

Transformative Branding: A Dynamic Capability To Challenge The Dominant Social Paradigm

Amanda Spry, Lecturer in Marketing, School of Economics, Finance, and Marketing, RMIT University, 445 Swanston Street, 3000, Melbourne, Australia. Phone: +61 3 9925 5806, Email: amanda.spry@rmit.edu.au.

Bernardo Figueiredo, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, School of Economics, Finance, and Marketing, RMIT University, 445 Swanston Street, 3000, Melbourne, Australia. Phone: +61 3 9925 5866, Email: bernardo.figueiredo@rmit.edu.au.

Lauren Gurrieri, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, School of Economics, Finance, and Marketing, RMIT University, 445 Swanston Street, 3000, Melbourne, Australia. Phone: +61 3 9925 5419, Email: lauren.gurrieri@rmit.edu.au.

Joya A. Kemper, Lecturer in Marketing, The University of Auckland Business School, The University of Auckland, 12 Grafton Road, Auckland, New Zealand, 1010. Phone: +64 09 923 3412, Email: j.kemper@auckland.ac.nz.

Jessica Vredenburg, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, Faculty of Business, Economics, and Law, Auckland University of Technology, 120 Mayoral Drive, Auckland, New Zealand 1010. Phone: +64 09 921 9999 ext 5411, Email: jessica.vredenburg@aut.ac.nz.

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Abstract

In response to calls by macromarketing scholars, this article introduces transformative branding to demonstrate how branding—a process traditionally conceptualised at the firm level to achieve marketing management outcomes—can contribute to both market and societal systems. We define transformative branding as a dynamic capability deployed by firms as a prosocial process to facilitate stakeholder co-created brand meanings that draw on hybrid market and social logics. We contend that transformative branding encompasses two market-shaping activities, which drive macro-level change according to hybrid logics: (1) leadership i.e., building a vision for transformation and (2) collaborative coupling i.e., implementing transformation with stakeholders. Shaping the market and society in this way creates opportunities for transforming economic, regulatory, socio-cultural, and political environments, whereby transformative branding works to challenge the dominant social paradigm from within the market system. We conclude with a cautionary note about the potential of branding as a force for good.

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To date, ‘marketing has not embraced a worldview commensurate to its vanguard role in the social and economic well-being of nations’ ([Achrol and Kotler 2012](#), p. 44). Indeed, marketing remains rooted in the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP), namely the basic belief structures and practices of marketplace actors manifest in existing exchange structures ([Gollnhofer and Schouten 2017](#); [Kilbourne, McDonagh and Prothero 1997](#); [Mittelstaedt et al. 2014](#)). The DSP emphasises individual utility maximisation as the means of achieving the common good, in turn, fostering hyperconsumption that is complicit with socially unjust or exploitative practices ([Barnhart and Mish 2017](#)) and promoting economic growth that is achieved to the detriment of the environment ([Kilbourne, McDonagh and Prothero 1997](#)).

Challenges to the DSP have traditionally been enacted through alternative market arrangements that run counter to ([Kozinets and Handelman 2004](#); [Williams 2005](#)), parallel to ([Ertekin and Atik 2015](#); [Tencati and Zsolnai 2012](#)) or complement ([Gollnhofer and Schouten 2017](#)) the existing structures of the DSP. Yet, there is a discernible shift in expectations of corporations, from a view based on dominant market logics (driven by profit and self-interest) to one that incorporates social logics (driven by communal and civic values). This creates a hybrid set of logics in which corporations are becoming, and are expected to be, agents of social change ([Barton et al. 2018](#); [Edelman 2018](#)). This rhetoric has gained traction in the field of marketing, with scholars encouraged to ‘take the lead in bringing business and society back together’ ([Porter and Kramer 2011](#), p. 62). How can marketing play a role in challenging the DSP through more traditional market arrangements?

Branding has garnered attention when it comes to challenges and opportunities for marketing to more fully engage with its societal responsibilities. There is a growing conversation in macromarketing about branding's role in contemporary society, namely the need to incorporate pressing socio-environmental criteria ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#)). This corresponds with the evolving definition of a brand, from the managerial view where a brand's role is to label products and communicate features ([Low and Fullerton 1994](#)) to the macromarketing view where a brand is defined as a ‘semiotic marketing system’ and repository of diverse, co-created meanings ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#)). A spearhead for communicating, embodying, and orchestrating new market values ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#)), brands can influence and reflect societal values ([Berthon and Pitt 2018](#)) as well as sociocultural and political views ([Kravets 2012](#); [Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). Brands also have the capacity to address cultural anxieties and contradictions ([Holt 2004](#); [Kadirov and Varey 2011](#)), which may entail institutional change for social issues unrelated to direct business operations ([Kemper and Ballantine 2019](#); [Wettstein and Baur 2016](#)). Although brands may participate in efforts towards the betterment of society due to a perceived responsibility to do so ([Moorman 2020](#)), an understanding of *how* branding may orchestrate social change necessitates greater attention ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#)).

In this paper, we introduce *transformative branding* to highlight the potential of branding to facilitate positive market and societal system change towards challenging the DSP. We define transformative branding as a dynamic capability deployed by firms as a prosocial process to facilitate collaboration amongst stakeholders to co-create brand meanings that draw on hybrid market and social logics. We conceive that transformative branding works as a mechanism for market shaping, which refers to market transformation resulting from actors’ agentic and conscious efforts ([Nenonen, Fehrer, and Brodie 2021](#)). Specifically, transformative branding

shapes markets via two activities, namely (1) leadership, which entails building a vision for transformation and (2) collaborative coupling, which entails implementing transformation with stakeholders. By shaping the market in this way, avenues are created for transforming economic, regulatory, socio-cultural, and political environments across market and societal systems. These avenues comprise: supporting a new basis for exchange for the market system beyond profit maximisation, reorienting consumer culture away from hyperconsumption, using regulative power and influence to advance social and environmental justice, and engaging in brand activism to bolster involvement in socio-political issues. In turn, we contend that transformative branding works to challenge the DSP from *within* the market. As such, transformative branding is a dynamic capability that can be enacted by a variety of market agents, including those that promote, encourage, and action social change (e.g., social enterprises) as well as organisations that do not have social change as their main guiding purpose.

In conceiving transformative branding, we build on extant conversations in macromarketing that highlight the power and possibilities of marketing to contribute to transformative social change ([Varey 2010](#)). We offer three key contributions: first, we introduce transformative branding as a novel macromarketing concept to the literature on branding and social change; second, we demonstrate how this functions to shape markets and consequently challenge the DSP from within the market system; and finally, we advance theorisations of dynamic capabilities and market shaping beyond the firm level to drive both market and social change. Our work is one of the first to integrate dynamic capabilities and market shaping research with macromarketing, offering a robust theorisation for *how* purposive actions that originate with the brand can drive market and societal system change.

