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Pope Francis as a Human Brand.

A new application of the Customer-Based Brand Equity model.

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ANNO ACCADEMICO 2020/2021

# Index

Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 1 – Pope Francis’ relevance and leadership	
1.1 Pope Francis’ relevance: a secondary data analysis.....	2
1.1.1 After the crisis of 2018.....	2
1.1.2 Before the Pandemic.....	4
1.1.3 During Covid-19 pandemic.....	6
1.2 Pope Francis’ Pontificate.....	8
1.2.1 The least and the poor.....	8
1.2.2 Young generations.....	9
1.2.3 Environment protection.....	10
1.2.4 Brotherhood among peoples and religions.....	10
1.2.5 Church reforms – Simplicity and Transparency.....	11
1.2.6 Sexual abuse.....	12
1.3 Vatican Communication 2.0 – Pope Francis’ communication revolution.....	12
1.3.1 Pope Francis’ communicative power.....	12
1.3.2 Management of Vatican Media.....	14
1.4 Conclusions on Pope Francis’ relevance.....	17
CHAPTER 2 – Human Brand Literature Review and CBBE model	
2.1 Human brands literature review.....	19
2.1.1 Thomson’s contribute: ARC model.....	19
2.1.2 Role of authenticity.....	20
2.1.3 Need for interaction.....	21
2.2 Celebrity theory literature review.....	23
2.2.1 Celebrity and endorsement.....	25
2.3 Spiritual leader: un-explored area in human brands and CBBE model introduction.....	26
2.4 Brand Equity.....	27
2.5 Customer Based Brand Equity model.....	28
2.5.1 Brand Salience.....	30
2.5.2 Brand Performance and Brand Imagery.....	30
2.5.3 Brand responses: consumer judgments and feelings.....	31
2.5.4 Consumer Brand Resonance.....	31
2.5.5 Different paths to reach an end goal.....	32

2.6 A CBBE model for Pope Francis.....	32
2.6.1 Human Brand Saliency.....	33
2.6.2 Human Brand Performance and Human Brand Imagery.....	33
2.6.3 Consumer Judgments and Consumer Feelings.....	34
2.6.4 Human Brand Resonance.....	34
2.6.5 CBBE pyramid for Pope Francis.....	35
2.7 Marketing for religious organizations.....	36
2.8 Research Question.....	37

### CHAPTER 3 – Data collection and analysis

3.1 Model.....	39
3.2 Methodology.....	40
3.3 Measures.....	41
3.3 Data Analysis.....	42
3.4.1 Data results – ANOVA.....	43
3.4.2 Post Hoc analysis – Bonferroni test.....	46
3.4.3 ANOVA conclusions.....	49
3.4.4 “First thought” analysis.....	49
3.5 First Conclusions.....	51
Conclusions and future research.....	53
References.....	55

## Introduction

Human brand has been one of the most discussed topics in marketing in the last years. During this decade, scholars have deepened this theory, coming up with new theoretical models. Human brands play a key role in our societies, they have the power to influence people and to bring competitive advantage to companies they decide to bond with.

Human brands have unique characteristics, so the researchers have started to study how to perfectly manage these figures and how to improve their inspiring power on people. Until today, human brands have been associated with four main categories: CEO's, sport, artists/movie stars and politicians; all together, they are considered "celebrities". Celebrities have always been the one and only application for human brand theory, while many other fields would deserve to be investigated. Indeed, a gap in the literature was found in the application of human brand theory to religious leaders.

One of the most influential religious leaders in the world is Pope Francis. His papacy has been representing a change of course for the Church and he is one of the most appreciated global leaders. He was chosen in 2013 by the Conclave to fight the reputational crises that was affecting the Church before his pontificate, and not surprisingly Pope Francis' innovative manner and historical decisions have often left the world speechless. Through his commitment, he is building a new image of the Church either for Catholics or non-believers.

After eight full years of Pope Francis' pontificate, it is very interesting to study how he is perceived by the population and to what extent he is able to influence people with his opinions. This investigation aims to address Pope Francis as a human brand and to study how people who differ in religious belief make judgements about him.

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) by Keller is the theoretical model chosen to analyze the Pontiff. Through this, it is possible to examine the process that leads people to bond and to be engaged with a human brand. The six building blocks of the CBBE pyramid are: Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgements, Feelings and Resonance.

