “1,000 songs in your pocket.”<sup>47</sup> By having strong brand messages that are memorable in the mind of the consumer, Apple is able to convey its brand personality of being memorable.

The personality of a company is also designed to “give flesh to a brand’s character” and Apple achieves this through the use of celebrity endorsements in its advertisements. In recent years, Apple has worked with extremely famous celebrities such as NBA All-Star Stephen Curry, 23-time Grand Slam winner & tennis superstar Serena Williams, television icon Oprah Winfrey, and many more extremely recognizable figures.<sup>48</sup> Apple recognizes that in the modern day, being memorable is an increasingly difficult feat for brands to achieve in the minds of consumers. Thus, it chose to associate the brand with some of the most memorable individuals on the planet, thus creating a relationship in the consumer’s mind between these individuals and the Apple brand.

### *Relationship*

Apple has a very strong connection with its customers, strong enough that some may even describe it as a cult. Apple’s main focus when it comes to its consumers is building up and ensuring brand loyalty. It wants to make sure that its consumers are practically chomping at the bit for the next Apple product to be released, thus it is imperative that it maintains strong customer loyalty. In order to do this, it must maintain a strong relationship with its consumer base.

Apple also focuses on the relationship from customer to customer. It wants to ensure that consumers who have an Apple product feel connected to those who also have one. Examples of this include Apple’s messaging service and video chatting service. Apple’s messaging service – iMessage –

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<sup>47</sup> Chazin, *Marketing Apple: 5 Secrets of the World's Best Marketing Machine*.

<sup>48</sup> “Apple Revealed All the Celebrities Who Are ‘Behind the Mac’ in Their Latest Spot.” *Digital Agency Network*

will change colors from blue to green if a user is texting someone not from an Apple device. While this may seem like a trivial change, there are many users who will treat others differently depending on whether the text bubbles are blue (for Apple) or green (for not Apple). I have personally experienced this phenomenon, as I have used both Apple's products and its competitors throughout my life. Apple's video chatting service, FaceTime, also focuses on building relationships from consumer to consumer as it is *exclusively* available on Apple devices. This means that only Apple customers can FaceTime each other.

### *Culture*

When thinking about the culture of the Apple company, innovation is the key motivator for employees. Apple employees are encouraged to think outside the box or even to disregard the box altogether.<sup>49</sup> The push for innovation doesn't include employees in charge of developing the newest products for Apple, but also encompasses employees that work in Apple's retail stores as well. The Genius Bar is Apple's face-to-face tech support service that exists inside each one of its retail stores. The purpose of this is provide any type of support Apple customers may need from general knowledge to technical support. Even the name itself 'the Genius Bar' evokes a certain image in the mind of its consumers of individuals who are innovative and the best in their respective fields.

### *Reflection*

Similarly to the culture of Apple, the reflection of the Apple brand is highly focused on innovation. Apple is rarely the company to invent a specific type of product: when it comes to some of its most famous product lines such as the PC, mobile phone, or MP3 player, it was not the company

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<sup>49</sup> Dudovskiy, Apple Inc. Report 2021

who invented these products. Rather, Apple observes what other companies do and improves upon existing designs and functions.<sup>50</sup> It applies its own experiences and technology to already existing products, thus making large breakthroughs and creating the perception of innovation in the mind of the consumer.

One of Steve Jobs' primary strategies while at Apple was to only enter markets that were already established and had clear profit potential. Instead of spending large amounts of money on research & development, Apple would instead sit on the sidelines and let other companies spend these resources. Then, once its competitors released a product in this new market, Apple would then study what it did correctly and what could be improved upon, thus releasing a version of its own with *only* the goods parts.<sup>51</sup> From there, Apple would then focus on providing customers with incremental innovations. Its existing product lines would have 'upgrades' every 9-12 months, with Apple adding new features that users wanted. These upgrades served to both continue this idea of innovation inside the consumers mind and growth customer loyalty, as consumers would most definitely want a 'better version' of a product they already had.<sup>52</sup> By focusing on innovation rather than creation, Apple has been able to properly build up the idea of innovation inside the minds of its consumers

