

Model: Brand Reputation Grid

Type of model: Brand model (structure model)
 Author(s): Rik Riezebos
 Domain: Internal branding

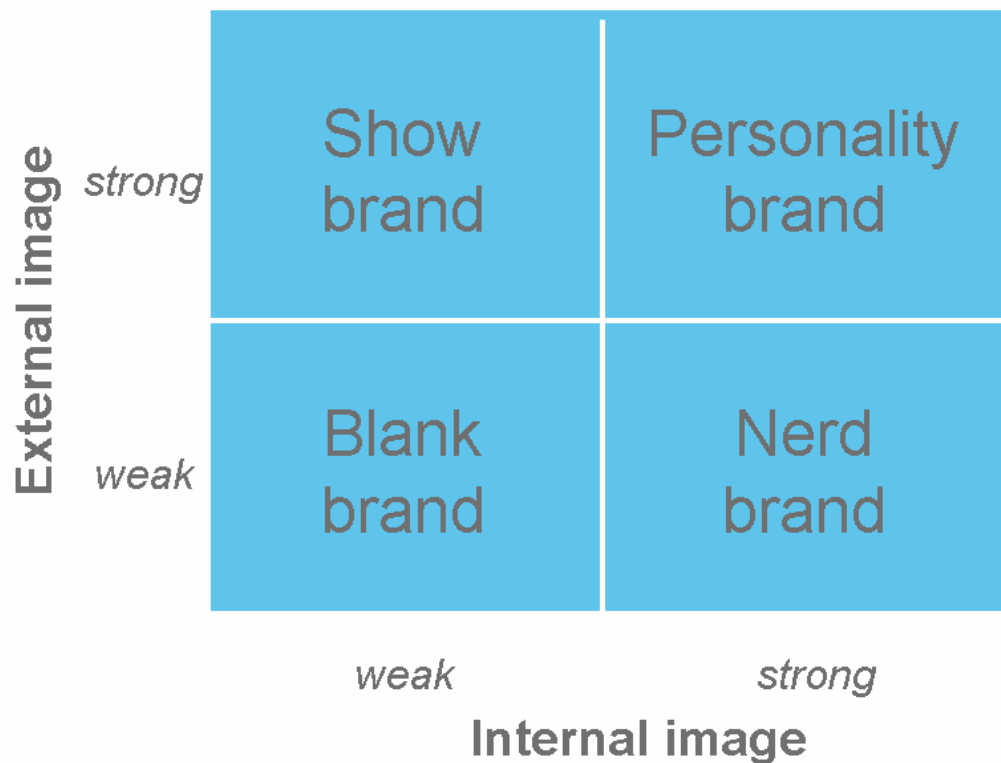


Figure 1: BRG/ Brand Reputation Grid according to Riezebos.

The BRG model distinguishes between a company’s reputation in the eyes of its own employees (i.e. the internal image) and in the eyes of the customers (i.e. the external image). And the BRG model subsequently designates two values per dimension: ‘weak’ and ‘strong’. The internal image, and the external image as well, can be either weak or strong. In case of a weak internal image, the company’s employees feel the company does not offer them what they should expect to receive (NB: this does not relate to employment terms, but rather to the role a company plays in the meaningfulness of the work and personal status and job satisfaction). A strong internal image comes to fore in the expression of external pride and commitment, and in the fact that employees identify with the values and standards of the company. One would initially be inclined to assume that the internal image of a company largely corresponds with the external image. However, in practice it often turns out that the internal image does not

match the external image at all; some companies have, for example, a strong external image, while their own employees have a less rosy image of the company. And there are also cases where the internal image of a company is far stronger than the external image. The BRG model depicts the four possible combinations of a weak and a strong internal and external image.

