

## WHY BRAD PITT?

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**ABSTRACT.** The study of visual identity elements is a popular area for researchers as they can make a key contribution to the commercial success of a particular brand. Personas/characters, in turn, are one of the most important elements of visual identity, because through them the brand communicates to the target segment those values that define its (i.e. the brand's) personality. Brad Pitt is an internationally known celebrity: a much discussed global phenomenon. However, investigations into the correlation between Brad Pitt's professional life and celebrity endorsement represent a gap. This paper is based on the following main objectives: to identify (1) those traits, characteristics that define the actor Brad Pitt and (2) those aspects, values that can be captured in the advertising campaigns included in the analysis.

**Keywords:** Brad Pitt, celebrity endorsement, authenticity

**JEL Classification:** M31

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## Introduction and Review of Literature

As mentioned in the literature, the elements of a brand's visual identity include: brand name, logo, slogan, characters, packaging, colours and soundtrack. Fragrance is also a substantial component of brand building (Ujvári, 2015). The typology of characters that brands can use - in the process of promoting their offer - is diversified, they can be (a) fictional animated or human characters, (b) known or unknown human characters. The design and use of fictional characters to represent the brand to society is "often the result of companies' desire to associate their brands with various personality traits in the minds of consumers" (Moisescu, 2012, p. 100). Actors, similarly, "can have 'brand associations' in the minds of consumers, based on previous consumption experiences" (Kerrigan, 2016, p. 181). Due to the fact that they are consumers - where - authenticity presents a major criterion, influencing the purchase decision (Törőcsik, 2006) marketers should:

- (1) take into account that "stability and rarity positively" (Moulard et al., 2015, p. 173) have a major impact on celebrity authenticity,
- (2) choose celebrities to support the brand in advertising campaigns "after considering how constituents from within their key target markets are likely to connect with the chosen celebrity" (Tran et al., 2019, p. 923),
- (3) to analyse celebrities "not only as endorsers but also as brands" (Kowalczyk, 2011).

As such, certain characteristics and features of a celebrity are so unique, so personal that it is impossible to acquire them: the celebrity becomes a brand in its own right. In the movie *The Intern*, one of the characters<sup>3</sup> asks a little puzzled, why isn't he Brad Pitt? This question surprises the other character, because they think that the answer is obvious, does not need to be explained, it is self-evident. Still in this context the following should be mentioned:

- (1) Brad Pitt was the first man to represent the Chanel brand No. 5, 2012 (Mackinney, 2013).
- (2) Brad Pitt "was found to be highly familiar with a student population" (Kowalczyk, 2011, p. 88).

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<sup>3</sup> The casting takes place in this sequence of the film.

## Material and Method(s)

Brad Pitt is a renowned American actor, producer and social activist ([https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad\\_Pitt](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_Pitt)), known as one of the most attractive men in the world: People's magazine has awarded him - twice - the title "Sexiest Man Alive". Brad Pitt appeared on the cover of the magazine for the first time in 1995, due to his film roles: *Legends of the Fall* and *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (<https://www.insider.com/who-has-been-sexiest-man-alive-people-2018-11#2021-paul-rudd-37>). For his roles in the films:

- (1) *Legends of the Fall* (Tristan Ludlow), was nominated (Golden Globe Awards) for Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama, respectively.
- (2) *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (Louis de Pointe du Lac), was nominated (MTV Movie & TV Awards) for Best Male Performance, and Most Wanted Male, winning both categories ([https://www.no-regime.com/ru-ro/wiki/List\\_of\\_awards\\_and\\_nominations\\_received\\_by\\_Brad\\_Pitt](https://www.no-regime.com/ru-ro/wiki/List_of_awards_and_nominations_received_by_Brad_Pitt)).

In 2000, Brad Pitt again won the title "Sexiest Man Alive" for his performance in the film *Fight Club* (Tyler Durden) (<https://www.insider.com/who-has-been-sexiest-man-alive-people-2018-11#2021-paul-rudd-37>).