### *Self-Image*

The self-image of Apple's consumer-base is one that is very similar to the brand identity of Apple itself. Apple markets itself as being innovative, thus its consumers view themselves as being innovative as well for using Apple products. Apple builds upon this perception by ensuring that it makes its consumers feel special and empowered for using these products. An example of this was

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<sup>50</sup> Chazin, *Marketing Apple: 5 Secrets of the World's Best Marketing Machine*

<sup>51</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

<sup>52</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

the creation of the PowerBook in 1993. While the new PowerBook boasted many new innovations, one that stood out most to consumers was the color. Most laptops at the time were an 'unremarkable beige' whereas the new Apple laptops was a distinctive grey. In its era, the PowerBook grew to become a symbol of status, as those who had one were looked at more favorably than those who did not.<sup>53</sup> This idea of self-image is something that Apple has capitalized upon time and time again, as it went about the same process when introducing the first iPhone.

### *Apple's Brand Identity: Summarized*

After applying Kapferer's brand identity prism to the Apple company, it can be concluded that Apple has built its brand to be very strong in the minds of consumers. To put it simply, the brand identity of the Apple company can be broken down into the following four terms: ***simplistic, innovative, memorable, and exclusive***. The next section will discuss how the marketing strategies of Apple have been influenced and modeled after these key traits.

## **SECTION 2: MARKETING STRATEGIES OF THE APPLE COMPANY**

The role of brand identity in this paper can be highlighted through the similarities between Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism and Apple's strategies in its marketing mix. The concepts that appear in some of aspects of the Brand-Identity Prism are the exact marketing strategies that the Apple company uses.

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<sup>53</sup> Chazin, *Marketing Apple: 5 Secrets of the World's Best Marketing Machine*

## Product

### *Brand Recognition*

The first marketing strategy Apple employs is designing its products to be memorable. When thinking about the company, many individuals would say that the two most memorable things are the logo and the lowercase 'i'. Apple's logo has stayed relatively the same since 1976 – the outline of an apple with a smooth bite taken out of it. The logo originally was a colorful rainbow, which was changed in 1998 to the monochrome color it currently is today.<sup>54</sup> Apple credits this change towards a need to evolve – that similarly to its products and customers, the Apple brand must evolve as well. The change "reduced some of the clutter in the original design," as Apple recognized the need to pursue simplicity.<sup>55</sup> The company retained the memorability of its logo design while adding the simplicity of a monochrome look.

This simplicity in both logo and product design has helped them to attain near instantaneous brand recognition in consumers. In a survey done by researchers, customers were shown the products of six different companies and asked to match the product to its respective brand. Out of 100 participants, 95 of them were able to correctly match Apple's product to the brand.<sup>56</sup> The next closest brand was Sony, with 47 out of 100 participants able to match its product to the brand. This example serves to demonstrate how strong Apple has built its brand recognition to be. The other memorable thing about Apple's brand is the lowercase "i" in its product name. iPhone, iPad, iPod, iMac – Apple used this technique of repetition to ingrain this into the mind of its consumers. Now, whenever a

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<sup>54</sup> Logogenie, *Apple logo: Learn about the history of the logo, branding and Logo Evolution*

<sup>55</sup> Logogenie, *Apple logo: Learn about the history of the logo, branding and Logo Evolution*

<sup>56</sup> Schneiders, *Apple's Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*.



product is released with a lowercase "i" in front of it, consumers will immediately recognize it as belonging to Apple.

### *Product Elimination*

In addition to Apple's focus on memorability through product recognition, one aspect the company also focuses on is the discontinuation of unsuccessful products. This practice serves two functions – firstly, it allows Apple to save a lot of money and secondly, it allows them to maintain its brand identity of being 'simplistic.' Not only are the products themselves simplistic, but the choices given to the consumers when faced with what to buy are also very simple. When Steve Jobs returned to Apple in 1997, one of the first changes he made was to 'clean house.' He discontinued various products that were either not profitable or did not fit the brand identity of Apple. Projects such as the Apple ROMs, Newton, Copland OS, and many others were cut off when Jobs returned.<sup>57</sup> The discontinuation of many of these products led to Apple's target market to become much more focused, which in turn led to Jobs deciding that simplification was the next step.

