

# A framework for analysing convergence between online brand identity and online brand image. The case of the British Museum<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

**Purpose of the paper:** *The aim of the paper is to analyze the level of convergence between online brand identity and online brand image in the museum sector.*

**Methodology:** *This paper proposes an operative framework - called Assessing Web Convergence (AWC) - for extracting information from the web, processing it with text mining techniques and interpreting it in order to monitor the level of convergence between identity and image on the web for the British Museum (BM).*

**Results:** *Empirical testing of the framework has shown that in the case of the British Museum, the museum's communication and the users' perception share four thematic areas: Aim and Organisation, Prospects, Art and Collections and Visit Experience. It is possible to observe that the effectiveness of such communication does not depend on the apparent homogeneity of the themes but on the convergence between identity and image with reference to three qualitative dimensions - Functional, Holistic and Experiential.*

**Research limitations:** *The framework is limited by its purely qualitative approach.*

**Practical implications:** *The proposed operative framework can be used by museums for self-diagnosis. Specifically, the interpretative phase enables management to identify and exemplify those elements that enable museums to transform data into knowledge that is useful for developing and enhancing their competitive strategies with regard to the co-evolution of web content.*

**Originality of the paper:** *The operative framework's originality lies in the possibility of extraction and analysis of non-structured information which, if interpreted from the perspective of convergence between identity and image, can be transformed into knowledge, useful for decision-making.*

*Key words: web communication; museum; online brand identity; online brand image; text mining; co-creation*

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Although this paper comes from a common work of authors, paragraphs 1 and 3 are by Paola Scorrano, paragraph 2 is by Amedeo Maizza, paragraph 4 is by Monica Fait, paragraphs 5 and 6 are by Alkis Thrassou

## 1. Introduction

Web communication contexts (social media, Web 2.0 and its offshoots) represent important enablers for the development of a synergistic relationship between organisation and user (Amirkhanpour *et al.*, 2014). The interactive and dynamic dimension of user engagement is strengthened by the capacity of the Web 2.0 tools (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2013) such as forums, noticeboards, chatrooms, newsgroups, personal Web pages, social networks and blogs (De Valck *et al.*, 2009) for the sharing, interaction and socialisation of values and content (Tuten and Solomon, 2014). Actually, the dynamic and integrated nature of social communication stimulates cognitive processes, experiential and emotional associations (Fiore *et al.*, 2005a) and interest in the organisation and the brand (Fiore *et al.*, 2005b). This facilitates a multidimensional approach - with cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioural dimensions - to the brand (Bowden, 2009; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek, 2011; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010).

Adopting a user-oriented perspective, in the web the user no longer expects to merely acquire information but to interact with its source and with other users. This is not just a technological development, but a radical change in the architecture of communication and information that has generated a “software culture”. This culture takes the form of multimedia content, information and human interactions, and is typical of a networked society that lives in a global (albeit virtual) village (Castells, 1996). Indeed, social communication enables the emergence of individual subjectivity. Each subject that is, thanks to the reduction of inter-personal barriers, performs a series of activities that amplify their social networks (interaction), disseminating and acquiring knowledge, and sharing their experiences with others (Armano, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Thus, social networks become a place where the value proposition finds itself face to face with the public, and where perceptions can be constructed, analysed and measured (Tuten and Solomon, 2014). It is in this context therefore that the two fundamental components of the brand - identity and image - can come together and learn from each other (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, 2009).

These dimensions are two important sources of the brand equity. Since the brand equity depends on what consumers know and remember about the characteristics of the dimensions, their evolution and their convergence are essential elements for the stability of brand equity over time (Nandan, 2005; Dilip and Saikat, 2007).

In this new cultural perspective (Thrassou and Vrontis, 2009), museums must adapt their traditional educational role, centred on the creation and dissemination of knowledge, in response to the feedback that these new users are potentially able to provide.

In the first part, the paper recalls the recent literature on the importance of social media in the interaction between brands and users (Berthon *et al.*, 2012; Kotler *et al.* 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Muñiz and Schau, 2011; Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold, 2010; Weinberg and Pehlivan,

2011). Then, it analyses the literature that recognises the social media as a way to invite the public to participate in the creation of culture and to acquire awareness of its identity. According to the literature which argues that in today's communications environment a strong brand can be created and maintained by strengthening identity and image linkage (Nadan, 2005; Dilip and Saikat, 2007), the paper goes further at the exploratory level that analyze the importance that communication changes have in the creation and maintenance of the identity-image linkage. It suggests an operative framework for extracting information from the web, processing it by text mining techniques and interpreting it in order to monitor the level of convergence between *brand identity* (communicated by the company) and *brand image* (perceived by users). The framework is tested on the British Museum which is proving to be aware of the potential of social communication as a mean to disseminate knowledge, increase and personalise the appeal of the offer and generate new mechanisms of interaction and dialogue (López *et al.*, 2010; Schweibenz, 2010). It allows to answer the following research question: "How can a museum set and monitor an effective communication strategy via social web communication?"

Secondary questions that derive from this are: "What are the elements around which on line brand identity and on line brand image are formed?"; "What is the level of convergence between the message being communicated (identity) and the message perceived by the users (image)?"

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Social Media and Interactions between Brand and Users

Web 2.0 and its offshoots represent a "digital (r)evolution" (Macnamara, 2010) which facilitates the co-production of information and the enrichment of user experiences, enabling the extension of real social networks into virtual environments (Vrontis *et al.*, 2015). This is not a technological change but a new way of approaching users (O'Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 is the place where the latter meet, publish material, create links and relations, discuss topics of common interest and express their opinion regarding new developments. Indeed, its main strength is user-generated content (UGC), i.e. content generated directly by the users themselves, the fruit of a participatory approach to the web (Berthon *et al.*, 2012) that today influences conversations and choices (Smith, 2009). The main contribution of social networks is thus to enable participants to play the roles of co-creator, commentator and author (Kotler *et al.*, 2010; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The users become creators of content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Muñiz and Schau, 2011), they are no longer passive (Li and Bernhoff, 2008), they influence each other and they are much more motivated to share their experience (Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold, 2010).