This article proceeds as follows: First, we present our theoretical approach leading to our problematisation and research aim. Second, we conceptualise transformative branding as a process that operates at three levels: as a dynamic capability that (I) facilitates collaboration amongst stakeholders to co-create brand meanings that draw on hybrid market and social logics; (II) shapes markets through the activities of leadership and collaborative coupling; and (III) challenges the DSP from within the market by transforming economic, socio-cultural, regulatory, and political environments. Finally, we highlight our contributions, offer directions for future research, and conclude with a cautionary note about the potential of branding as a force for good.

Theoretical Approach

In this section, we review the research streams that underpin our subsequent conceptualisation of transformative branding. First, the various concepts of transformation that exist in the marketing literature are summarised and differentiated from transformative branding. Then, the evolution of branding's conceptualisation in the macromarketing literature is mapped, followed by the emergence of hybrid logics. Subsequently, we arrive at our problematisation and research aim.

Concepts of Transformation in Marketing

It is important to clarify precisely what we mean by *transformative* branding and delineate it from existing concepts of transformation (see [Table 1](#)). Per [Lefebvre \(2012\)](#), we use the term 'transformative' to define breaking away from the past and focusing on changes in the social

and market system. Although transformation can lead to positive or negative outcomes, our aim is prosocial transformation, which denotes improvements in the quality of life of consumers and other actors in the market system. This aligns with the use of the term in *Transformative Consumer Research* (Mick, Pettigrew, and Pechmannetal 2012) and *Transformative Service Research* ([Anderson et al. 2013](#)), which are scholarly movements in marketing that seek to advance consumer welfare and quality of life of individuals, communities, and markets.

Table 1. Concepts of Transformation in Marketing.

Concepts	Definitions
Transformative Marketing (Kumar 2018, p. 2)	The confluence of a firm's marketing activities, concepts, metrics, strategies, and programs that are employed in response to marketplace changes and future trends to leapfrog customers with superior value offerings over competition in exchange for profits for the firm and benefits to all stakeholders.
Transformative Green Marketing (Polonsky 2011)	Highlights the need for marketers to seek new ways of calculating and communicating value, which integrates environmental value, changes the discourse regarding the environment (human–environment interface), and focuses on want satisfaction and shifting away from the acquisition of goods.
Transformative Social Marketing (Lefebvre 2012)	Stipulates a need for social marketing to co-create campaigns and support services with customers, participants, stakeholders, and partners, establish conversations, build relationships and work in the context of communities, and change the marketplace. Programs are informed by design thinking and service design and guided by the values of dignity, hope, love, and trust.
Transformative Branding (present paper)	A dynamic capability deployed by firms as a prosocial process to facilitate collaboration amongst stakeholders to co-create brand meanings that draw on hybrid market and social logics.

Considering related concepts, ‘transformative marketing’ ([Kumar 2018](#)) focuses on offering superior value and profit maximisation in response to marketplace changes, while ‘transformative green marketing’ ([Polonsky 2011](#)) communicates environmental value, changes human-nature discourse, and questions product ownership for ecological benefit. The ‘transformative social marketing’ model ([Lefebvre 2012](#)), mostly enacted by non-market actors, advocates for social marketers to co-create behaviour change campaigns, establish conversations, build community relationships, and change the marketplace. Transformative branding shares the focus of these concepts on valuing the environment and society as important stakeholders, utilising co-creation, and changing the marketplace. Yet, as delineated subsequently, it extends this collection of concepts by addressing the ‘how’ of bringing about betterment in these domains, by suggesting ways this can be enacted by branding to shape markets towards challenging the DSP.

Evolution of Branding in the Macromarketing Literature

Originally, the marketing literature set forth a firm-centric dyadic view of branding, in which firms control and own brand identity and stakeholders passively receive marketing messages ([Keller and Lehmann 2006](#)). This literature is, moreover, replete with evidence of the ‘money making’ role of brands ([Bastos and Levy 2012](#)), most notably Keller's (1993) work on brand equity and Srivastava, Shervani and Fahey's (1998) theory of a brand's financial value.

Subsequently, strategies whereby branding is used for good were introduced. Examples include green branding (e.g., [Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz 2005](#); [Kumar 2016](#)), brand activism (e.g., [Moorman 2020](#); Sarkar and Kotler 2018; [Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)), as well as CSR-based approaches to branding (e.g., [Hoeffler and Keller 2002](#); [Vallaster, Lindgreen and Maon 2012](#)). These strategies operate according to traditional positioning principles - for example, green branding communicates a sustainable brand identity by defining brand attributes and benefits related to reduced environmental impact ([Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz 2005](#)). Brand activism similarly communicates an activist brand identity through expressing brand values via public stances taken on socio-political issues ([Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). Thus, while these strategies engage with environmental, social, and political betterment, they remain primarily driven by the firm-centric dyadic view of branding and marketing management outcomes (e.g., brand equity; [Hoeffler and Keller 2002](#)).

This traditional view of brands and branding is narrow, however. Brands have matured considerably in complexity and meaning, such that they serve to do more than label and differentiate products ([de Chernatony and Riley 1998](#)) and communicate brand values ([Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz 2005](#); [Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). The traditional view is therefore no longer fully commensurate with the current realities of what brands and branding have become ([Brodie and de Chernatony 2009](#)). Importantly, it does not acknowledge how firms may employ branding to engage a wider network of stakeholders to co-create outcomes for the broader market and social systems.

To redress this myopic view, the macromarketing literature has expanded the understanding of what branding is and what it can achieve in three ways that are instrumental to our conceptualisation of transformative branding. First, by inverting the relative importance of branding to marketing, [Levy and Luedicke \(2013\)](#) argue for a shift from a marketing to a branding ideology, in which brands orchestrate marketing activities rather than the reverse. This work elevates branding's influence, signalling its potential capacity as a process for contributing to marketing and society.

Second, brands have been reconceptualised as ‘semiotic marketing systems’, acting as repositories of meaning and vehicles for meaning making within networks ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#)). This reimagines brands as shared constructs ([Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony 2012](#)) that possess evolving meanings, which are co-created by firms and stakeholders ([Arvidsson 2005](#); [Orazi et al. 2017](#)) as symbols within the marketing system ([Kadirov and Varey 2011](#)). Conceiving brands as collective meaning repositories associates them with increasingly diverse sets of values (beyond marketing management and values unilaterally communicated by the firm). It furthermore acknowledges brands have ‘a macromarketing nature’ and a broader impact on socio-environmental systems ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#), p. 293).

Third, viewing brands as meaning repositories has led to an integrative branding perspective, whereby branding is conceived as a process involving a network of actors that is initiated and facilitated, rather than managed and controlled, by a marketing agent ([Brodie, Benson-Rea and Medlin 2017](#)). This perspective resonates the branding literature's increasing emphasis on the relational ([Riley and de Chernatony 2000](#)) and is part of recommitting marketing to being a responsible partner with the fundamental purpose of improving living standards for all citizens and engaging with long-term and complex problems facing business and society ([Webster and Lusch 2013](#)). Importantly, this extends the traditional view of branding as an internal, firm-centric process and involves firms initiating and facilitating stakeholder interactions, leading to ever new opportunities for the integration of brand meanings. [Brodie and colleagues \(2017\)](#) further argue that integrative branding is a dynamic capability. This is a useful theoretical lens for mapping the branding process as it captures the stakeholder network involved and the co-creation of brand meanings over time.