### *Simplification*

Upon his return, Jobs also decided it was time to simplify Apple's product line. The company at the time had many different products being sold and in development, many of which were either unsuccessful or actively costing the company money. This philosophy became one that Apple adapted and stuck with over the years, keeping its product line very small. In the modern day, Apple still operates under the same principle of both design simplicity and distribution simplicity. In 2016, Samsung, one of Apple's direct competitors released a whopping 31 new devices into the market.

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<sup>57</sup> Schneiders, *Apple's Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*.

Apple in comparison only released three new products during the year.<sup>58</sup> Despite this difference between new products released, Apple still earned more revenue in the year from the sales of its devices.

### Place

When Apple first began selling its products, it did so by forming partnerships with large retail department stores. Similar to its competitors, like IBM at the time, products were put on display in these stores to be sold. However, Apple's products did not sell well and as a result, the salespeople in these departments stores eventually stopped trying to sell them. This all changed when Steve Jobs returned in 1997, as he noticed the failing distribution channels. Jobs immediately lowered the number of distributors that Apple worked with and announced that Apple would begin selling computers on its own website – where customers could personalize their own configuration.<sup>59</sup>

### *Online & Retail Selling*

Selling on its own website helped to create the consumer perception that Apple was now more 'exclusive' than it was before. No longer would you see Apple products on display in everyday retail stores, but rather they would be sold on its own website. To further this idea of exclusivity, Jobs also made it so that only a limited number of retail stores would be allowed to sell Apple products.<sup>60</sup> This served to enhance the idea of exclusivity in the consumers' mind and caused them to think differently about the Apple brand.

However, Jobs was not done there. After making its products available to sell on its website, Apple came to the realization that its distribution network could be expanded by creating stores of its

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<sup>58</sup> Peng, "Cell Phone Cost Comparison Timeline."

<sup>59</sup> Cruikshank, *The Apple Way*:

<sup>60</sup> Schneiders, *Apple's Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*

own. Apple released its first retail store in May 2001, a move that was heavily criticized at the time.<sup>61</sup> However, moving was one of these smartest moves Apple could have made, as it had an immensely positive effect on consumer perception. The result was referred to as 'retail theater' – consumers were able to “learn and experience the things they can actually do with a computer” while also being assisted by highly trained brand ambassadors and employees who served their every need.<sup>62</sup> This blending of product display, customer support, and strong branding cemented Apple’s brand in the mind of consumers.

In the modern day, Apple has a multi-faceted approach when it comes to distribution, in order to match its products. Since Apple offers both traditional and digital products, it made the decision to have its distribution channel match as well by selling both through traditional and digital mediums. The traditional mediums are through both electronic stores and Apple stores, while digitally Apple also still sells all its products on its own website.

### Price

One of the most controversial parts of Apple’s marketing mix is its pricing strategies. It’s no secret that consumers pay a higher premium for Apple products compared to its competitors. The primary reason Apple was able to do this is simply because its products are considered superior as opposed to others on the market.

### *Product Differentiation*

Apple is able to increase demand for its products through product differentiation. Apple employs a focused differentiation strategy, which is defined as “providing high perceived value to the

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<sup>61</sup> Stein, *It's been two decades since Apple opened its first store*

<sup>62</sup> Stein, *It's been two decades since Apple opened its first store*

customers justifying a substantial price premium, usually to a selected market segment.”<sup>63</sup> This means that consumers expect the product to be of a high value, thus justifying the higher price. By making its products unique compared to other brands, it can make them appeal to its consumer base. This combines the attributes of innovation and exclusivity from its brand identity, as through the use of other elements in its marketing mix like product, Apple has designed its products to have a higher aesthetic quality than its competition. Furthermore, through innovative efforts by its employees, many of the features of its products have been considered ‘ahead of their time.’ These two elements combined created a massive effect on the consumer perception of its products, as not only do they *look* better, but they are actually functionally better than its competitors.