Thus, social media-driven brand management becomes an additional strategy that is characterised by monitoring and identifying relevant

conversations, based on the active participation and involvement of users as the determiners of choice (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). In other words, it means adopting the vision of Convergence Culture (Jenkins, 2006) and recognising that visitors are losing their traditional role and becoming users of a technological tool by means of which they are part of a two-way relationship characterised by cooperation, participation and sharing of knowledge.

The managerial literature has long been aware of the importance of a) customer engagement, understood as the psychological state that is created as an effect of interactive content and the sharing of experiences with reference to a specific focus such as the brand (Ashley and Tuten, 2015); and b) consumer brand engagement, understood as the range of consumer behaviours towards a brand (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010), which go beyond the purchase in the narrow sense (Verhoef *et al.*, 2010), giving rise to a two-way relationship between consumer and brand/product characterised by different levels of involvement (Spratt *et al.*, 2009). Thus, managerial studies have tended to focus on certain aspects such as community engagement, i.e. a structured set of relationships that are created between subjects interested in a brand, who share their motivation for interacting and cooperating with the other members of the community. The virtual brand communities influence the perception and the actions of their members (Muñiz and Schau, 2007), rapidly disseminating the information (Brown *et al.*, 2003), generating affinities between members (De Valck *et al.*, 2009) and feelings of empowerment among consumers. At the same time, they can strengthen the brand if companies manage to encourage interaction between members (Schau *et al.*, 2009) and generate a multidimensional approach to the brand involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions (Bowden, 2009; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek, 2011; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Such effects are stimulated by user-generated content (UGC) (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012), which is focused on consumer choice (Daugherty *et al.*, 2008). The motives behind UGC include self-promotion, intrinsic enjoyment, and a desire to change public perceptions (Berthon *et al.*, 2008). Since consumers perceive such content as reliable (Christodoulides, 2012) and users adopt it and use it as a marketing tool (Muñiz and Schau, 2007), UGC has important practical implications for companies' communication processes. Companies therefore need to know all about it, analyse it and even create more of it themselves, pooling the ideas of engaged consumers. Furthermore, UGC contributes to the explosion of another key factor for communication: Word-of-Mouth (WOM). WOM's high power of persuasion (Buttle, 1998; Herr *et al.*, 1991), which is greater than that of traditional communication tools, derives from the fact that consumers consider it to be an objective source of information, generally seen to be credible and reliable, since it serves to "amplify" the experiences of real individuals, who willingly transmit them to other subjects (Adjei *et al.*, 2010). WOM thus has a significant impact on the assessment of the brand (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Laczniak *et al.*, 2001). What has been set out, thus, leads far to a new perspective on communication which involves prompting or encouraging consumers to generate content in support of the brand. Indeed, a more

participatory and interactive form of cooperation with the consumer creates powerful brand associations (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012), thereby establishing and improving consumer loyalty (Vivek *et al.*, 2012).

The authenticity of the relationship between consumer and brand that is generated in a virtual brand community is in fact an important part of the construction and maintenance of that brand's success, because it helps to form a unique identity and provides the pre-conditions for the creation of an image (Gundlach and Neville, 2012). Identity is that unique set of associations that the company seeks to create or maintain, which represent what the brand desires to be for its customers, implying a promise to them (Aaker, 1996). In contrast, image represents the perception of the elements associated with the brand and the value and the meaning assigned to them (Keller, 2003). Today, these components - brand identity and brand image - meet and interact on the web (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). It is necessary therefore to create and monitor frequent and active feedback between consumers and brand (Keller, 2009), since the nature and quality of this feedback determines the company's ability to activate communication that will maintain convergence between the identity transmitted and the image perceived (Nandan, 2005). Indeed, reducing the gap between identity and image sustains the mental process by which, over time, the consumer identifies, remembers and recognises the brand (*brand awareness*).

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A framework for analysing  
convergence between online  
brand identity and online  
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The case of the British  
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## 2.2 Identity, image and cultural organization

Museums have been traditionally seen as authoritative and authentic providers of knowledge. By means of various activities - exhibitions, public programs, outreach and education - they provide interactive cultural experiences that enable the individual to interpret history and science (Thomas and Mintz, 1998). These interactions are the result of the convergence of various disciplines, all serving to put the individual in a position where they can create and visualise content within an authoritative cultural environment, without neglecting the need to share individual and collective experience.

Adopting the experiential approach of Pine and Gilmore (1999), studies of visitors - such as *The engaging museum* (Black, 2005) and *The Responsive Museum* (Lang *et al.*, 2006) - have long been aware that the mission of museums is evolving. The involvement of the public in processes of learning and discovery is no longer simply tied to the collection in the narrow sense, but to the overall environment and to their *interaction* with the collection.

Indeed, museums now need to provide multiple experiences: aesthetic and emotional, celebratory and educational, recreational and social (Kotler *et al.*, 2008).

In an effort to involve the community and the public, increase the participation of stakeholders and disseminate knowledge, museums have created constructive relationships with users by means of digital technologies (Bowen *et al.*, 2008; Parry, 2010). The adoption of these technologies has not only generated involvement, but has also innovated the process of creation of cultural value. This is because it has accentuated

cooperation in the creation of culture; it has developed experimentation and promotion of works of art; and it has broadened the user base, involving stakeholders of various kinds. All this has enhanced the cultural value of museums to the point that they now boast content of an evocative type, appealing to both individual and collective memory, linked to specific historical moments or places (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2011). Thus, the creation of value in cultural organisations, and museums in particular, is not a simple economic transaction but is associated mainly with the experience of the users. The primary challenge therefore is to recognise the motivation of the users in order to be able to co-create experience (Leinhardt *et al.*, 2003; White *et al.*, 2009) and encourage participation by users on an educational and creative level. This will increase and personalise the appeal of the cultural products and services on offer, thereby activating new mechanisms of interaction and dialogue (Taheri and Jafari, 2012; Vom Lehn and Heath, 2005).