This study takes a new perspective, because it considers a religious leader as a human brand; moreover COVID-19 conditions radically changed the role of world leaders; the pandemic time has marked a turning point for many global leaders. Starting from an analysis based on secondary data, this investigation applies a revised CBBE model to the Pontiff and it gains evidences about Pope Francis' brand equity among diverse segments of populations who differ in religious belief. Indeed, atheists, agnostics, non practicing believers and practicing believers were taken into account for this work. The results reveal how Pope Francis is positively judged by people, the CBBE pyramid clearly shows how Pope Francis receives good evaluations in almost every step of the building process for brand equity, but his end-goals are not reached for everybody.

The independent variable of this model is the religious belief, the dependent variable is brand equity and my main hypothesis is that Pope Francis' brand equity changes in relation to the degree of religiosity.

# CHAPTER 1

## Pope Francis' relevance and leadership

### 1.1 Pope Francis' relevance: a secondary data analysis

It was 19:06 of March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 when the white smoke came out into the sky of Rome and Jorge Maria Bergoglio became the 266<sup>th</sup> Pope of the Catholic Church, choosing the name "Francis". Pope Bergoglio introduced some innovation since the first day of his papacy: before him, there had never been a Pope either coming from the Jesuit order, or Sud-American and no one had never chosen the name of the Saint of Assisi. This gesture was a symbol of Bergoglio's closeness to poor and last people in modern societies. The beginning of his pontificate represented a collection of "*first times ever*", his election and his first choices became hot topics and many experts defined them as shattering (CNN, 2013).

Pope Francis has been a change of course for the Church during these eight years, his spontaneity and simplicity have been constantly reversed in words and actions. This change of course was well perceived all around the world, indeed the global consensus around Pope Francis has always been bigger than the one of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI<sup>th</sup>.














However, Pope Francis and the Church were hit by an image crisis in 2018 due to series of sexual abuse scandals in the U.S., which lead to decrease of the approval for the Holy Father. Nevertheless, Pope Francis is nowadays a figure of global leadership and to understand his relevance, it is necessary to provide an analysis about the reputation of Pope Francis relating to other current world leaders. This study was conducted by collecting secondary data on public opinion about global leaders and it is divided in three sections: A. After the crisis of 2018, B. Before the pandemic, C. During Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 1.1.1 After the crisis of 2018

According to Forbes, the classic year-end report of 2018 "*The world's most powerful people*" affirmed that Pope Francis ranked 6<sup>th</sup>, behind Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Angela Merkel and Jeff Bezos (Forbes, 2018).

Gallup International in its report at the end of the same year highlighted how the world was suffering a "leadership crisis": people did not believe in their own leaders. Among the European government leaders, only two registered a positive overall rating at the end of 2018 (Gallup International, 2019). These outcomes were revealed by interviews conducted on a sample of 50000 people coming from all around the globe. By the end of 2018 and at the start of 2019, Pope Francis was the global leader with the highest approval rating: 53% favorable opinions vs 23% unfavorable and a net score of +30% (in the previous year was +29%). In the Figure 1 it is possible to appreciate the ranking of world leaders in 2019:

Fig. 1 – Public opinion of global leaders (Gallup International, 2019)

Base: Global Average	EoY Survey 2019			EoY Survey 2018			EoY Survey 2017		
	Favourable	Unfavourable	Net Score 2018	Favourable	Unfavourable	Net Score 2018	Favourable	Unfavourable	Net Score 2017
 Pope Francis	53%	23%	<b>30%</b>	51%	22%	<b>+29</b>	56%	18%	<b>+38</b>
 German Chancellor Angela Merkel	46%	31%	<b>15%</b>	45%	31%	<b>+14</b>	49%	29%	<b>+20</b>
 French President Emmanuel Macron	40%	33%	<b>7%</b>	38%	32%	<b>+6</b>	45%	24%	<b>+21</b>
 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi	26%	28%	<b>-2%</b>	24%	22%	<b>+2</b>	30%	22%	<b>+8</b>
 British Prime Minister Boris Johnson (Theresa May for 2017-2018)	30%	38%	<b>-8%</b>	35%	31%	<b>+4</b>	38%	31%	<b>+7</b>
 Turkish President Erdoğan	30%	40%	<b>-10%</b>	28%	40%	<b>-12</b>	28%	40%	<b>-12</b>
 Russian President Vladimir Putin	36%	48%	<b>-12%</b>	35%	47%	<b>-12</b>	43%	40%	<b>+3</b>
 Chinese President Xi Jinping	29%	41%	<b>-12%</b>	28%	37%	<b>-9</b>	37%	31%	<b>+6</b>
 Saudi Arabia King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud	25%	37%	<b>-12%</b>	24%	35%	<b>-11</b>	26%	32%	<b>-6</b>
 Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro	21%	35%	<b>-14%</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
 Iranian President Hassan Rouhani	21%	39%	<b>-18%</b>	18%	37%	<b>-19</b>	24%	33%	<b>-9</b>
 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu	21%	41%	<b>-20%</b>	21%	36%	<b>-15</b>	25%	33%	<b>-8</b>
 US President Donald Trump	31%	58%	<b>-27%</b>	29%	59%	<b>-30</b>	31%	58%	<b>-27</b>