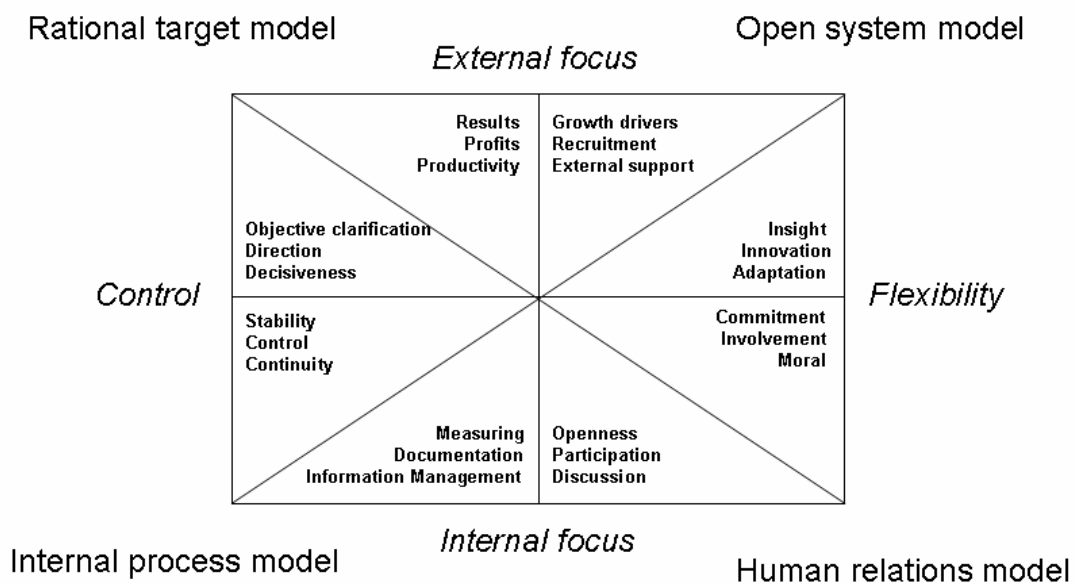
The Brand Reputation Grid discerns four types of corporate brands. In the top-right quadrant, we find organisations with both a strong internal and a strong external brand image. We are working on the basis that this quadrant represents the ideal for companies with a branding policy targeting maximum exploitation of their brand. Organisations within this quadrant have established a situation where the internal and the external image reinforce each other. In terms of brand personality, this type of brand is referred to as a *Personality Brand*. In the top-left quadrant, we find organisations with a strong external image, coupled with a weak internal image. In other words, the interior does not match the exterior, often causing the organisation to fail in delivering internally on the promises made externally. In terms of brand personality, such a brand is a *Show Brand*. In the bottom-right quadrant, the external brand image does not live up to the internal brand image. Such organisations often have a strong product-driven approach, whilst neglecting the customer side. Companies in this quadrant generally sell themselves short. In terms of brand personality, this is referred to as a *Nerd Brand*; companies delivering a high-quality product, but failing to adequately bring it to the attention of the external world. In the bottom-left quadrant, both the internal and the external image of an organisation are underdeveloped. Both customers and employees experience this kind of organisation as process-driven, paying little heed to market forces and their effects on the organisation's internal affairs. In terms of brand personality, we are dealing with a *Blank Brand* here.

There are three comments we have to make with the dimensions of the BRG. First: both dimensions are depicted with a dichotomy (weak vs. strong), while in reality they form a continuous scale. When working with matrices, we should not lose sight of the fact that reality cannot be captured in four clear-cut cells. But a matrix does serve to present an abstract picture of reality in a conceptual framework, helping us attain better understanding of reality. We should also note that when we manage to position an organisation in a matrix using measuring techniques, this will always be an 'as is' representation. Organisations can, with time, shift to another position in the matrix as the brand image changes. And we should finally also be mindful of the fact that an

organisation can actually occupy different positions within the matrix. Different departments or business units can, after all, present a different internal image.

The dimensions of the BRG relate to a number of other dimensions. Marketing literature makes a distinction between, for example, product-driven and market-driven companies (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Slater and Narver, 1995; Grewal and Tansuhaj 2001). Product-driven companies place the emphasis on the quality of the product they sell; such companies are also referred to as inside-out organisations. An inside-out orientation stresses the development of differentiating products and corresponding core competencies. Such organisations expect the market to conform to their product offering. An inside-out orientation is mainly encountered in combination with so-called *Nerd Brands*. Market-driven companies work on the basis of the idea that it is better to have a market than a mill. This kind of company generally puts a lot of time into market exploration, which is expressed in market research and benchmarking in relation to the competition. Market-driven companies have a so-called outside-in orientation; this type of company is mostly very well able to adapt its products and services to the market. The BRG picks up on this by showing the link between branding policy and strategic management, which becomes apparent in the model through the correlation with the product-driven and market-driven contrast (*Nerd* and *Show Brands* respectively).

Besides strategic management, the BRG can also be linked to human resources management (HRM). A widely used HRM model is Cameron and Quinn's Culture Model (1998). The figure below depicts this model in such a way that the dimensions correspond with the structure of the BRG.



Cameron & Quinn's Culture Model dovetails with the different types of corporate brands identified in the BRG. *Blank* and *Nerd Brands* have a predominantly internal orientation; this kind of organisation often struggles to present itself effectively to the external world. *Show* and *Personality Brands*, on the other hand, never struggle to raise their external profile. These observations echo one of the main dimensions of Cameron & Quinn's Culture Model: its vertical dimension is presented as the one offsetting the internal focus against the external focus. Internally, *Show* and *Blank Brands* mainly emphasize control and stability. In terms of management structure, this is reflected in the fact that this kind of organisation tends to be rather hierarchical. In the case of *Nerd* and *Personality Brands*, there is clearly less control and more flexibility. Within the realm of HRM, terms such as empowerment and entrepreneurial are widely used. Cameron and Quinn used this as their second dimension: stability vs. flexibility.

Reference(s)

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* : available in the EURIB library.