What is needed now is to name and map a dynamic capability in branding that enables firms to harness their brands to contribute to social outcomes (in addition to the established market outcomes) and ultimately, to create value for market and societal systems. We advance 'transformative branding' as one such dynamic capability. Yet how can such a dual purpose for branding be understood? Here, we turn to literature on institutional logics - specifically, hybrid market and social logics.

Hybrid Logics

An institutional logic is the set of material practices and symbolic systems, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organisations provide meaning to their daily activities, organise time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012). Market logics emphasise profit maximisation, exchange for meeting supply and demand, and self-interested and rational motivations ([Scaraboto 2015](#)). Social logics, on the other hand, prioritise social and collective change to include prosocial objectives involving wealth sharing/giving, equality, civility, respect, and community ([Doherty, Haugh and Lyon 2014](#); [Keane 2005](#); [Lumpkin et al. 2013](#)). The relationship between market and social logics can be conceived as 'hybrid', which refers to the simultaneous existence of two very different sets of logics rather than the development of new hybridised forms of logics ([Johansen and Waldorff 2017](#)). This coexistence highlights that movement between logics may transpire depending on the timing and broader organisational issues at play - and that ways to combine these logics in the best way possible, given prevailing circumstances, may be sought.

Branding traditionally operates in accordance with market-dominant logics, reproducing and enabling assumptions, values, beliefs, rules, and behaviors associated with capitalist markets. As such, branding mostly functions within the DSP. Yet, adopting hybrid logics allows an organisation to champion views and goals that challenge the DSP (e.g., advance prosocial change), because the coexistence of market logics with social logics maintains legitimacy and viability ([Kennedy, McGouran and Kemper 2020](#)).

Various macromarketing concepts integrate market and social logics, such as welfare marketing ([Varey 2011](#)) and sustainable market orientation ([Mitchell, Wooliscroft and Higham 2010](#)). The value of hybridity is moreover signalled in macromarketing, from supporting the sustainability of markets in alternative economies ([Scaraboto and Figueiredo 2017](#)) to promoting mutually beneficial relationships for stakeholders ([Kolk and Lenfant](#)

[2016](#)) and working within the marketing system to promote quality of life ([Kadirov 2018](#); [Mittelstaedt et al. 2014](#)). We contend that transformative branding emerges as a way of integrating hybrid logics to co-create brand meanings by facilitating stakeholder collaboration, towards market shaping and challenging the DSP from within the market.

Problematisation and Research Aim

Synthesising the branding and hybrid logics literatures uncovers a nexus with significance for macromarketers. The branding process has been reconceptualised as a dynamic capability, accounting for the engagement of the stakeholder network in the co-creation of diverse brand meanings over time. Yet, a dynamic capability in integrative branding stems from strategic management and is thus undertaken to achieve sustained competitive advantage ([Brodie, Benson-Rea and Medlin 2017](#)), a goal clearly accordant with market logics. This reveals a gap to identify and delineate a novel process whereby branding can be conceptualised and implemented beyond the firm level *and* in pursuit of prosocial transformation. We introduce transformative branding to the macromarketing literature as one such process. In the section that follows, we define transformative branding and unpack the process by which it shapes markets per hybrid logics and, in turn, challenges the DSP from within the market system. To do this, we integrate dynamic capabilities and market shaping research with macromarketing.

Conceptualising Transformative Branding

We define transformative branding as a dynamic capability deployed by firms as a prosocial process to facilitate collaboration amongst stakeholders to co-create brand meanings that draw on hybrid logics. As such, this process is aimed at achieving outcomes aligned to both market and social logics, ultimately creating value for stakeholders, the market, and society at large. We conceive that a dynamic capability in transformative branding works as a mechanism for market shaping that takes place through two specific activities, namely leadership and collaborative coupling. By modifying the market in this way, transformative branding creates avenues for changing economic, regulatory, socio-cultural, and political environments. These avenues comprise: supporting a new basis for exchange for the market system beyond profit maximisation, reorienting consumer culture away from hyperconsumption, using regulative power and influence to advance social and environmental justice, and engaging in brand activism to bolster involvement in socio-political issues. In turn, transformative branding works to challenge the DSP from within the market. The process of transformative branding operates at three levels, mapped in [Figure 1](#) and delineated in the sections below.

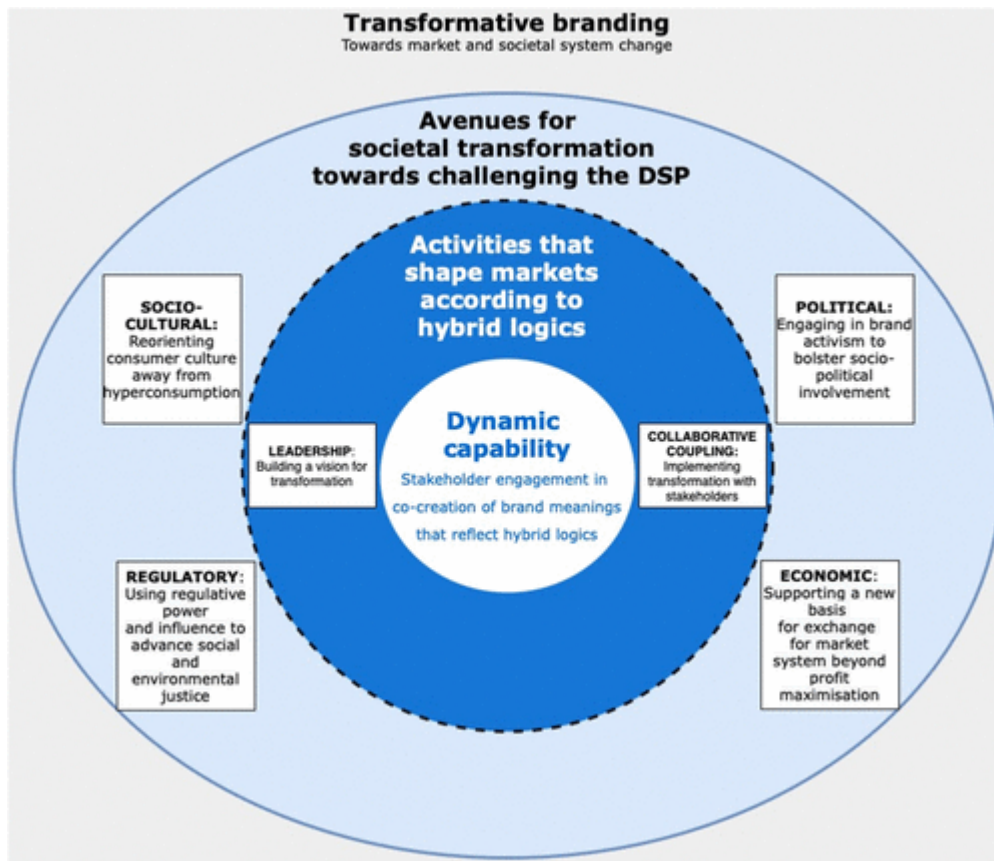


Figure 1. Conceptualisation of the process of transformative branding.