### *Consumer Perception*

Consumer perception has played a key part in Apple’s pricing strategy through the use of brand loyalty. As mentioned previously, one of the advantages of positive consumer perception is that it can increase customer loyalty. When consumers positively perceive a brand, they will be more likely to purchase from that brand again, thus building loyalty. From the beginning, Apple intended to sell its products at a high premium. In a 2013 interview with *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Apple CEO Tim Cook stated, “We never had an objective to sell a low-cost phone. Our primary objective is to sell a great phone and provide a great experience, and we figured out a way to do it at a lower cost.”<sup>64</sup> With this in mind, Apple priced its products high from the start, as it was confident in its ability to provide consumers with a great experience. This experience would then build a favorable consumer perception of the brand, allowing Apple to not have to worry about losing sales over price.

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<sup>63</sup> Schneiders, *Apple's Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*.

<sup>64</sup> Guglielmo, “Tim Cook Says Apple Isn't Interested

## *Promotion*

This research section will be breaking down Apple's most successful advertising campaigns, specifically focusing on why it succeeded and how it connects to Apple's brand identity.

### *1984 Ad Campaign (innovative)*

One of Apple's most famous ad campaigns occurred in 1984 and aired during the Super Bowl, which is one of the most coveted and expensive slots an advertiser can get. The purpose of this ad campaign was to introduce the new Macintosh. The ad was a nod to the George Orwell novel *1984* and mirrored many elements of the dystopian novel. In the ad itself, written by legendary director Ridley Scott, a female character is featured wearing a white tank top, red shorts, and running shoes, running through a dark, futuristic, dystopian world. A large TV screen is shown, with Big Brother giving orders to rows of individuals who look like prisoners – a veiled reference to IBM. The woman then throws a sledgehammer through the screen, shattering it. The commercial then ends with the following quote *"On January 24, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984."*<sup>65</sup>

At the time of airing, commercials generally consisted of a straightforward product presentation. Apple shattered this mold by airing its 1984 which many considered to be bold and brash.<sup>66</sup> By taking an innovative new approach to product marketing, Apple was able to successfully differentiate themselves from its competitors in the minds of its consumers.

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<sup>65</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

<sup>66</sup> Schneiders, *Apple's Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing.*

### *“Think Different” Ad Campaign*

Another of Apple’s famous ad campaigns was its “Think Different” advertisements that aired in magazines, billboards, and on TV. During a time when the company was struggling to stay afloat, Steve Jobs rejoined Apple and immediately began work on its next advertising campaign. Jobs first introduced this slogan at the MacWorld Expo in 1997, beginning the start of Apple’s most iconic advertising campaign since 1984.<sup>67</sup> The advertisement goes as follows:

Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules and they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.<sup>68</sup>

Apple’s “Think Different” campaign focused on providing consumers a message that focused purely on the self-image of its consumer base. Similar to its previous ad campaign 1984, Apple completely ignored product features, rather choosing to focus on the message and how it made consumers feel. The “Think Different” campaign appealed to consumers by stating that it is acceptable to be different. It associated its brand message with some of the most celebrated leaders, thinkers, and artists in history such as Einstein, Picasso, or Ghandi<sup>69</sup> and challenged consumers to consider something better than mindlessly attaching to then current market leader IBM. Using IBM as a comparison, Apple was able to create a frame of reference for its brand, but simultaneously differentiate themselves through its brand message.<sup>70</sup> This frame of reference both greatly increased brand differentiation and memorability of the ad campaign.

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<sup>67</sup> O’Grady, *Apple Inc*

<sup>68</sup> Schneiders, *Apple’s Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*.

<sup>69</sup> Schneiders, *Apple’s Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*.

