

# Pointofview



## PISA VS FLORENCE: THE TWO WAYS TO MAKE A BRAND ATTRACTIVE

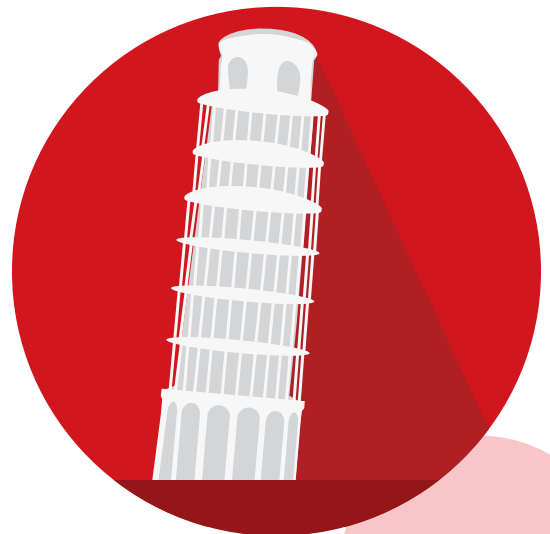
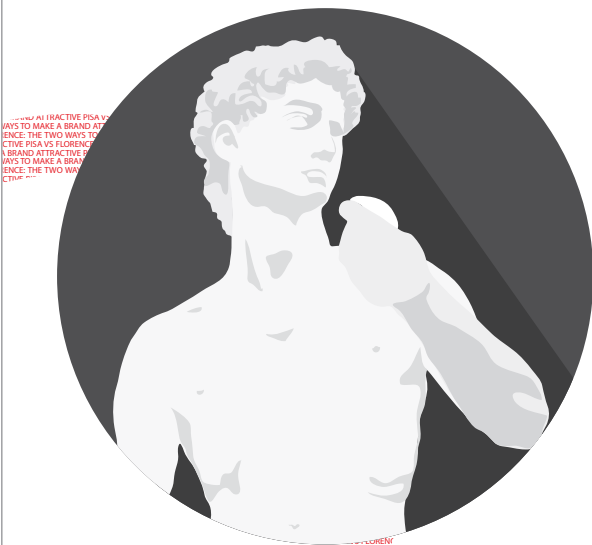
Louis Rougier, Ipsos UU, Chief Research Officer



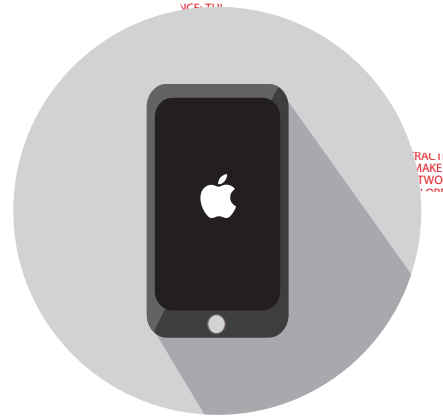
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Pisa, on the other hand, has no real image or identifiable personality. Without visiting, it is difficult for one to imagine what the city might look like. So how is it that the city is able to attract as many visitors? Pisa hosts a world-renowned feature, which has not only become the icon of the city, but also attracts visitors from all over the world: The Pisa Tower.

These examples illustrate two very different ways for brands to become attractive: Strong **resonance** and high **familiarity**.



The importance of a **brand's icons** is far less recognized. People feel close to Apple because of its image (the brand stands for creativity, passion, user-friendliness), but also because very concrete icons have built a real familiarity with the brand: flagship products (Macintosh, iPod, iPhone, iPad), ambassadors (Steve Jobs), an instantly recognizable logo, and specific design characteristics. Some years ago, it was these icons that made Apple truly stand out from competitors such as Samsung, another brand with a positive image but no strong icons at this time. Today, thanks to well-established flagship products like the Galaxy, Samsung is catching up.



## What make icons so powerful?

1. **They are absolutely unique to the brand.** You have the Pisa Tower or you don't. Nobody can steal it from you. What this tower is to Pisa or the Beetle to Volkswagen is not a matter of degree but of nature.  
(Conversely, no image characteristic can be totally owned by one brand. Volvo stands for "safety" and Mercedes for "robustness" but over time competitors could take ownership of these characteristics. It's a matter of degree, not of nature).
2. **Icons are also intemporal** (as long as they stay associated with the brand). The Beetle had disappeared from the Volkswagen portfolio for 20 years, but it was still alive as an icon. The same with Steve Jobs, although he has now passed away, he is still very much alive in people's minds.
3. **Icons do not belong only to the brand, but to the general culture, and then, to people themselves.** The Nike swoosh has become a cultural code, as has Coca-Cola's red can. Icons are like gifts that pave the relationship between a brand and people, generally for many years. That's why they act as such strong concrete emotional drivers.



The best option is to leverage both dimensions and to follow Venice's example: Thanks to both a high resonance (the city stands for romance, mystery, beauty) and multiple strong icons (the gondolas, St. Mark's Square, the Guggenheim museum, the carnival, the Mostra, etc.), the city is able to attract five times more visitors than Florence or Pisa.

## Is your brand Florence-like (high *resonance*, but low *familiarity*)?

For brands, the more icons they have identified with them, the better. In Venice, there is no competition between the carnival, the Vaporetto's and the Rialto Bridge. They are not of the same nature, and even if they were (e.g. various museums), they complement each other to convey a positive image for the city. Incidentally, this also means that a brand can continuously think about how to strengthen its icons, whereas once brand positioning is set, it is set for a quite long time.

## Is your brand Pisa-like (high familiarity, but low resonance)?

In this case, we recommend first to identify a positioning in resonance with the target's aspirations, values, and style. Be careful that conversely to the icon's logic, when it comes to brand image, more does not always mean better. Adding multiple characteristics to a brand's image can be dangerous. It's very difficult to be seen as both a "family car" and a "sports car" – you have to choose one or the other. We must often challenge the temptation that many of our clients have, to broaden their brand positioning in the hopes of making it stronger. The risk is that in doing so you actually dilute the overall image of the brand. In fact, the more coherent the brand's image, the better off it will be.

Then, we recommend leveraging the strength of existing icons to build the expected brand image. Do we want to make Pisa an artistic city? If so, let's organize an annual event to redecorate the Pisa Tower. Do we prefer to make Pisa a sporty city? If so, let's organize an annual cycling event around the Tower. Suddenly, the Pisa Tower will not be seen as just a tower, but a powerful driver of the brand's image.



## Contact

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