Social media represent a way to invite the public to participate in the creation of culture. Users' questions and comments - even unusual ones - can provide the starting point for new dialogues between users and institutions. In addition, they make it possible to contextualise the visit within a process of learning. The interactions of visitors with the objects of learning are then re-contextualised in turn within the network (think of tweets for example), thereby generating a participatory culture (Jenkins *et al.*, 2009).

Opening up a participatory and modular dialogue with users, transforms the museum into a Participatory Museum (Simon, 2010), i.e. a platform that brings together the various subjects involved (creators, distributors, consumers, critics and collaborators) via personal user-generated content (UGC) and favours the cooperative creation of cultural value. The museum thereby transforms itself into a place, be it physical or virtual, where knowledge is being generated as well as being transmitted.

Whatever perspective is adopted, the common focus is that participatory communication is the driver for the co-production of museum value, which is in turn a fundamental precondition for enabling cultural institutions to disseminate their heritage beyond geographical boundaries, creating an identity that is shared not only with the actual visitors but also with potential ones (Rahaman and Tan, 2011; Slater and Armstrong, 2010).

The two-directional participation and communication, made possible by the relational component that characterises Web 2.0 environments, therefore enables museums to activate a process of modernisation in which they become a social, dynamic, multi-vocal and participatory place (Simon, 2010). Their functions of conservation, safeguard, communication and enabling public access are served in new ways. They can, thus, create a brand that is not only a sterile symbol, but also a tool with which to evoke emotions and a sense of belonging and participation. The social approach allows museums to connect with the experiences, memories and opinions that the visitors bring with them (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Numerous theoretical and practical studies have shown the tendency of museums to make use of digital technologies to involve visitors and communities

(Cameron and Kenderdine, 2007; Parry, 2010). The challenge then is for the museum to acquire awareness of its identity, of what makes it unique: its history, values, content, mission and how it is seen in the world. It also becomes necessary to consistently and effectively communicate the above-mentioned elements and monitor users' perceptions of them in order to activate a process of enrichment of its identity.

Monica Fait  
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A framework for analysing  
convergence between online  
brand identity and online  
brand image.  
The case of the British  
Museum

### 3. Hypothesis, framework and methodology

According with the above-mentioned literature, this paper focuses on identity-image linkage and tries to monitor the convergence between the message channelled by the brand and the message perceived by the users. The empirical experimentation was conducted by the case study technique centred on the British Museum (BM) in order to observe the identity that is transmitted by the BM and the image perceived by web users.

Hence, we hypothesised the following:

*H1: if there is homogeneity between the topics used for communicating the museum's brand identity and the elements associated with the brand by the users (image), then the notoriety of the museum brand is high.*

*H2: the effectiveness of web communication activities depends on the convergence between identity and image with reference to the cognitive, experiential and emotional dimensions of the users' perceptive process.*

#### 3.1 The framework

The paper is based on a framework created by the authors -called Analysing Web Convergence (AWC) (Fait *et al.*, 2015; Scorrano *et al.*, 2015)-, based on the following approaches set out in the managerial literature:

Phases	Theoretical background
Identification and interpretation of information	Question answering (Cooper and Ruger, 2000; Kwok <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Voorhees, 1999)
Processing of extracted data	<i>Content Analysis</i> (Berelson, 1952; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Kerlinger, 1986; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990;) and <i>Text Mining</i> (Bolasco, 1997; Feldman and Sanger, 2007)
Interpretation and analysis	Dimensions (functional, holistic and experiential) recognised by the managerial literature as forms, elements or characteristics of the basis of the perceptive process (Aaker, 1997; Mowen, 1995; Keller, 1993; Peter and Olson, 1996; Solomon, 2004).

The approach envisages two operational dimensions:

*Pre-processing*; this is a preliminary phase before the extraction of the data and is designed to identify three variables (Scorrano and Fait, 2015): *What?*, identifying the object of the investigation and any related sub-categories that can better qualify it from a semantic point of view (brand name, services, product, etc.); *Who?*, identifying the types of subject for which the information must be extrapolated (tourist, blogger, fan, tour

operator, consumer, etc.); *Where?*, providing greater detail on the two spatial dimensions, which are: 1) of a geographical nature, designed to segment the information on the basis of the depth to which the phenomenon must be analysed; and 2) of a virtual nature, which involves identifying non-structured sources on the basis of which to conduct research.

*Processing*: in this phase, data collection is subject to text mining which underpins the Content Analysis method. Content Analysis is a research technique for the systematic and quantitative description of the content of communication (Berelson, 1952) and for the measurement of specific variables (Kerlinger, 1986). If the focus is on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text, then qualitative content analysis is particularly suitable (Babbie, 1992). The aim of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992), and to classify large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories with similar meanings (Weber, 1990). The output obtained is then interpreted with reference to three questions: *How? Why? and When?*, corresponding, in the interpretative process, to the three dimensions (functional, holistic and experiential) that make it possible to observe the qualitative significance of each word in the process of identity and image formation. *How?* refers to how users talk in the pre-identified non-structured sources. This phase coincides with the identification of the traditional core resources (the Functional Dimension) and therefore considers those lemmas that are representative of the intrinsic or extrinsic characteristics of a product, service or organisation (Grönroos, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). *Why?* refers to the reason why users talk. It represents the process of psychological abstraction that determines the perception of the elements that characterise the product, service or organisation (the Holistic Dimension) and makes it possible to interpret them in accordance with a systemic approach. It considers aspects of their utilitarian and functional value that coincide with lemmas expressing psychological attributes (Dillon *et al.*, 2001; Williams, 2002).