<sup>70</sup> Payne, “Brand Positioning and Its Usefulness for Brand Management:”

In addition, this campaign was special because of how it was received by consumers. They *loved* it. The reception of Apple's ad campaign was positive to the point that people wanted to analyze it, buy posters of it, and show the commercial to others.<sup>71</sup> Apple was successfully able to get consumers viewing its advertisements without having to buy airtime. While the ad campaign itself wasn't solely responsible for Apple's turnaround in the years after, it played an extremely important role – shifting the perception of the company in its consumer's psyche.

### *iPod Silhouette Ad Campaign*

The iPod ad campaign was a very simplistic but innovative campaign that Apple launched in 2003. The advertisement featured numerous happy, energetic individuals dancing as silhouettes against a colorful background. In each of these individual's hands was a bright white iPod with white Apple earbuds plugged in and moving to match the users dancing.<sup>72</sup>

This advertisement worked *extremely* well, as the ad campaign helped Apple shatter analysts' forecast for sales. The iPod was expected to earn \$400 million, but through the success of this advertising campaign, Apple reached \$1.2 billion in net sales during the first quarter alone.<sup>73</sup> The idea behind having the characters be silhouetted was a stroke of genius as well, as these silhouettes had a major effect on consumer perception. Consumers saw the reflection of the Apple brand on this advertisement, and through self-image imprinted themselves onto these dancing figures. They imagined the figures dancing happily to be themselves, all while holding an Apple iPod in hand listening to music on iTunes.

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<sup>71</sup> O'Grady, *Apple Inc.*

<sup>72</sup> Chazin, *Marketing Apple: 5 Secrets of the World's Best Marketing Machine*

<sup>73</sup> J.d. *The iPod Silhouettes*,

Another focus of the advertisement was also on the pure white headphones that Apple designed themselves. As outlined earlier in the paper, these white headphones served the same purpose as the grey coloring of the PowerBook – it was a symbol of status.<sup>74</sup> Having distinctive and memorable colors cause Apple’s products to stand out against its various competitors’ products. This grows brand recognition and causes a phenomenon where “people buy what other people have.”<sup>75</sup>

## People

### *Secrecy*

One primary aspect that separates Apple from its competitors is the high level of secrecy that its employees hold. When it comes to its employees and even public relations departments, Apple is notoriously tight-lipped.<sup>76</sup> It shares very little about the company’s plans and even less about new product releases. It has even been noted that “Apple engineers, even senior engineers, have no idea what a final Apple product will look like until it is launched. The people who work on the software have no idea what the hardware is like, and the hardware guys have no idea of the software”<sup>77</sup>

This level of secrecy is intentional by Apple, as it serves two purposes. Firstly, the secrecy gives the Apple brand a sense of memorability. Knowing every single detail about a product months before it comes out only serves to bore consumers. Instead, releasing little to no information only leaves consumers wanting *more*. This lack of information also helps to serve the second purpose of Apple’s secrecy: publicity. When individuals are constantly wondering what the next Apple product will be, this means that the brand will constantly be in the minds of these individuals. This practice has

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<sup>74</sup> Chazin, *Marketing Apple: 5 Secrets of the World's Best Marketing Machine*

<sup>75</sup> Schneiders, *Apple's Secret of Success: Traditional Marketing vs. Cult Marketing*.

<sup>76</sup> O'Grady, Apple Inc.

<sup>77</sup> Dudovskiy, Apple Inc. Report 2021



created “a cottage industry of independent journalists that follow the company’s every move looking for any hint about new products.”<sup>78</sup> Customers, journalists, and everyone else familiar with the Apple brand are constantly looking for new information regarding its future plans.

### *Customer Support*

As previously mentioned in the culture section of Apple’s brand identity prism, the push for innovation by the company doesn’t only include employees tasked with the development of new products. Apple makes sure to keep its brand identity consistent across every facet of its employees – even those who work on the front lines in its retail stores and customer service. This includes the Genius Bar: its face-to-face tech support service within each of its retail stores. Apple consistently gets high customer satisfaction rating for technical support and even won top honors in Consumer Reports annual survey by double digits over its closest rival.<sup>79</sup> Apple is able to achieve such high customer satisfaction ratings because it is responsible for the entire experience from the moment a customer enters the store. From the way its employees dress, the layout of the store itself, and even the name of ‘the Genius Bar,’ Apple has carefully crafted a specific brand image to appear to in the minds of its consumers.