In addition:

- (1) in 1996, Brad Pitt won (MTV Movie & TV Awards) the Most Desirable Male category for his role in the film *Seven* (David Mills),
- (2) in 2005, he was nominated (MTV Movie & TV Awards) for Best Male Performance for his role as Achilles in the film *Troy*: ([https://www.no-regime.com/ru-ro/wiki/List\\_of\\_awards\\_and\\_nominations\\_received\\_by\\_Brad\\_Pitt](https://www.no-regime.com/ru-ro/wiki/List_of_awards_and_nominations_received_by_Brad_Pitt)), being the most commercially successful film ([https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad\\_Pitt](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_Pitt)),
- (3) according to The Trend Spotter he is considered the Sexiest Man Alive (<https://www.thetrendspotter.net/sexy-men/>),
- (4) he enjoys increased media attention ([https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad\\_Pitt](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_Pitt)).

#### A. Films included in the analysis:

1. Since the quality of an actor's performance, the role played<sup>4</sup>, the physical appearance of the actor and the popularity of the film are the factors that determine the "success" of an actor with the public, the following are the most representative films - from the marketers' point of view:
  - *Legends of the Fall* (epic western: 1994),
  - *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (gothic horror: 1994),
  - *Seven* (neo-noir psychological: 1995),
  - *Fight Club* (drama/thriller: 1999),
  - *Troy* (epic historical war: 2004).
2. It is also worth noting that the films do not have a so-called "warranty period". For example, in the case of *Legends of the Fall*, some comments were written two days before the data was collected: this was on 10 August 2022. Another aspect to mention is that the roles played over the years contribute significantly to the image of a celebrity, and this does not disappear over time.
3. Data collection period:
  - *Legends of the Fall*: 10 August 2022,
  - *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*: 19 September 2022,
  - *Seven*: 21 September 2022,
  - *Fight Club*: 22 September 2022,
  - *Troy*: 23 September 2022.
4. Data source:
  - *Legends of the Fall*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en7Z6v2PvmU>,
  - *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIm8HfwnmVE>,
  - *Seven*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znmZoVkJpI>,

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<sup>4</sup> The films included in the analysis are those in which Brad Pitt played the lead role or was one of the lead actors, because this gives us a (significantly) greater opportunity to better understand the qualities, characteristics and values that define Brad Pitt as an actor, compared to the films in which he played a supporting role.

- *Fight Club*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHXXqlcCxPs>,
  - *Troy*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LfBuyonkUY&t=4s>.
5. Those comments were included in the analysis which:
    - referred to Brad Pitt's physical appearance,
    - rated Brad Pitt's acting performance,
    - were related to the role/character played by Brad Pitt.
  6. Those comments were not included in the analysis which:
    - had an equivocal content,
    - were written in Arab, Chinese, Indonesian languages,
    - appreciated – in general – the films.
  7. The graphs present opinions on the variables analysed (see point no. 5 above).

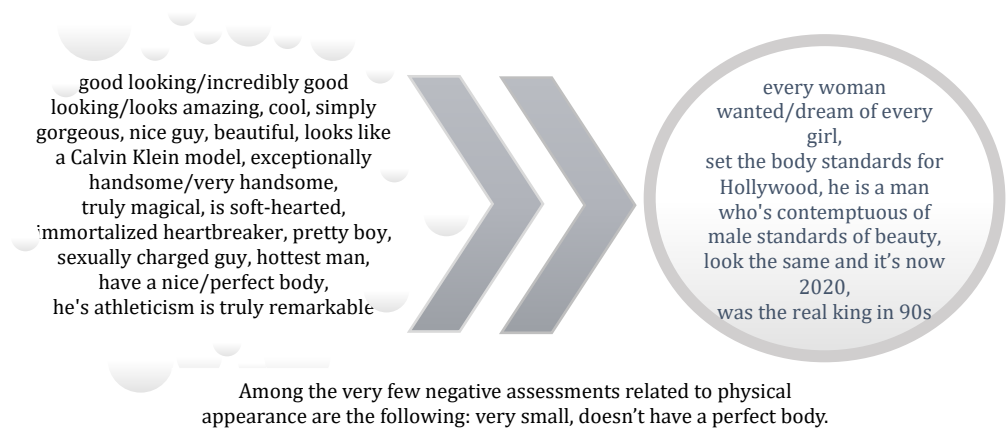
#### B. Commercials included in the analysis:

1. The analysis included the latest commercials, in which Brad Pitt appears as the new brand ambassador of the supported brand. These include:

- De'Longhi Perffecto (2021),
  - Brioni Spring/Summer -, respectively Fall/Winter collection (2020).
2. Data collection period:
    - De'Longhi Perffecto commercial: 01 August 2022,
    - Brioni commercials: 06 September 2022.
  3. Data source:
    - De'Longhi Perffecto commercial:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2fZoXDqGYM>,  
<https://fb.watch/g7Au-VtbmL/>.
    - Brioni commercial:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNoUEDkTcsc> -  
Spring/Summer,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KSuGc831Fw> -  
Fall/Winter.
  4. Comments that provided a general assessment of these commercials were not included in the analysis.

## Results and Discussions

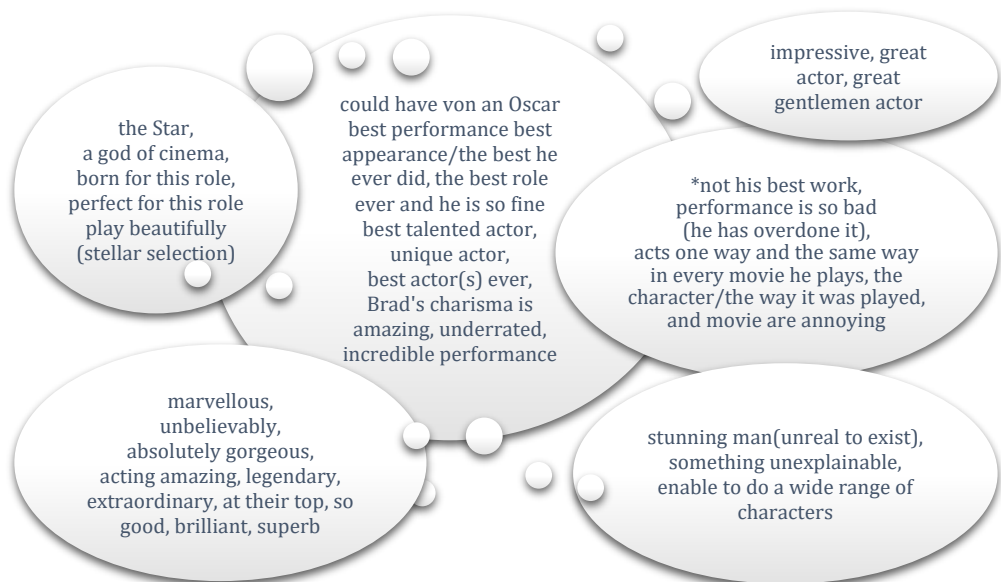
People have always been attracted to beautiful objects, but the desire to look good, to be beautiful is a global phenomenon that has taken on new dimensions (Madan et al., 2018), since “substantial benefits accrue to those who are attractive” (Bloch and Richins 1992, p. 3) with the remark that cultural and social factors influence the perception/interpretation of beauty (Yin and Pryor, 2012). Thus, the psychological effect of embodying beauty in marketing communications “can be profound and wide ranging in a culture” (Vacker and Key, 1993, p. 471). Furthermore, if the brand communicates internationally then marketers need to be aware “of how the portrayal of body ideals and cultural background of endorsers can affect marketing communications” (D’Alessandro and Chitty, 2011, p. 843). It should not be lost sight of the reality that attachment to a brand begins with winning hearts and then minds (McEwen, 2008), consequently the physical appearance of the endorser can direct consumer behaviour. In order to know the opinions - as a first step - we collected those data that refer to Brad Pitt’s appearance. The categorisation of the comments is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Appreciation of Brad Pitt’s physical appearance  
*Source:* authos’ compilation, based on the comments made on the films included in the analysis

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The second step was to collect data on the performance of Brad Pitt (Figure 2), as the quality of the actor's performance, i.e. the effort put into creating a legendary/epic performance, embodies Integrity in the brand-consumer relationship (McEwen, 2008). Integrity is really about the brand's attitude towards the consumer when a problem needs to be solved.