*When?* refers to when users talk. It identifies the process of abstraction that accompanies the assessment of a product, service or organisation (the Experiential Dimension). This category includes those words that express the pleasure and enjoyment associated with consumption and are the expression of its Symbolic and Experiential value (Kempf, 1999; Kim and Morris, 2007; Park and Kim, 2003). It is thus possible to observe the hedonistic and experiential value attributed to the product, service or organisation, which is not necessarily limited to the moment of consumption, but also includes the search for information.

### 3.2 Methodology

According to the framework, in the pre-processing step the British Museum (BM) was selected as a museum to analyse (What?). This phase was conducted in accordance with the case study approach (Gummesson, 2000; Yin, 2013) and an Information-Oriented Selection perspective, which makes it possible to maximise the usefulness of information from

small samples and single cases selected on the basis of expectations about their information content. The selected case is *paradigmatic*, suitable for validating the framework, since it makes it possible to explore a phenomenon by means of a specific context whose key elements can be considered, by analogy, to be relevant to the phenomenon in question (Eisenhardt, 1989; Siggelkow, 2007). While recognising the limits of this method, whose results cannot be generalised, it can still be considered suitable for generating a qualitative information flow that serves to enhance learning (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and test the created framework.

The BM aims to be “*A museum of the world, for the world*”, enabling its visitors to “*Discover over two million years of human history and culture*” (BM Facebook page, 2015), and it seeks to fulfil this mission by means of social media tools and platforms. According to the BM’s strategy document, Towards 2020:

*The familiar architecture of knowledge has dissolved. The Museum needs to rethink completely how it transmits information about the collection, and how it engages its visitors with the objects. New technology allows new ways of visiting the galleries: stories and images, enquiries and interactions, individual and group explorations all need to be crafted and promoted. And those who can never visit may now be enabled to experience, learn and enjoy.* (British Museum, 2015).

The BM is currently one of the most visited tourist attractions in the world with 6.7 million visitors a year (The Art Newspaper- Special Report, 2014; British Museum, 2014), and the number of online visits has seen rapid growth. In a year up to 31 March 2014, traffic on the main BM website increased to 20.5 million visits, with a total of 35.3 million across all BM websites. Videos on the website and YouTube amassed 1.5 million views and the number of followers on Facebook rose to half a million.

The centrepiece of the BM’s website is the online presentation of its collection. Other examples of the Marketing department’s use of social media to offer access to digital content, communicate ideas, and encourage and facilitate discussion include special exhibitions and the opportunity for visitors to communicate their experience through reviews, images and video. The BM has made this possible by integrating the most important social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, Youtube) into its website and its blog, which has a good ranking. The blog was ranked by extracting the first 20 pages generated by Google.com for the search query “museum blogs”. The blogs detected were then subjected to the web metrics tests proposed by Alexa (Actionable Analytics for the Web - [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com)), which use a classification system based on a website’s traffic, popularity and engagement.

The analysis was performed on the BM and the users of the BM’s Facebook page (Who?). Regarding the sources (Where?), reference was made to: i) the BM’s website and blog; and ii) the review section of the museum’s Facebook page, which represent the zones - social community and social publishing- of social media marketing (Tuten and Solomon, 2014) most used by the BM.

Then, the processing step was conducted. The text corpus was obtained by considering everything published on the BM’s website and FB page in

the month of April 2015 and was analysed using T-LAB (Lancia, 2012) a content analysis, visualisation, and mapping software package mainly used for word occurrence and co-word mapping. With the text corpus as input, T-LAB converts each word into a lemma (or lexical root) and makes distinctions between various grammatical categories such as verb, noun, and adjective with reference to an English dictionary. In this way two datasets were obtained (see Table 1):

*Tab. 1: T-LAB data for the BM website and Facebook posts*

	BM Website	Facebook posts
Text corpus	1	1
Elementary contexts	959	518
Forms	7,449	3,328
Lemmas	5,720	2,796
Occurrences	46,926	16,970
Keyword threshold	7	4

Source: our elaboration

T-lab is an appropriate tool for communication studies because it allows analysis of keyword frequency and co-occurrence, this information being essential for understanding a phenomenon's conceptual framework.

This study adopts a summative approach to qualitative content analysis (Babbie, 1992; Morse and Field, 1995), which starts by identifying and quantifying certain words or content-as-text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content. The main keywords were identified by means of co-occurrence analysis. These were then statistically analysed in accordance with the Co-word procedure in order to detect groups of words that were representative of the museum's core communication (online identity) and core perception (online image). In other words, the aim was to determine whether the degree of communicational homogeneity in each corpus was sufficient to generate groups of words that represent specific themes of online identity and online image. The summative approach to qualitative content analysis goes beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis and interpretation (Holsti, 1969). Specifically, the level of convergence between the museum's online identity and online image was verified by comparison of the themes identified by the three questions: How? Why? and When?, corresponding, in the interpretative process, to the three dimensions - functional, holistic and experiential.

The co-occurrence analysis identified 767 keywords for the BM website and 379 keywords for the reviews on Facebook (FB). The keywords detected in both contexts were subjected to hierarchical clusterisation (Co-word analysis). The Co-word analysis is an elaboration of the co-occurrence by creating a table of m rows and n columns in which the first are the lexical units (UL) - individual words in the corpus- the second are units textual (UT) - sentences or parts of them included in the corpus (web site, post Facebook). In this way, it was possible to identify mini-clusters, represented

graphically by a similarity matrix created by the Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) method (see Figures 1 and 2). In the similarity matrix are reported proximity values (dissimilarity) derived from the calculation of an index association (coseno). This, in turn, makes it possible to represent relations between data within a small space. Both maps were sufficiently significant, with stress values of 0.14 and 0.13 respectively ( $0 < \text{stress values} < 1$ ); if the value of stress is close to 0, the greater the goodness of fit (De Lillo, 2007; Lancia, 2012). The diameter of the terms reflects the probability that they will appear; the colours (quadrants) represent the division into themes of the most frequently discussed topics. Every mini-cluster created and named by T-Lab consists of groups of words related to each other. Observation of the words that generate the mini-clusters, thus, made it possible to identify four main thematic areas for each of the two contexts, to which explanatory names were given by us.