Transformative Branding: A Dynamic Capability

The above definition of transformative branding as a dynamic capability emphasises two characteristics: (1) the engagement of the stakeholder network beyond the firm-customer dyad in the co-creation of brand meanings, and (2) the brand meanings resonate hybrid market and social logics. For example, the Air New Zealand brand is committed to a process of ongoing engagement with stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, suppliers, governments, communities, and competitors to co-create brand meanings that incorporate market and social elements. Whilst still aiming to be a market leader, the brand also promotes Te Reo Māori, the native language of New Zealand and works to address its carbon footprint.

Conceiving transformative branding as a dynamic capability makes it possible to understand and articulate how it can operate to drive change beyond the firm level, in the broader market and societal systems. Dynamic capabilities are the driving processes that enable firms to act on their resources (for instance, brands) to ‘purposefully create, extend, or modify’ them (Helfat et al. 2007, p. 4) in a manner that enacts their business philosophy ([Morgan, Vorhies and Mason 2009](#)). Pivotal to our conceptualisation, a dynamic capability constitutes a process by which firms react to, but also create and facilitate, change in their environment ([Eisenhardt and Martin 2000](#); [Teece 2007, 2016](#)), as follows.

Engaging Dynamic Capabilities to Shape Markets

This paper adheres to the view that markets are malleable and evolving systems ([Layton 2007, 2015](#)), able to be transformed by market actors via a process of market shaping ([Kjellberg et al. 2012](#)). Market shaping is a conscious strategy through which actors - spanning firms and stakeholders - proactively change their business landscape (Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018; [Maciel and Fischer 2020](#)). There is a growing consensus that deploying dynamic capabilities can be a means to achieve market shaping ([Teece 2016](#)), and scholars have called for a closer examination of this relationship ([Schilke, Hu and Helfat 2018](#); [Wilden, Devinney and Dowling 2016](#)). Accordingly, studies have established categorisations of market-shaping dynamic capabilities ([Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)) and identified firm-driven processes, such as strategic design, that orchestrate and leverage market-shaping capabilities (Windahl, Karpen, and Wright 2020).

The various capabilities and strategies identified for shaping markets exhibit several characteristics pertinent to our conceptualisation of transformative branding. The first is attention to the wider stakeholder network beyond the traditional firm-customer dyad ([Hillebrand, Driessen and Koll 2015](#)). Changing the market cannot be unilaterally controlled by the firm ([Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)), and pursuing radical transformation in the face of possibly divergent interests requires deliberate efforts to foster collaboration amongst stakeholders ([Blanchet and Depeyre 2016](#)). The second is recognition of an actor's intentionality in enacting change, which is informed by a focal firm's dominant logics and can combine and direct actors to transform markets (Hawa, Baker, and Plewa 2020). The third is acknowledgement that the evolution of markets can be catalysed by initiatives other than new products or technologies ([Humphreys and Carpenter 2018](#); [Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)). Notably, brands and branding can change markets (Nguyen and Özçaglar-Toulouse 2021; Regany et al. 2021), a capacity afforded by their ability to facilitate relationships between stakeholders for the dialectic construction of brand meanings, to enable market shaping ([Onyas and Ryan 2015](#)).

These studies predominantly speak to shaping markets whereby firms pursue sustainable competitive advantage (Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018). Yet, more recently the market shaping literature has considered value creation beyond the bounds of the focal firm (e.g., [Amit and Han 2017](#); [Nenonen, Gummerus and Sklyar 2018](#)). For example, Windahl, Karpen, and Wright (2020) suggests that market shaping can draw on the concept of shared value ([Porter and Kramer 2011](#)), to contribute to broader-reaching and longer-term wellbeing.

The above research on dynamic capabilities (e.g., [Brodie, Benson-Rea and Medlin 2017](#)) and market shaping (e.g., [Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)) informs our conceptualisation of transformative branding in its emphasis on the wider stakeholder system to facilitate change and branding as a possible catalyst. Where we depart is in theorising brand meanings based on hybrid logics and, in turn, transformative branding drives macro-level changes that reflect market and social domains. Transformative branding is, moreover, conceived as an individual, specific dynamic capability for shaping markets (c.f. categories of capabilities; [Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)). Last, while the market-shaping literature signals the possibility of pursuing societal outcomes, it stops short of explaining *how* these processes can be enabled by branding, in particular. Accordingly, we parse out how transformative branding works to shape markets next.

Transformative Branding: Market-Shaping Activities

We delineate two specific activities by which transformative branding results in market shaping: leadership and collaborative coupling. Our aim is not to provide an exhaustive set of market-shaping activities but to integrate the dynamic capabilities and market shaping literatures to demonstrate possibilities for how transformative branding can trigger change. A logical starting point for transformative branding research is to lay down pathways for (1) building a vision for transformation (i.e., leadership) and (2) implementing transformation with stakeholders (i.e., collaborative coupling). The importance of these sorts of activities can also be inferred from research that points to the need for hybrid logics to be appropriately managed and enacted to support brand meanings ([Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015](#)).

Informed by studies on dynamic capabilities ([Hine et al. 2014](#)) and market shaping ([Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)), we conceptualise a hierarchical structure whereby transformative branding constitutes a higher-order dynamic capability and leadership and collaborative coupling, lower-order market-shaping activities. Transformative branding, as the higher-order capability, determines how leadership and collaborative coupling are applied, namely in a manner that imagines and creates new avenues for branding by collaborating with stakeholders and enacting hybrid logics towards macro-level change. Leadership and collaborative coupling, as lower-order activities, encapsulate a firm's direct actions in the marketplace. This aligns with extant studies where higher-order capabilities relate to the discovery of the value potential of market changes, in order to determine which lower-order activities are applied to actually trigger those changes ([Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)). In summary, a transformative branding dynamic capability propels market and social changes via leadership and collaborative coupling activities, as described next. In-depth examples are used to illustrate each activity.

Leadership: Building a Vision for Transformation

Rethinking why branding exists - beyond making money and toward societal transformation - requires a higher degree of consciousness on the part of leaders ([Fyke, Feldner and May 2016](#)). Thus, a particular flavour of leadership can be observed for transformative branding to shape markets. Leadership in this context is distinguished by adopting and articulating broader strategic-thinking processes, underscored by hybrid logics and stakeholder collaboration. We reason that broader strategic-thinking processes have two qualities. First, such processes are more flexible and wide-ranging ([Day 2011](#)) than traditional branding mindsets and are therefore open to diverse perspectives of branding, beyond the firm-centric and marketing management approaches. Second, broader strategic-thinking processes see leaders operating on longer-than-usual time horizons and staying attuned to changing ideologies, commensurate with the nature of societal megatrends (e.g., climate change) to which transformative branding ultimately contributes.