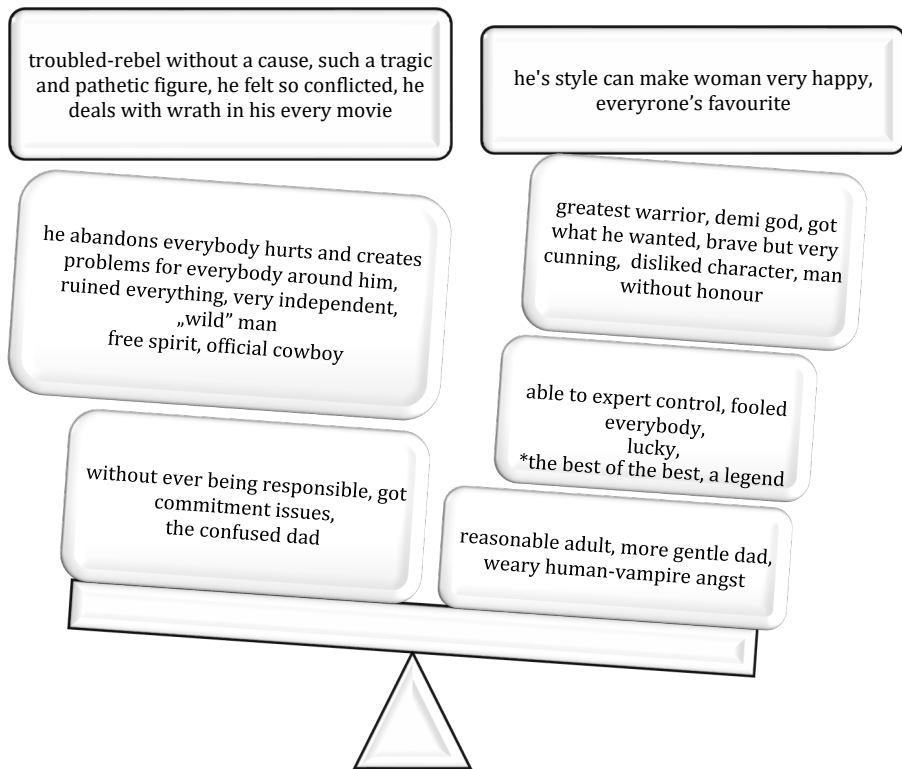


\* the number of those expressing dissatisfaction was extremely low

**Figure 2.** Brad Pitt's acting performance rating

Source: authors' compilation, based on opinions of the actor's performance

The characters played materialize those values that can be attributed to the actor, consequently to the brand supported. In relation to the characters played by Brad Pitt (Figure 3): Tristan Ludlow (*Legends of the Fall*), Louis de Pointe du Lac (*Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*), Tyler Durden (*Fight Club*) David Mills (*Seven*), Achilles (*Troy*), the following was outlined:



\* the assessment is made on the character played

**Figure 3.** Appreciation of the characters played by Brad Pitt

*Source:* authors' compilation, based on comments made about the characters played by Brad Pitt

At the end of 2019, the Brioni brand officially announces that the new brand ambassador will be Brad Pitt, who first appears in the advertisement presenting the Spring/Summer collection and then the Autumn/Winter collection in 2020. Following the content analysis (Table 1) of the commercials, the following can be noted:



**Table 1.** Content analysis of the Brioni commercials

The role Brad Pitt plays	Values endorsed by Brad Pitt
<p>A man:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. mature, attractive appearance, very masculine,</li> <li>2. professionally accomplished,</li> <li>3. with a very well-defined, refined style: apparently simple, but complex in its details,</li> <li>4. who is aware of his own values.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pleasure (the pleasure of expressing personality through attire).</li> <li>2. Self-esteem (the brand he supports).</li> <li>3. Freedom, independence (individual choice of outfits, without the help of an assistant).</li> <li>4. Achievement/success/luxury (the visual setting is predominantly white).</li> <li>5. Imagination, intelligence (combination of garments, typology of garments worn).</li> </ol>

*Source:* own, based on the Brioni commercials  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNoUEdkTcsc>,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KSuGc831Fw>

After categorising the data collected (comments on the Brioni commercials), the following can be concluded:

- o Brad Pitt is a character who becomes more and more attractive as the years go by: he is a public figure who manages to attract people’s attention (regardless of gender), becoming a true gentleman, an icon.
- o Brad Pitt is an actor of unparalleled talent.
- o Brad Pitt is a refined man with a remarkable masculine intelligence.
- o Brioni has made a good match with Brad Pitt<sup>5</sup>.
- o Brad Pitt is always the best, he is aware of his power of attraction.
- o Brad Pitt is a stylish man, a boss man.
- o The soundtrack, as an element of visual identity, appears as an element of contour in the commercial.