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A framework for analysing  
convergence between online  
brand identity and online  
brand image.  
The case of the British  
Museum

#### 4. Results

The four thematic areas for the BM website and blog (see Fig. 1) are:

*Aim and Organisation*, characterised by the presence of mini-clusters made up of words explaining the museum's mission (Museum, Aim, Bring); organisational and planning aspects (Department, Project, Digital, Future, Audience); and the aesthetic value of the places (Great, Place).

*Prospects*. The mini-clusters that characterise this quadrant are explanatory of the museum's development objectives, mainly concerning its role as a manager of events and exhibitions (Exhibition, Research, Record, Work) and a driver of learning (Need, Develop, Study, Story).

*Art and Collections*, so called because the mini-clusters concern the various collections on display (Assyrian, Century, donate, Egyptian, Greek, Head, Human, King, Modern coin, Write, Country, Year).

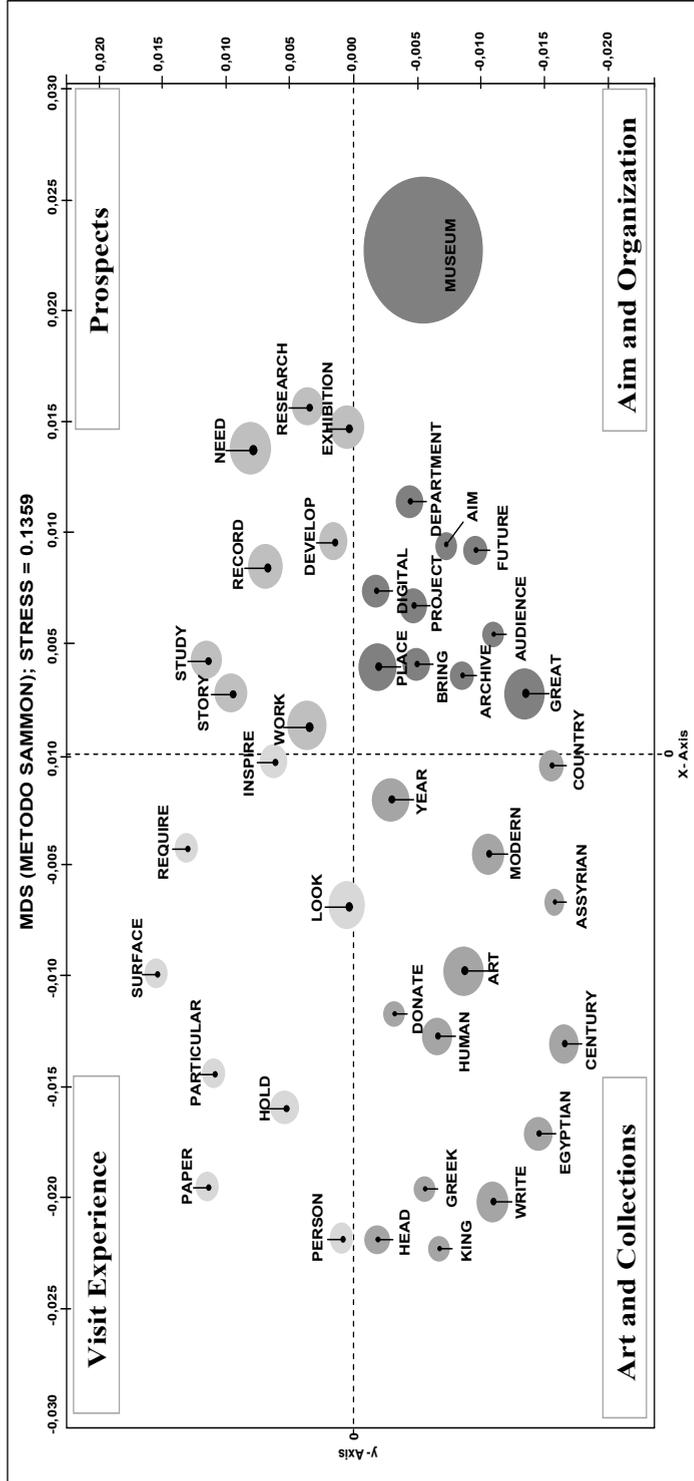
*Visit Experience*. The mini-clusters comprising this theme refer to the moment of the visit and the emotions it stirs (Inspire, Require, Look, Surface, Hold, Person, Paper).

The thematic areas (see Fig. 2) extracted from the Facebook reviews have the same names as those of the previous context but differ in terms of their composition:

*Aim and Organisation*, characterised by the presence of a dominant mini-cluster indicative of the BM's historical, artistic and international mission (Museum) and others that are associated with the most important collections (Marble, China, Civilization, Elgin) and the Museum's function as the custodian of culture (Time, object, Great, BM).