Broader strategic-thinking processes shape markets by enabling leadership to think flexibly, 'out-of-the-box', and with long-term assumptions and decisions regarding the meaning and purpose of branding. Extant research shows that business landscapes are changed by 'revolutionary transformational' leadership ([Avolio and Bass 1988](#); [Burns 1978](#)) and 'conscious and active' managerial approaches ([Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018](#)). Market shaping necessitates flexible and wide-ranging thinking for reimagining and refocusing what the brand could be, 'far beyond elements such as product features or redefined platforms' ([Baker, Storbacka and Brodie 2019](#), p. 319), as well as 'visioning' of possibilities beyond the traditional value chain ([Nenonen, Gummerus and Sklyar 2018](#)). This intention then needs to be translated to stakeholders to establish a shared focus that will

jointly drive shaping activities (Hawa, Baker, and Plewa 2020). Thus, leadership's broader strategic-thinking processes may change the business landscape as a result of leaders not only proactively imagining a market that is more mutually sustainable and valuable than the current one, but also sharing this with stakeholders, inviting them to become collaborative partners in branding to achieve a hybrid set of market and social goals. This is pivotal in encouraging transformation beyond the firm and within the wider system. Overall, leadership's diverse mindset drives their navigation of and trajectory within the market, so that they can influence their context by challenging the status quo and defining new opportunities, in partnership with stakeholders.

Additionally, through the adoption of a longer-than-usual time horizon, leaders come to recognise the ultimate value of changing the market in the way they intend (Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018). Over time, leaders need to maintain an outward-facing orientation, keeping abreast with evolving expectations around socio-political issues and demonstrating attention to current ideologies to drive market shaping ([Baker, Storbacka and Brodie 2019](#)). Taking a long-term view accounts for the fact that shaping activities take time to deliver impact and therefore signals a good sense of the speed of change in the environment and the appropriate timing of decisions and actions ([Nenonen, Gummerus and Sklyar 2018](#)). Working to a long time horizon shapes markets by guiding leadership to make decisions and undertake activities that will be effective over an extended period of time. Moreover, an outward orientation may transform the business landscape by enhancing leadership's awareness of change and identification of worthwhile avenues to proactively drive change in the market, in a way that is relevant and attentive to the current climate. Whereas being unaware or resistant to change reverts leadership to a reactive position, an outward orientation drives proactive navigation and influence on the environment.

Example: Patagonia

Consider Patagonia as an example of transformative branding and leadership, as described above. First, Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia, exhibits a diverse, flexible, and wide-ranging perspective of branding, evidenced by how he has revolutionised the role and responsibility of business, reconceiving the Patagonia brand as a solution to environmental degradation (Chouinard and Stanley 2013). Chouinard derides the notion of a fully sustainable business as impossible and instead reframes Patagonia's priority as one of responsibility ([Anderson 2019](#)). Chouinard challenges capitalist systems that predominantly underscore branding. To this end, the iconic 'Don't Buy This Jacket' demarketing campaign highlighted the need to shift the consumption ideology from one of purchase to one of repair, which demonstrates a shift in standard practices to extend the product's life ([Allchin 2013](#)). This was followed by 'Buy Less, Demand More,' a circular economy initiative integrating its Worn Wear program for used apparel ([Stewart 2020](#)).

Second, Chouinard works to a long time horizon in decision making - for instance, committing to building an entirely new organic cotton supply chain from the ground up - which aligns to his diverse view of nature as a 'life-giving entity' rather than an input resource ([Sonsev 2019](#)). Demonstrating attention to evolving socio-political ideologies, Patagonia's leadership has reformed its mission statement to 'Patagonia is in business to save our home planet' in response to the extremely heightened urgency to address climate change.

Overall, Patagonia illustrates leadership under transformative branding, encapsulating the actions directly taken in the market to trigger change. While Patagonia offers a market-based

solution to environmental problems, this brand has become world-renowned for its radical and empathetic stance, which works, in turn, to build action within the market and society towards the climate emergency. While we do not purport that a single brand transforms these systems, it can catalyse the process of change by setting a precedent for other actors and brands and encouraging them to follow (e.g., by changing consumption ideologies and supply chain structures), ensuring change beyond the firm level. Thus, when Patagonia's leadership envisions and practices sustainable production and consumption, it offers up a new role for branding and opens up the discussion for other leaders to do the same. Of note, Chouinard wrote a book about his leadership style - 'Let My People Go Surfing' - which offers transparency and shares insights that enables stakeholders to follow and influence the wider context.

Collaborative Coupling: Implementing Transformation with Stakeholders

This entails enacting transformative branding, as envisioned by leadership above, across the key strategic dimensions of the brand such that they become aligned or 'coupled' on this basis. Strategic dimensions include, for example, business units; functional areas; hierarchical levels including the top management team; the marketing mix; the supply chain; internal policies and practices; and external activities and communication. Central to enacting transformative branding is mobilising the engagement of key stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, investors, suppliers, governments, communities, and competitors). As such, collaborative coupling describes a bottom-up (rather than top-down) implementation process, whereby the focal brand proactively responds to stakeholders' negotiations of brand meanings across these strategic dimensions. This presupposes that the transformative vision is always 'in the making' and it adapts to accommodate heterogeneous values and goals that persistently emerge from stakeholders in the marketing system. Thus, collaborative coupling necessarily involves 'sensemaking' and 'sensegiving' ([Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991](#)) between the focal brand and stakeholders, towards the systemic coordination of meanings and practices across the brand ecosystem. Collaborative coupling enacts market shaping in three ways: demonstrating commitment, expertise and resource sharing, and establishing legitimacy.

First, coupling of the above strategic dimensions—which subsume structures, practices, and symbols—shapes markets by evidencing a deeply embedded and widespread commitment to market and social goals. Market shaping research suggests that, to be effective, activities must be 'consciously and deliberately' implemented, rather than appearing to be pursued on an ad-hoc basis (Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018; Kjellberg, Azimont, and Reid 2015; Ulkuniemi, Araujo, and Tähtinen 2015). Equally, successful shaping activities include mobilising the larger system of stakeholders ([Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019](#)). Doing so shows that the brand *and* its stakeholders 'throw their weight behind the shaping process' (Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018). Collaborative coupling thus signals to the market that transformative branding is intended to be sustained over time and across the brand's strategic dimensions and the stakeholder network, thereby setting down a path for creating new standards in the environment, which is needed to transform markets.

Second, collaborative coupling facilitates market shaping by fostering and distributing the resources and expertise related to transformative branding across functional areas, levels, and stakeholders. This includes competitors who, when acting collaboratively, can shape markets through their collective purposeful actions (Beninger and Francis 2021). The coordination and alignment of a dynamic capability across functional areas is key to shaping markets

because it is the process responsible for actually inducing change (Nenonen, Storbacka and Windahl 2019). This notion is echoed in research that shows strategic cooperation substantially improves the potential for market shaping ([Baker, Storbacka and Brodie 2019](#)). Collaborative coupling therefore influences the environment by ensuring that transformative branding—as the engine for change—is enacted and negotiated with stakeholders across strategic dimensions, rather than being commanded by the brand itself or within a single area or team under the brand.