In the year 2021, Brad Pitt appears in the De’Longhi Perfecto commercial, directed by Damien Chazelle. Based on the content analysis (Table 2) of the commercial, the following can be concluded:

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<sup>5</sup> There was a single opinion expressing disagreement with that choice.

**Table 2.** Content analysis of the De’Longhi Perfetto commercial

The role Brad Pitt plays	Values endorsed by Brad Pitt
A man: 1. with an individual household, 2. professionally accomplished, 3. mature, wise and in harmony with himself, 4. handsome/attractive with a well-defined style.	1. Freedom, independence, peace (motorcycle, soundtrack <sup>6</sup> ). 2. Self-respect (buying a quality brand). 3. Small pleasures that make life more beautiful (coffee ritual). 4. Comfortable living (interior design of home). 5. Inner harmony, happiness, wisdom (facial expressions, behaviour/manner of expression). 6. Accomplishment/success (size of home, interior- exterior design).

Source: own, based on the De’Longhi Perfetto commercial  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2fZoXDqGYM>

Based on the comments regarding the De’Longhi Perfetto commercial, the following can be stated:

- The character is one of the most appreciated elements of visual identity. Overall, Brad Pitt’s character received far more positive than negative reviews. He is considered an attractive man who has starred in iconic films, his appearance in the commercial being in (perfect) harmony with the characters played in *Legends of the Fall*, *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*, *Seven*, *Troy*.
- Is an “unreal” character who is “perfect in every way”: a “perfect endorser”.
- Brad Pitt is compared to George Clooney (another two-time “Sexiest Man Alive” winning actor) celebrity endorser of the Nespresso brand... What else?
- The soundtrack is another important element of visual identity, as many of those who viewed the ad were interested in its origin.

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<sup>6</sup> This element of visual identity was created by Justin Hurwitz, an American film composer who won the 2016 Academy Award for Best Soundtrack for the film *La La Land* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justin\\_Hurwitz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justin_Hurwitz)).

- The commercial is not obvious to everyone: it is not clear whether the De'Longhi brand is a coffee machine brand, or also a coffee brand?
- The character (Brad Pitt), and the lifestyle presented, delimit the target segment.

## Conclusion

Based on the analyses, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ✓ Brad Pitt is one of those actors who sets the standards in terms of beauty, masculinity. The passing of the years does not affect the image of him negatively, on the contrary, his appearance is increasingly attractive. He represents an accomplished man, who knows his own values, who knows what he wants.
- ✓ He is a unique actor who cannot be reproduced by anyone else: Brad Pitt is a brand by himself.
- ✓ Brad Pitt's effort to play a certain character in an authentic way turns into Integrity, which means that the brand Brad Pitt endorses "will take responsibility for its products" (McEwen, 2008, p. 104).
- ✓ Even though the characters played are also endowed with negative characteristics, Brad Pitt is an attractive character because he is thus more real/more human and identification is easier.
- ✓ There is harmony between the way he acts/plays in the analysed films and the segment the supported brand addresses (e.g. Brad Pitt is a unique actor and the Brioni brand offers exclusive business products).
- ✓ A link can be seen between the values that determine the characters played in the films analysed and the values supported in the commercials analysed (e.g. personal freedom is very important for the character Tristan. In the De'Longhi Perffecto commercial, the motorcycle appears as a symbol of independence, of freedom).

According to what has been presented (1) the modern consumer is an informed consumer, who analyses advertising campaigns, based on accumulated knowledge, in order to capture the authenticity of the celebrity endorsement, (2) today, masculinity represents a remarkable differentiating element especially in a situation where the feminisation of men - in the world of brands - is not unusual.

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