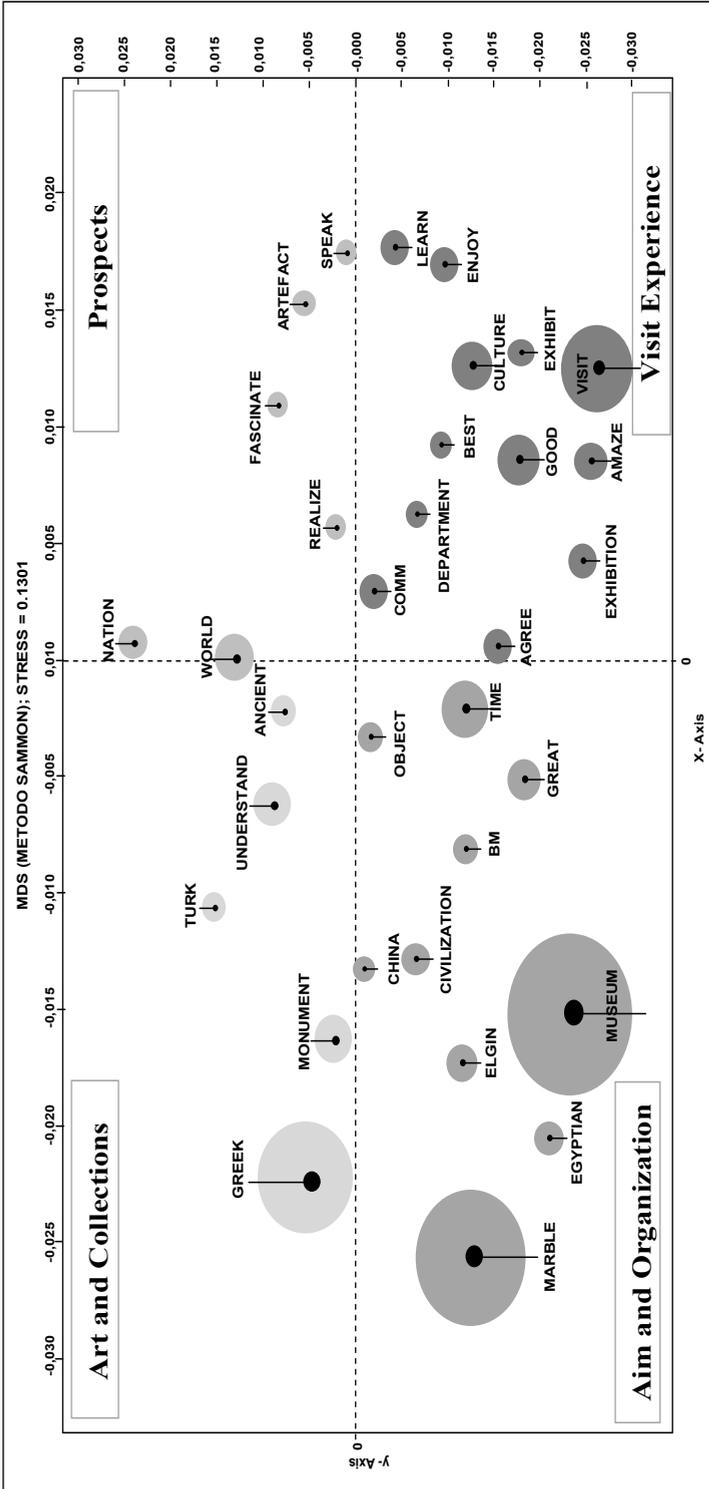
*Art and Collections*. The main mini-cluster in this quadrant seems to highlight the collection's importance to our knowledge of Greek civilisation (Greek). This view is strengthened by the remaining mini-clusters, which highlight the storytelling role of the collections (Monument), and reaffirm the collections' importance as a driver of the learning of history (Understand).

Fig. 1: MDS map for the BM website and blog



Source: our elaboration

Fig. 2: MDS map for the Facebook reviews



Source: our elaboration

Monica Fait  
 Paola Scorrano  
 Amedeo Maizza  
 Alkis Thrassou  
 A framework for analysing  
 convergence between online  
 brand identity and online  
 brand image.  
 The case of the British  
 Museum

*Visit Experience*, composed of mini-clusters that highlight the pleasure of the visit (Visit, Amaze, Exhibit, Enjoy, Good) and the pleasure of discovering something new (Agree, Comment, Best, Culture, Learn, Star).

*Prospects*. This macro-theme is the least important since the mini-clusters are small, limited in number and do not have a specific collocation. They seem to evoke the museum's role as a driver of learning (Artefact, Fascinate, Nation).

The analysis reveals that for the British Museum, which is acknowledged to enjoy high brand notoriety, there is indeed homogeneity between the topics used for communicating the museum's brand identity and the elements associated with the brand by the users (H1).

The methodology chosen (the summative approach to qualitative content analysis) includes latent content analysis and interpretation. Therefore, in order to clarify the nature of the convergence between online brand identity and online brand image (H2) and to analyse the effectiveness of the museum's web communication activities, further analysis was conducted by means of the AWC model. The adoption of the three questions - How? (Functional Dimension), Why? (Holistic Dimension), When? (Experiential Dimension) - that characterise the proposed framework enabled qualitative gap analysis within each theme.

Observing the internal composition of the Aim and Organisation theme (see Table 2), it appears that the identity and image approaches are slightly different.

Tab. 2: Aim and Organisation

	Online identity	Online image
	BM website	BM Facebook reviews
<i>Functional dimension (How?)</i>	<i>Museum</i> (collection; culture; world; history; explore; object) <i>Department</i> (accessible; library; fund; catalogue; publication; curator) <i>Aim</i> (achieve; priority; partnership; engagement; expand) <i>Bring</i> (preserve; potential; style; expert; scientific; high; standard)	<i>Museum</i> (art; country; history) <i>Marble</i> (Greece; sculpture; Parthenon; return) <i>China</i> (Ching; Empire; Hong Kong) <i>Civilization</i> (Ottoman; respect; money; stole), <i>Elgin</i> (decorate; house; Lord)
<i>Holistic dimension (Why?)</i>	<i>Future</i> (adopt; constantly; generation; staff) <i>Audience</i> (worldwide; diverse; economy; global) <i>Project</i> (attempt; international; national; facilitate; piece; successful) <i>Digital</i> (technology; medium; main; excite; move)	<i>Time</i> (heritage; look; original; nice) <i>Object</i> (historical; opinion) <i>Great</i> (feel; stone; heart; man) <i>BM</i> (big, cultural; happy)
<i>Experiential dimension (When?)</i>	<i>Great</i> (allow; wonderful; Empire; create; highly; relevant; today) <i>Place</i> (event; experience; increasingly; ways; physical; remain; ritual; sacred)	

Source: our elaboration

In the Prospects theme (see Table 3), the gap is more evident.