Last, collaborative coupling helps a brand to attain legitimacy as an institution, which is needed to achieve market shaping ([Baker, Storbacka and Brodie 2019](#); [Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015](#); Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018). Research shows that when structures, practices, and symbols of the brand are perceived by constituents as ‘appropriate and desirable’ ([Suddaby, Bitektine and Haack 2017](#)) and as aligned or ‘coupled’ ([Guo et al. 2017](#)), brands become regarded as legitimate. Yet, what is appropriate and desirable may differ between stakeholders, highlighting the importance of mobilising stakeholder engagement in collaborative coupling. Legitimacy, in turn, facilitates market shaping by establishing the focal brand as deeply knowledgeable, trustworthy, and a ‘legitimate champion’, thereby showing an understanding of stakeholders and influencing them, in turn (Kindström, Ottosson, and Carlborg 2018). This shapes markets as the brand becomes an authoritative source that guides behavior and drives change amongst the business landscape in line with transformative branding.

Example: Tony's Chocolonely

Consider Tony's Chocolonely, a market-leading chocolate brand in the Netherlands with a stated mission to make a profit while eliminating slave labor in the production and supply chain of the chocolate manufacturing industry (Tony's Chocolonely [2019](#)). Tony's illustrates transformative branding and collaborative coupling, as described above. First, Tony's works to enact transformative branding across key strategic dimensions. They operate from a roadmap that encompasses a mixture of financial and societal goals, reflecting hybrid market and social logics, and this roadmap underscores the brand's strategic dimensions. For instance, Tony's claims ethical manufacturing processes and promotes the brand with the unique selling proposition of achieving a slave-free cocoa industry (aligning the functional areas of manufacturing and marketing), and moreover, Tony's chocolate bars are made up of unequally-sized pieces, analogous to the unequal treatment of workers in the cocoa industry (aligning the marketing mix elements of product and promotion). Implementing transformative branding in this way demonstrates Tony's commitment to market and social goals, towards market shaping.

Second, Tony's facilitates stakeholder engagement in the implementation process. For instance, their Open Chain Platform provides industry players with information and tools to copy what Tony's have done, as part of their six-layer impact strategy aimed at bringing consumers, farmers, retailers, chocolate producers, and governments on board to enlarge their social impact ([Kraaijenbrink 2019](#)). This strategy is unique in that it effectively eliminates any differential advantage in aid of reforming the cocoa industry, privileging social goals over market goals. Via this platform and strategy, Tony's shares the requisite resources and expertise to achieve their social mission and asserts themselves as an authoritative, legitimate champion for ethical chocolate manufacturing, which is critical for marketing shaping. Leading by example in terms of knowledge and best practice, Tony's has potential to not only

transform their own industry, but also other industries battling ethical labour issues (i.e., clothing manufacturing), thereby spearheading cumulative change in the market system.

However, implementing transformative branding with stakeholders is complex and dynamic - for instance, the meaning of Tony's Chocolonely as an ethical brand that legitimately operates according to hybrid logics continues to be contested by stakeholders. At the time of writing, Tony's was just removed from Slave Free Chocolate's ethical producers list because of its partnership with Barry Callebaut, a major chocolate producer sued for using slave labour ([Irving 2021](#)). Accordingly, Slave Free Chocolate and ethical consumers called out Tony's for 'woke washing', citing misalignment of marketing messaging and corporate practice ([Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). In response to stakeholders' concerns, Tony's Chocolonely articulated the reason behind this decision, claiming that working with competitors is critical to educating and inspiring them to adopt ethical principles and practices and, in turn, transform the industry.

This section explained how a transformative branding dynamic capability is enacted through leadership and collaborative coupling activities to shape markets. Next, we show how this may flow on to challenge the DSP, creating opportunities for societal transformation from within the market system.

Transforming Market and Societal Systems Through Challenging the Dominant Social Paradigm

The view of markets as the agora demonstrates that, beyond exchange, markets have political, sociocultural, technological, and institutional influences ([Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt 2006](#)). Thus, while the aforementioned activities of transformative branding are classified as 'market' shaping, their effect goes beyond the economic activities embedded in markets to create avenues for transforming economic, socio-cultural, regulatory, and political environments that, in turn, challenge the DSP from within the market system. Transformative branding can therefore address problems created by the existing system (i.e., the DSP) and foster a new set of symbolic potentialities ([Kadirov and Varey 2011](#)). Furthermore, the 'cumulative potential' ([Beverland 2014](#)) of transformative branding makes gradual, widespread change possible, as the prosocial actions of a single brand influence other brands and actors to follow and collectively disrupt the social and market environment. We contend that transformative branding, through market-shaping activities, challenges the DSP in four ways: supporting a new basis for exchange for the market system beyond profit maximisation (economic), reorienting consumer culture away from hyperconsumption (socio-cultural), using regulative power and influence to advance social and environmental justice (regulatory), and engaging in brand activism to bolster involvement in socio-political issues (political).

Economic Transformations: Supporting a New Basis for Exchange for the Market System Beyond Profit Maximisation

First, transformative branding challenges the DSP by supporting a new basis for exchange for the market system. The shift from market-dominant logics to a hybrid set of logics entails an orientation of market exchange relationships beyond a focus on profit maximisation and self-interest to also prioritise prosocial objectives involving wealth sharing/giving, mutuality, equality, civility, respect, and community. The DSP focuses on the self-interested and

motivated individual first and foremost ([Barnhart and Mish 2017](#)), not considering the individual as a consuming citizen nor the social impact of exchange on others ([Webster and Lusch 2013](#)). Transformative branding asks stakeholders to acknowledge value outcomes beyond the economic, such as linking-value outcomes connected to the benefits of establishing and maintaining social connections; epistemic-value outcomes connected to the benefits of learning and acquiring new competencies; ethical-value outcomes connected to the benefits of doing the right thing; and societal-value outcomes connected to benefits associated with the wellbeing of society at large. Transformative branding proposes and enables an agora in which these value outcomes can be exchanged.

Moreover, transformative branding recognises that there is no such thing as a pure buyer-seller relationship, as all such relationships impact upon other stakeholders, and consumers do not just *consume* but are citizens too ([Webster and Lusch 2013](#)). For example, the leadership of Eileen Fisher prioritises prosocial objectives of sustainability and human rights, establishing a new basis of exchange that is implemented across a transformed supply chain. This encompasses a circular economy manufacturing model that resells and remakes clothing produced by the brand, in which fair wages and healthy participatory workplaces are supported through specific training and equipment provisions. While market change is arguably the direct and intended consequence of economic transformation, in this way, transformative branding can also impact upon the societal system by shaping exchange-based values and expectations of stakeholders in line with hybrid logics.

Sociocultural Transformations: Reorienting Consumer Culture Away From Hyperconsumption

Transformative branding also challenges the DSP through reorienting consumer culture away from hyperconsumption. Reorienting consumer culture means challenging the DSP by enabling ideologies, consumer strategies, and marketplace cultures that better accommodate, express, and perform hybrid logics towards more sustainable forms of consumption. For instance, through the market-shaping activity of leadership, the brand becomes a vehicle for a vision that articulates particular meanings and values in consumer culture. Similarly, collaborative coupling enables systemic changes in consumer culture by orchestrating practices and meanings that transform how consumers socialise, interpret, and act, allowing for the emergence of consumer strategies and ideologies that are both market and socially oriented.

