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# 6<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON CORPORATE BRANDING, IDENTITY, IMAGE AND REPUTATION

*Theme:*

*Brand Purpose Under Pressure: Navigating Misinformation,  
Polarization, and Geopolitical Risk to Safeguard Corporate  
Identity, Image, and Reputation*

MILAN 16-18 JULY 2025

**COBIIR 2025**



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## Colloquium Theme

### **Brand Purpose Under Pressure: Navigating Misinformation, Polarization, and Geopolitical Risk to Safeguard Corporate Identity, Image, and Reputation**

In the face of rising geopolitical tensions, increasing socio-political polarization, and cycles of misinformation, corporate brands today operate in an environment of heightened complexity and uncertainty. At the core of contemporary corporate brand management lies brand purpose, a strategic asset that serves as a guiding beacon, aligning a company's values, identity, and actions with its image and reputation. Yet, maintaining a consistent, authentic, and above all credible brand purpose is now more challenging than ever before.

The term brand purpose, declared "Word of the Year" by the Academy of Marketing Science in 2018, has only grown in relevance. Brand purpose has been described in various ways: as the reason for a business's existence, 'the aspirational reason for being that inspires action benefiting shareholders, stakeholders, and global societies alike' (Afdhel & Jones, 2021, p. 13), and as 'a predominant component of [a corporate brand's] identity, meaning structure, and strategy, leading to productive engagement with some aspect of the world that transcends the brand's profits' (Williams, Escalas, & Morningstar, 2022, p. 703). A socio-cultural perspective on brand purpose means viewing it through the lens of meanings, values, symbols, and dialogues that collectively shape its narrative. This perspective considers brand purpose as a dynamic co-construction, continuously shaped and enacted through collective actions, interactions, and discourses (Biraghi, Gambetti, & Dalli, 2024). This dynamic is particularly evident in the digital era, where consumers, stakeholders, and brands navigate a broad array of technology-mediated engagement platforms (Melewar, Dennis, & Foroudi, 2021), mutually influencing the broader ecosystem of corporate brand identities, purposes, images, and reputations (Melewar & Saunders, 2000).



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Organizations today face increasing pressure from stakeholders to act with integrity and address societal challenges, making the risks of failing to deliver on brand purpose ever greater. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2023), 64% of consumers worldwide now make purchasing decisions based on a company's social or political stance, while 58% of respondents indicated they would boycott a brand they believe fails to live up to its stated purpose. Additionally, 53% of global consumers feel that businesses are not fulfilling their promises regarding purpose and responsibility (RepTrak Report, 2024). These trends highlight the growing gap between brand purpose as a strategic ideal and its practical execution. Annual surveys, such as Gallup's survey on business in society and Euromonitor's (2024) survey on global consumer trends, reveal an emerging skepticism toward brand activism, with consumer interest in brands taking sociopolitical stances on polarizing topics slightly waning, reflecting a growing distrust in businesses' actual societal impact.

This colloquium seeks to address the critical role that brand purpose plays in shaping contemporary corporate identity, image, and reputation and to explore how it can be sustained in a fragmented and polarized market and social context. We aim to examine the theoretical, strategic, and ethical dimensions of purpose-driven branding, providing a platform for scholars and practitioners to discuss the challenges of balancing strategic and cultural coherence with market pressures (Holt, 2002; Gambetti & Biraghi, 2023). Specifically, this colloquium explores how companies can safeguard their brand purpose and ensure its relevance in a world increasingly characterized by conflicting narratives, misinformation, and skepticism.



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## Keynote Speakers



### PROFESSOR TC MELEWAR

*Middlesex University London, UK*  
[T.C.Melewar@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:T.C.Melewar@mdx.ac.uk)

Dr T C Melewar (BSc, MBA, PhD) is Professor of Marketing and Strategy at The Business School, Middlesex University London, UK. Before that he was a Professor at Brunel University and Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland. TC also taught at the University of Warwick and De Montfort University in Leicester. He obtained his PhD from Loughborough University of Technology, an MBA from Cleveland State University, USA and BSc (Business) from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA. He has also taught MBA and MIB programmes in Russia, Republic of Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Germany, France, Sweden, Indonesia and Malaysia. He was awarded the Honorary Fellow by the Academy of Marketing in 2016.