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<sup>78</sup> O’Grady, Apple Inc

<sup>79</sup> O’Grady, Apple Inc.

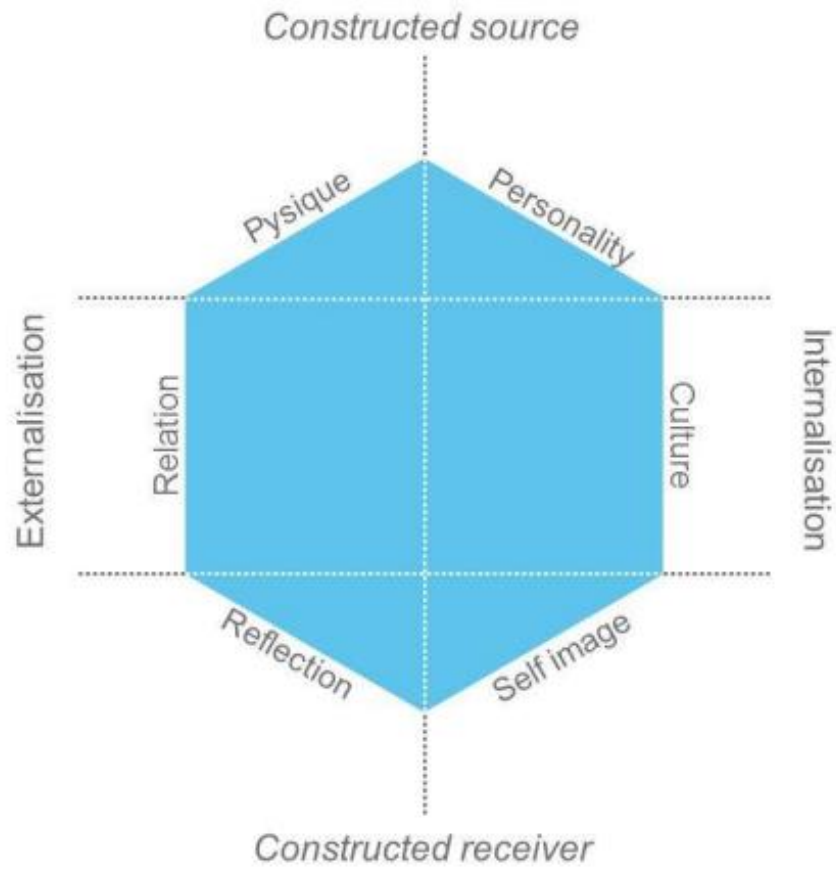
## **CONCLUSION**

The Apple company's brand identity directly influences, if not controls, the marketing strategies it employs. After applying Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism to the Apple company and analyzing the six aspects that make up brand identity, one can see how its brand identity can be broken down into four main characteristics: simplicity, innovativeness, exclusivity, and memorability. These traits can be seen throughout Apple's marketing mix strategies, as it attempts to communicate these traits to consumers.

After analyzing the Apple company and its campaigns through the lens of the 5 P's of marketing, one can see how Apple emphasizes its brand identity through every facet of the marketing mix. Its focus on communicating its brand identity in turn influences the consumer's perception of the company, resulting in the success and influence over consumer perception the Apple company has today. Creating campaigns centered around its brand identity has been a driving factor for Apple's success in its industry.

Rather than focusing on a single aspect of its brand identity, the Apple company takes a holistic approach in its marketing mix. Through the analysis of Apple's marketing mix, one can see how the company works to ensure that every aspect of its brand identity complements each other. By utilizing its brand image to influence the consumer perception of the company, Apple has won over new customers and solidified its connection to existing ones.

## APPENDIX A



*The Brand Identity Prism Model*<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*

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