For example, the leadership of Nudie Jeans permeates their vision for sustainable consumption throughout organisational culture and beyond, bringing ecological awareness about denim production through industry-leading sustainable practices. Moreover, Nudie Jeans has advanced a culture of repair, reuse, and recycling through its repair shops, partnerships, and repurposed collections. Nudie repair shops serve as hubs where jeans are repaired and resold as second hand, a hybrid of market-oriented practice (selling) and socially-oriented practice (sustainable consumption). This facilitates the circular economy principles and initiatives of reduce, repair, reuse, and recycle, enabling change in the societal system through changing market-based practices that discourage hyperconsumption across consumer culture.

Regulatory Transformations: Using Regulative Power and Influence to Advance Social and Environmental Justice

The third way in which transformative branding challenges the DSP is by using regulative power and influence to advance social and environmental justice. Through these mechanisms, transformative branding enables changes in the market system, to provide more than financial outcomes for participants to serve the purpose of a ‘good life’ ([Kadirov, Varey and Wolfenden 2016](#); [Kadirov 2018](#)), provisioning for communities, and serving community welfare. Such change is enabled when transformative branding's market-shaping activities modify governance mechanisms. Market governance mechanisms inform how markets operate through a set of formal and informal rules and are designed to change the behavior of individuals, businesses, organisations, and governments (IIED 2013). Market governance mechanisms can be economic (i.e., taxation, subsidies, financing), regulatory (i.e., legal requirements such as norms and standards, liability and policy), cooperative (i.e., voluntary agreements and partnerships) and informational (i.e., raising awareness through certification and reporting). While these mechanisms are market oriented, they have positive flow-on effects to the societal system, as follows.

Through leadership and collaborative coupling, transformative branding acts upon these governance mechanisms to create or alter policy, agreements, certifications, and subsidies so they can better align with hybrid logics and as a result, alter formal and informal institutions. For instance, branding certifications can propose alternative mechanisms based on hybrid logics that demand stakeholders comply with standards towards the wellbeing of consumers and society, beyond traditional market standards of quality, financial benefit, and standardisation entrenched in the DSP. Tony's Chocolonely, for example, lobbied companies, political parties, and NGOs to pass the *Zorgplicht Kinderarbeid* bill, asking companies to take the necessary steps to prevent child labor, thus shaping governance mechanisms that advance human rights. Further, their Open Chain Platform provides open-source knowledge and tools to end illegal child labor and modern slavery in the cocoa industry. This drives regulatory transformations in marketing systems through direct internal practices, providing ‘new’ industry standards and norms (informal institutions) and lobbying for legislative change (formal institutions) that challenge industry expectations and practices.

Political Transformations: Engaging in Brand Activism to Bolster Socio-Political Involvement

The final way in which transformative branding challenges the DSP is through engaging in brand activism to bolster socio-political involvement. Brand activism is a purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a non-neutral stance on a relevant socio-political issue ([Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). While businesses have historically participated in the political environment through activities such as donating and lobbying, this predominantly served their own financial interests (e.g., favourable regulation) and reinforced the DSP. By contrast, transformative branding seeks political transformations that also serve societal interests and that represent and defend stakeholders’ values through collectively amplifying their voices in this domain via brand activism.

The market-shaping activity of leadership pushes the boundaries of a brand's role and responsibility in society and envisions brands as actors capable of influencing socio-political norms, beliefs, and policies to challenge the status quo. This catalyses brands to take a stand on socio-political issues via activism efforts. Contemporary issues, from climate change to homelessness to LGBTQIA + rights, tend to be highly politicised because their value (i.e., importance) and viable solutions are debated, making these issues partisan by nature ([Moorman 2020](#)). Importantly, to drive meaningful change, brand activism needs to be

perceived as 'authentic' and align intangible (messaging) and tangible (practice) dimensions ([Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). Otherwise, woke washing occurs, whereby brands merely pay 'lip service' to issues ([Sobande 2020](#); [Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)). Collaborative coupling, therefore, plays a critical role in ensuring authentic brand activism, aligning strategic dimensions and mobilising stakeholders to participate together in the socio-political domain.

For example, the leadership of Lush have put activism at the core of the brand. Lush have championed a global ban on animal testing for cosmetics, and this marketing messaging is authentically aligned across the brand's strategic dimensions. Not only are Lush's products and supply chain free from animal testing, but the brand has become a founding supporter of the #BeCrueltyFree campaign, endowed financial support to advance animal protections laws, and donated its storefront windows for promotion. Lush mobilises stakeholders to join in brand activism - for instance, employees participated in campaign promotion and customers signed petitions for legislative change. Transformative branding, via activism initiatives, serves to bolster the involvement of the focal brand and its stakeholder network in contemporary socio-political issues with potential to transform the societal system.

Conceptual Distinctiveness of Transformative Branding

Employing branding for good—environmental, social, or political—is not new, nor is the notion that branding can be conceptualised and implemented at a macro level, involving a system of actors and institutions outside the focal firm. Thus having now fully elaborated the process of transformative branding, it is important to crystallise where transformative branding is located within the context of extant branding processes. [Figure 2](#) organises the branding literature according to two apparent themes.

		Level of Conceptualisation and Implementation	
		Micro level	Macro level
Goals/ Domain of Change	Marketing management	Traditional/managerial focus of branding (e.g., Aaker 1991; Keller 1993)	Integrative branding (e.g., Brodie, Benson-Rea, and Medlin 2017) Co-creation of brands (e.g., Wallace, Buil, and de Chernatony 2012; Orazi et al. 2017)
	Prosocial transformation	Green branding (e.g., Hartmann, Ibáñez, and Sainz 2005; Kumar 2016) Brand activism (e.g., Moorman 2020; Vredenburg et al. 2020) CSR-based approaches to branding (e.g., Hoeffler and Keller 2002; Vallaster, Lindgreen, and Maon 2012)	Transformative branding (present paper)

Figure 2. Branding matrix—conceptual distinctiveness of transformative branding.

The first theme relates to the level at which the conceptualisation and implementation of the branding process occurs, classified as either micro or macro level. This corresponds with the origins and focus of the theoretical principles used to understand the branding process, as well as the domain of the branding process when put into practice, including who is involved. A micro level refers to implementation being undertaken with a managerial focus and involving the focal firm only. As such, theorising is based on traditional branding principles, which involve, for example, how the firm unilaterally crafts the brand identity around making positive change (e.g., a sustainable brand identity) and projects this to consumers and the market for brand-equity gains. On the other hand, a macro level refers to a branding process in collaboration with a wider network within the market and society at large (e.g., actors, institutions) and therefore requires theories that account for the players and dynamics of the market and societal systems. The second theme relates to the goals of the branding process, with some related to challenging the status quo by leading prosocial transformation and others, maintaining the status quo by upholding traditional marketing management objectives. [Figure 2](#) presents the key types of related branding, placing them within quadrants depending on their respective levels of conceptualisation and implementation and their primary goals. Transformative branding is distinguished in this matrix on the basis of its conceptualisation and implementation at the macro level and its pursuit of prosocial transformation.