### PROFESSOR YIJING WANG

*Erasmus School of History, Culture  
and Communication, Rotterdam*  
[Y.wang@eshcc.eur.nl](mailto:Y.wang@eshcc.eur.nl)

Yijing Wang, Ph.D. is a strategic communication scholar specialized in the study of crisis communication and sustainability transition. She is Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She serves as Chair of the ECREA Risk and Crisis Communication Section, Editor-in-Chief of Corporate Reputation Review, and Editorial Board Member of Public Relations Review and Business Horizons. She is the Principal Investigator and Coordinator of the Horizon Europe project CUES (EUR 6.5 million, 2024-2028), a Management Committee Member of the COST Action project Alert Hub, and a member of the Crisis Communication Think Tank (CCTT). Yijing obtained her PhD degree in Corporate Reputation and Stakeholder Management from Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam. She is the author of numerous international publications in journals such as the Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of International Management, Business Horizons, Convergence, Public Relations Review, Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, and Media and Communication.



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# Colloquium Programme

**Day 1 – Room C.014**

**16/07/25 | 14:00-18:00**

**14:00 – 14:30: Registration** with coffee break

**14:30 – 15:00:** Welcome Address from Colloquium Co-Chairs and Colloquium Overview

**15:00 – 15:15:** Welcome Address by Professor TC Melewar  
Colloquium Founder

**15:15 – 16:00: Keynote speech** by Professor **Yijing Wang** “A  
*READINESS State of Mind for Managing AI Risks and Crises*”

**16:00 – 17:00: Session 1 – Chair Rossella Gambetti, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore:** *Co-creating Purpose: Stakeholders, Sustainability & Engagement*

**Francesca Serravalle, Milena Viassone**

*“Teamwork makes the dream work”: The Role played by Multiple Stakeholders in the co-creation of a City Brand*



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**Alessia Anzivino, Mirko Olivieri**

*Enhancing Nonprofit Branding with AI*

**Emmanouela Kokkinopoulou, Ioanna Papasolomou, Lucia Porcu,  
Demetris Vrontis**

*Business meets meaning: A new path to sustainable engagement*

**Ozlem DoUll, Lara Bertola**

*Audience Co-creation of Brand Purpose through Parasocial  
Interactions: A Qualitative study of MÂneskinís Digital Community*

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**17:00 – 18:00: Aperitivo and socializing**

**Day 2 – Room C.014**

**17/07/25 | 09:30-17:00\*\***

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**09:30 – 10:00: Registration** with coffee break



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**10:00 – 11:20: Session 2 – Chair André Luiz Soares, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore:** *Ethics, Impact and the Evolving Boundaries of Brand Responsibility*

**Hamed Aghakhani, Mehdi Akhgari, Hadi Eslami**

*The Price of Purpose: How Advertising Framing Affects Consumer Valuation of Rescued Food*

**Linda Hassaine, Hamida Skandrani, Kaouther Kooli**

*The impact of activist brand's advocacy and customers' personal beliefs on purchasing intentions*

**Rossella C. Gambetti, Silvia Biraghi, Angela A. Beccanulli, Stefania M. Vitulli**

*The brand/persona dilemma through the lens of Vivienne Westwood activism*

**Héla Sassi, Hamida Skandrani, Kaouther Kooli, Olfa Masmoudi**

*Tensive Semiotic Analysis of Negative Events and their impact on the Product Image and on the Values of the Made in Tunisia Olive Oil*

**Ridhima Bhanot Sharma, Mitra Amini**

*Purpose Driven Branding: A Systematic Review & Future Research Directions*

**11:20 – 12:20: Panel with managers** *“Navigating the Storm: Safeguarding Brand Purpose in a Fractured World”, Moderated by Silvia Biraghi:*

**Elisa Rota**, President & Founder Alchemilla

**Simonetta Schillaci**, Executive Vicepresident Fondo Filantropico Italiano

**Sarah Vergani**, Corporate Communication Manager Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore





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**12:30 – 14:00:** Lunch Break

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**14:00 – 15:30: Keynote speech** by Professor **TC Melewar** “Ranking, Reputation and Research (3Rs): Voyage, Vista and Viewpoint (3Vs)”

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**15:30 – 16:00:** Coffee Break

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**16:00 – 17:00: Session 3 – Chair Angela Beccanulli, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore:** *Brands Under Fire: Misinformation, Crises and the Quest for Authenticity*

**Francesca Negri**

*From the US to Italy: The Spread of the Tesla Boycott and Its Crisis Management Implications*

**Amira Jenane Bayoudh, Jouhaina Gherib**

*Dimensions and Construction Process of Corporate Reputation in an Uncertain and Complex Environment : Evidence from Tunisia*