Tab. 3: Prospects

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 Paola Scorrano  
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 convergence between online  
 brand identity and online  
 brand image.  
 The case of the British  
 Museum

	<i>Online identity</i>	<i>Online image</i>
	<i>BM website</i>	<i>BM Facebook reviews</i>
<i>Functional dimension (How?)</i>	<i>Exhibition</i> (access; galleries; improve; loan; permanent; centre; conservation) <i>Research</i> (benefit; deliver; care; help; support) <i>Record</i> (complete; original; model; information; database; on-line; resource) <i>Work</i> (artist; studio; worker; close; influence; side; view)	
<i>Holistic dimension (Why?)</i>	<i>Need</i> (visitor; public; space; Buildings; plan; development; seek) <i>Develop</i> (all over; skill; challenge; House; course; learning; vital) <i>Study</i> (artefact; currently; major; Iraq; Southern; memory; share) <i>Story</i> (continue; hope; material; visual; impact; rise; tell)	
<i>Experiential dimension (When?)</i>		<i>Artefact</i> (exchange; wait; truth; write) <i>Fascinate</i> (human; bet; hey; life) <i>Nation</i> (century; land; existence; waste; policy; antiquity; stay)

Source: our elaboration

The functional dimension has a different value: from the museum's point of view, the words highlight a focus on the intrinsic elements of the organisation. In contrast, the FB users notice the BM's historical and artistic mission and international aspects, focusing on its most important collections. The museum's holistic dimension is projected towards a futuristic vision of its mission that highlights the global reach of its activities in terms of planning, digital technology and other aspects. In contrast, the users limit themselves to stressing the museum's cultural importance. In addition, for the museum, the experiential dimension is a consequence of the organisational factor and the spaces used to host events. However, the users do not attach as much importance to these factors.

Indeed, the museum tends to communicate its future plans both from an organisational-functional point of view, highlighting research areas and exhibitions, and in a holistic sense, emphasising its role as a driver of learning and cultural development. Users on the other hand show little interest in the museum's future projects. Indeed, the mini-clusters are modest in both size and number and they have no specific link to the holistic and functional dimensions. The most interesting mini-clusters are those that stress the museum's experiential value. What the user seems to expect is to experience the fascination of the ancient, of the evolution of human life as narrated by the exhibits.

The greatest convergence is seen in the Art and Collections theme (see Table 4).

Tab. 4: Art and collections

	Online identity	Online image
	BM website	BM Facebook reviews
Functional dimension (How?)	<p><i>Assyrian</i> (relief; court; palace)</p> <p><i>Century</i> (kingdom; powerful; Egypt; Sudan)</p> <p><i>Donate</i> (dynasty; pass; Iran; reign)</p> <p><i>Egyptian</i> (leave; tea completely; decipher; scholar; hieroglyph; knowledge)</p> <p><i>Greek</i> (lose, body; nudity; citizen; female; male, copy)</p> <p><i>Head</i> (send; Imperial; portrait; Meroë; Roman)</p> <p><i>Human</i> (civilization; complex; order; power; quality)</p> <p><i>King</i> (associate; symbolize; defeat; creature; dragon)</p> <p><i>Modern coin</i> (medal; modern; individual; mark; link; separate)</p> <p><i>Write</i> (discover; name; recognize; glyphs; word; script; read; system)</p>	<p><i>Greek</i> (call; name; know; people; dream; lie)</p> <p><i>Ancient</i> (Armenia; Turkey)</p> <p><i>Turk</i> (Asia; sure; Region)</p>
Holistic dimension (Why?)	<p><i>Country</i> (cultural; economic; Social; spend; transform)</p> <p><i>Year</i> (archaeologist; difficult; exist; set; feel; raise)</p>	<p><i>Monument</i> (civilization; continue; picture; important; story; tell)</p>
Experiential dimension (When?)		<p><i>Understand</i> (dear; mind; remember; wish)</p>

Source: our elaboration

In both contexts, the focus is on the collections on display in the museum, with particular importance assigned by users to the Greek civilisation. It is also interesting to observe that the museum (in the process of communication) and the users (in the process of perception) have a similarly holistic view of the collections, made explicit via references to the value of the civilisations in terms of culture, discovery and memory. The users assign experiential importance to this function due to the ability of the collections to make them reflect on their own memories and knowledge.

Considering the words that make up the mini-clusters of the Visit Experience theme (see Table 5), it will be observed that many terms referring to the pleasure of the visit are equally present in both the communicative and perceptive phases.

The museum seeks to entertain and to please the visitors, as well as stimulate their imagination by means of attention to details and places. This view is shared by the users, who assign particular importance to the pleasure of being physically present in the museum and discovering something new.

It is therefore possible to observe the presence of latent differences between the message communicated and the message perceived. Without doubt, the notoriety of the BM's brand is linked to the recognisability of its historical and artistic mission and the museum's international profile. In addition, considering the information on the Art and Collections and Aim and Organisation themes, it is clear that the Museum's online presentation strategy for its collections is effective, since they tend to be recognisable for

users. In contrast, there is a gap in the experiential dimension. Observing this dimension within each of the four themes, it is seen that the museum tends to give particular importance to the experiential aspect in the moment of the visit or at any rate in the narration of the visit (the vision of the museum and the users' associative nodes tend to be similar). In contrast, it neglects the experiential value when it communicates its future plans (Prospects) and presents its collections (Art and Collections).