Concluding Thoughts

The marketing discipline has long been urged to adopt a broader view of the marketing concept and to attend fully to its societal responsibilities ([Kotler and Levy 1969](#); [Wilkie and Moore 2003](#)). Discussions as to how branding may shoulder such responsibilities is growing in practice, but, to date, has been underdeveloped in academic research. In this work, we introduce transformative branding as a step toward unpacking how branding can operate to accomplish prosocial change within the market and society at large. We make three contributions to the macromarketing literature: introducing transformative branding as a novel concept to achieve macro-level change; demonstrating how this functions to challenge the DSP from within the market system; and advancing theorisations of dynamic capabilities and market shaping beyond the firm level to drive both market and social change. While each contribution helps advance our understanding of this elevated role of marketing ([Webster and Lusch 2013](#)), it also unveils a new set of questions for future research.

First, we advance understanding of marketing's responsibilities in society ([Kotler and Levy 1969](#); [Wilkie and Moore 2003, 2012](#)) by articulating how branding can be leveraged as 'a force for good' to achieve macro-level change ([Stoeckl and Luedicke 2015](#), p. 2453). Branding's role in contemporary society is an area that remains underdeveloped ([Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015](#)). As a first step into exploring how branding might shoulder its societal responsibilities, our research maps the process of transformative branding operating at three levels towards prosocial change in the market and societal systems. To date, the branding literature has introduced strategies, such as green branding, which demonstrate how branding can contribute to environmental, social, and political good. Where transformative branding differs is in how it is theorised and its proposed outcomes, as demonstrated by its conceptual distinctiveness relative to the extant literature ([Figure 2](#)). Whilst the aforementioned branding strategies are theorised through the application of traditional positioning principles, transformative branding encompasses a broader macrosocial view as afforded by dynamic capabilities and market shaping theories. Transformative branding therefore offers a novel theorisation for *how* purposive actions that originate with the brand can drive market and societal system change.

However, it is important to remain cognisant that branding may mislead or deceive marketplace participants (i.e., [Pope and Wæraas 2016](#)). We acknowledge that our perspective represents a one-sided view of the concept of transformation, given transformation does not always deliver positive outcomes. Further research is needed to examine the 'darkside' of transformative branding e.g., those firms and stakeholders that only claim to be transformative, but do not engage in market-shaping activities. For instance, consider Pepsi's 'Live for Now' campaign featuring Kendall Jenner. Whilst Pepsi was positioned as a solution to a complex social issue, the brand offered no call to action beyond purchase and the message was unsubstantiated across Pepsi's various strategic dimensions, illustrating an absence of collaborative coupling. Future research should examine cases where discrepancies exist between prosocial corporate discourse and dynamic capabilities, towards developing checks and balances for legitimate transformation. Equally, there is a burgeoning research stream calling attention to the darkside of market shaping, identifying negative consequences arising from actors' agency as well as exclusion of other actors from the changed modalities of the market (Cova, Ivens, and Spencer 2021). These works offer a critical path for future research on transformative branding to consider its full and unintended consequences.

Second, extant research has pointed to the possibilities of alternative market arrangements that may operate in opposition or parallel to the DSP ([Gollnhofer and Schouten 2017](#)). However, transformative branding signals how change can be driven from within traditional

market arrangements towards systemic transformations that challenge the DSP. In this way, transformative branding addresses the problems created by the existing system (DSP) and fosters a new set of symbolic potentialities ([Kadirov and Varey 2011](#)). We contend that, via market shaping activities, avenues are created for transforming economic, regulatory, socio-cultural, and political environments across market and social systems. We do not suggest that it is merely through one brand's actions that such institutional changes immediately occur; instead, it is the collective actions of brands which shifts and transforms market and social systems. Thus, there is further scope to explore the 'cumulative potential' arising from 'context-sensitive micro-level' actions that enable widespread change ([Beverland 2014](#)).

Third, in conceptualising the process of transformative branding as a dynamic capability that acts as a mechanism for market shaping, we build upon theorisations in both the dynamic capabilities and market shaping literatures. Dynamic capabilities were originally conceptualised at the firm level, leaving questions as to how they might be deployed at other levels unanswered ([Salvato and Vassolo 2018](#)). By conceiving branding as a dynamic capability that operates at and beyond the firm level across the strategic network of stakeholders, we contribute to the emerging conversations of branding as a dynamic capability that extends the traditional firm-level perspective ([Brodie, Benson-Rea and Medlin 2017](#)). Moreover, we show how dynamic capabilities, when based on hybrid logics, can be a mechanism for market shaping that drives social change beyond and in addition to market change, building on existing market-shaping capabilities frameworks (Nenonen, Storbacka, and Windahl 2019). The notion that market-shaping strategies can have broader-reaching and longer-term impacts beyond profit maximisation has only recently been signalled (Windahl, Karpen, and Wright 2020). Indeed, a recent editorial has illuminated the role and responsibility of market-shaping strategies in solving 'wicked problems of the 21st century' (Nenonen, Fehrer, and Brodie 2021, p. 236). It is therefore incumbent on researchers to identify and explain ways in which markets can be challenged and improved. By identifying leadership and collaborative coupling as concrete and specific market-shaping activities of transformative branding, we offer a way to unravel the 'how' of market shaping towards market and social change. Future research on transformative branding as a dynamic capability should identify other possible market-shaping activities and propose measures of the effectiveness of such activities as conduits for market and societal transformation.

This paper has focused on using the concept of transformative branding to link prosocial branding activities to systemic and macro-level effects in economic; socio-cultural; regulatory; and political spheres. We recognise that the market-shaping activities discussed in this paper imply a willingness to operate within the boundaries of existing market tools and, as such, they could be considered as within the boundaries of the DSP. We present transformative branding as a means to change the system from within, in line with extant macromarketing goals ([Golding 2009](#); [Mittelstaedt et al. 2014](#)), using hybrid logics as a springboard for change, aligning with counter hegemonic perspectives that challenge the DSP ([Kilbourne, McDonagh, and Prothero 2018](#)).

We end this paper with a cautionary note. In recent decades, we have witnessed the emergence of a number of marketing concepts with a 'social edge', including societal marketing ([Lazer 1969](#); [Kotler and Levy 1969](#)), welfare marketing ([Varey 2010](#)), and positive marketing ([Gopaldas 2015](#)), to name but a few. We envision transformative branding as a pathway towards societal transformation that envisages a more sustainable future. Yet, as [Tadajewski \(2016\)](#) observes, there is a responsibility to 'ask questions about why these concepts emerge and whose interests are being served' (p. 1522). This implies that our work

has only started to delineate these issues and that we should continually, and critically, re-examine the concept. Future research will need to more fully consider the ethical implications of transformative branding, whereby brands must come to value and prioritise orientations that are not entirely necessarily grounded in economic interests and activities, thus challenging the DSP from within the market system.

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