**Okai Ozbal, Omer Topaloglu, Elshad Abdullayev, Teoman Duman**

*Driver-Based Brand Equity in Ride-Hailing: Exploring Trust, Resonance, and Platform Experiences*

**Khaled Aboulnasr, Youngok Song**

*Strategic Purpose Adaptation: Evaluating Brand Responses to External Pressures and their Impact on Consumer Perceptions*

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**\*\*19:30 – Social Dinner *La Cascina Cuccagna***

*(Via Privata Cuccagna, 2/4, Milano)*



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## Day 3 - Room C.012

18/07/25 | 09:30-14:30

**09:30 – 10:30: Session 4 – Chair TC Melewar, Middlesex**

**University London:** *Trust in the Platform Age: Technology, Experience and AI Mediation*

**Selcen Ozturkcan, Tatiana Anisimova**

*Preserving Brand Authenticity Amid AI-Driven Misinformation: Sustaining Consumer Trust in the Digital Era*

**André Luiz Vieira Soares, Silvia Biraghi, Angela A. Beccanulli, Rossella C. Gambetti**

*Violence and precarity: How platform workers absorb the fallout of consumer polarization*

**Mehdi Rahmani**

*Examining the Impact of AI Chatbot Quality on User Proactive Engagement: Considering the Roles of AI Trust, Cognitive Absorption, Motivation and Decision Making*

**Hamida Skandrani, Nesrine Tmimi**

*The Destination Atmospherics Variables and their Impact on the Tourists' Attitudinal and Behavioral Responses*



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**10:30 – 11:30: Session 5 – Chair Grazia Murtarelli, IULM University:** *Aligning Brand Identity: Narrative Consistency in a Fragmented World*

**Maria Chalevelaki, Héra Sassi**

*From Sacred to Shared: Balenciaga's Brand Identity at the Met Gala through the lens of semiotics*

**Grazia Murtarelli, Stefania Romenti, Elanor Colleoni**

*Mapping Brand Purpose Under Pressure: An AI- and API-Enhanced Model for Cross-Platform Narrative Alignment*

**Xuan Truong Vu, Thi Huyen Ho Nga**

*Maintaining Brand Purpose in a Volatile Environment: Lessons on Consistency and Authenticity from Vietnam's Leading Corporations*

**Umme Kalsoom, T.C. Melewar, Alexis Chapman, Michael Kourtoubelides, Pantea Foroudi**

*Enhancing Corporate Brand Identity Through Immersive Technology: The Persuasive Power of AR: Conceptualization and Scale Development*

**Carlos Victor Costa**

*Reconciling brand purpose and positioning in a changing corporate sustainability landscape and the emergence of the Ephemeral Brands*

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**11:40 – 12:40: Collaborative session** *"Purpose-Driven Academia: Collaborating for Educational and Community Transformation"* with coffee break, Moderated by **Angela Beccanulli**

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**12:40 – 14:30:** Closing Ceremony and Lunch



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## Colloquium Venue



**Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – room C.014 and C.012**  
Via Carducci 28/30, Milan

### Nearest metro stations:

**Cadorna (M1/M2)** – about 76 m, 2 min walk

**San' Ambrogio (M2/M4)** – about 165 m, 3 min walk

### Map of the venue and nearby metro stations:

[Università Cattolica \(room C.014\)](#)

[Cadorna station \(M1/M2\)](#)

[San' Ambrogio station \(M2/M4\)](#)





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## Social dinner venue

### **Cascina Cuccagna** Via Privata Cuccagna 2/4, Milan

#### **Nearby stops:**

Viale Umbria/Via Muratori (bus 90, 91, 92, etc.) – about 150 m, 3 min walk

Via Comelico (tram 16) – about 254 m, 4 min walk

#### **Map of the dinner venue and nearby stops:**

##### [Cascina Cuccagna](#)

#### **Directions from the University to the Social Dinner:**

##### **Suggested route (metro + tram):**

Walk ~3 minutes to Sant'Ambrogio station (M2).

Take M2 (Green Line) towards Cascina Gobba / Cologno Nord.

Get off at Lodi T.I.B.B. (6 stops, ~10 min).

Walk ~9 minutes to Cascina Cuccagna.

Total travel time: ~20–25 minutes.

##### **Alternative route (walking + tram):**

Walk to Cadorna station (M1/M2).

Take tram 9 (direction Porta Genova) or tram 24 (direction Vigentino).

Get off at Piazza Cinque Giornate.

Walk ~8–10 minutes to Cascina Cuccagna.