Tab. 5: Visit Experience

	Online identity	Online image
	BM website	BM Facebook reviews
Functional dimension (How?)		
Holistic dimension (Why?)		
Experiential dimension (When?)	<i>Inspire</i> (approach; exile; souvenir; carry_out; simple; enjoy; wonder) <i>Require</i> (easy; item; imagine; method) <i>Look</i> (detail; reveal; scan; die; enable; long; period) <i>Surface</i> (crack; fine; learn) <i>Hold</i> (alongside; boy; dead; consider; creation; delicate, food; stay) <i>Person</i> (gather; party; popular; subject; version) <i>Paper</i> (apply; repair; Silk; carefully; edge).	<i>Visit</i> (collection; spend; Day; London; Love; place) <i>Amaze</i> (huge; area; worth; interest; lot) <i>Exhibit</i> (afternoon; appreciate; wonderful; pretty) <i>Enjoy</i> (able_to; mix; live) <i>Good</i> (compare; half; hand; thy; need; read; video) <i>Agree</i> (idea; beautiful; full; care; precious) <i>Comment</i> (earth; discover; perfect) <i>Best</i> (awesome, different) <i>Culture</i> (African; experience; India; today; long; bear; unique) <i>Learn</i> (display; fur; fantastic mistake) <i>Star</i> (Egyptian; Europe).

Source: our elaboration

## 5. Conclusion

The proposed operative framework crosses the exploratory level that analyzes the importance that communication changes have in the creation and maintenance of the identity-image linkage. It represents a framework for the brand tracking - as monitoring of the information collected at different time-intervals - aimed at observing the firm's ability to generate affinity and feeling between brands and users. Furthermore, the framework is based not only on the traditional functional dimension but especially on the holistic and experiential dimensions of the brand.

Despite its limitations, mainly linked to the interpretative phase, empirical testing of the framework has shown that the BM's communication and the users' perception share four thematic areas: Aim and Organisation, Prospects, Art and Collections and Visit Experience. Both perspectives focus on recognition of the BM's historical and artistic role and its international profile (Aim and Organisation) and on the recognisability

of its collections (Art and Collections), and conclude with the experience of the visit. In other words, the homogeneity between the topics used for communicating identity and the associative nodes of the user (image) is an indicator of brand awareness (H1).

The museum's social web communication was oriented towards the "balanced" generation of culture, i.e. it sought to avoid generating cognitive dissonance among visitors (including virtual visitors) to a museum. The framework's interpretative phase made it possible to observe that the effectiveness of such communication does not depend on the apparent homogeneity of the themes but on the convergence between identity and image with reference to three qualitative dimensions – Functional, Holistic and Experiential (H2). While convergence exists regarding the traditional educational role and the creation and dissemination of knowledge, as indicated by the functional and holistic dimensions of both the Aim and Organization and Art and Collections themes, a qualitative gap is present in the experiential dimension. Indeed, observing this dimension within the four themes, it is seen that the museum tends to give particular importance to the experiential aspect in the moment of the visit or at any rate in the narration of the visit (the vision of the museum and the users' associative nodes tend to be similar). In contrast, unlike the users, it neglects the experiential value when it communicates its future plans (Prospects) and presents its collections (Art and Collections). Indeed, users are keen to share the experience with other subjects even when they have not yet visited the museum themselves. Identifying new areas of interaction and dialogue is the key to personalising the appeal of the cultural offerings and creating effective and efficient action plans designed to increase awareness of the museum.

The findings suggest that the operative framework proposed is appropriate, in a relationship context as the Web 2.0, to know the qualitative gap between on line identity and on line image and to build a strong and recognizable brand over time since it creates a semantic and aesthetic systems consistent with the culture of the core target audience for the generation of sensory and cognitive categories.

## **6. Managerial implication and limitations**

The literature has more often paid separately attention to the construction of brand identity and brand image, to the effect that each one, has singularly on the consumer's purchasing behaviour (Keller, 1993; Cretu and Brodie, 2007) or on building brand equity (Faircloth *et al.*, 2001; Madhavaram *et al.*, 2005; Wheeler, 2013).

Instead, assuming as relevant the link between identity and image (De Chernatony, 1999; Nandan, 2005), from a theoretical point of view, the paper contributes to enhance its importance with the aim to decrease the distance between these two factors. The assumption is that the convergence on the web between the two dimensions is an expression of a positive customer-based brand equity because it is synonymous of a familiarity with the brand not only with consumers, but also with the user

who may become such. The framework's originality lies in the possibility of extraction and analysis of non-structured information which, if interpreted from the perspective of convergence between identity and image, can be transformed into knowledge useful for decision-making.

Knowing the level of convergence between on line brand identity and on line brand image makes it possible to assess more accurately a) the multiplying effect of brand awareness and appeal; b) the sensory, emotional and cognitive perception of the brand; c) the level of user interactivity with respect to the strategies adopted; d) the suitability of creating targeted forms of promotional communication.

While providing knowledge, useful for setting future branding strategies, the framework is limited by its purely qualitative approach. Its evolution should therefore involve the construction of indices that enable a quantitative analysis of the intensity and richness of the interaction. Despite the subjectivity of the framework, its interpretative phase represents a self-diagnosis of one's web communication via an analysis of the differences between the various dimensions of core communication (identity) and core perception (image). This makes it possible to observe and monitor the areas of interaction between brand and users, the interest of users in specific key themes and the capacity of the organisation to activate the three strategic dimensions (Functional, Holistic and Experiential) via the Web.

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A framework for analysing  
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The case of the British  
Museum

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A framework for analysing convergence between online brand identity and online brand image.  
The case of the British Museum

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