Appreciation toward Pope Francis seems to be quite homogeneous in the world: the highest percentage of people who declared to have a “*very favorable*” or “*somewhat favorable*” opinion of Pope Francis was in Latin America (73%). In Europe and Africa, the approval rating was between 60% and 65%, in USA 55%, in East Asia 51%, in West Asia 26% and in India only 6% because 89% of respondents “*do not know*” or “*do not respond*” (Gallup International, 2018).

### 1.1.2 Before the Pandemic

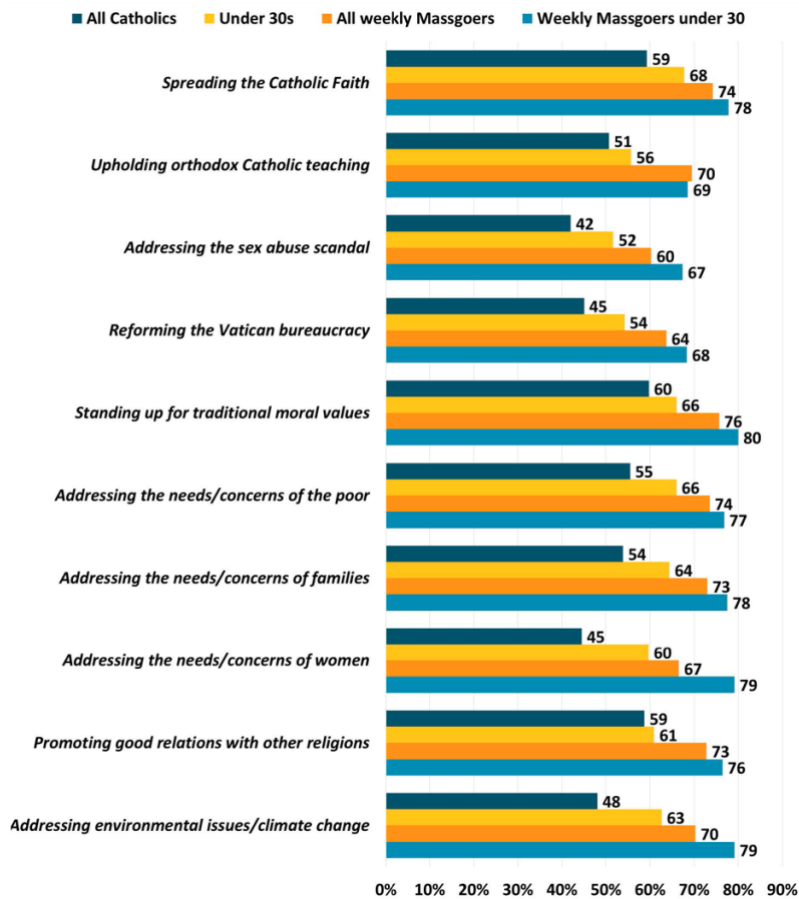
Fortunately, there are some relevant works about Pope Francis’ liking just before the pandemic. These reports are crucial because they make clear what was the perception about the Pontiff just before Covid-19 and how it changed with the global emergency.

A survey realized among Catholic people coming from England, Wales and Scotland demonstrated that 50% of respondents considered Pope Francis “*a change for the better*”, instead only 7% “*a change for the worse*”; the remaining portion was in the middle of these two opposite poles. The percentage of “*change for the better*” rose up to 55% if just under30 population is considered (Bullivant, 2020). Among under30 if we look at the people who go to the Mass at least once a week, it is clear that people thought the Pope was doing an *excellent/good* job on several topics, for example:

- “*Standing up for traditional moral values*” (80%)
- “*Addressing the needs/concerns of women*” (79%)
- “*Addressing environmental issues/climate change*” (79%)
- “*Spreading the Catholic Faith*” (78%)
- “*Addressing the needs/concerns of families*” (78%)

In the Figure 2 it is possible to point out the job approval rating about the Pope on ten crucial matters.

Fig. 2 – ‘Job approval’ rating of the Pope (Bullivant, 2020)



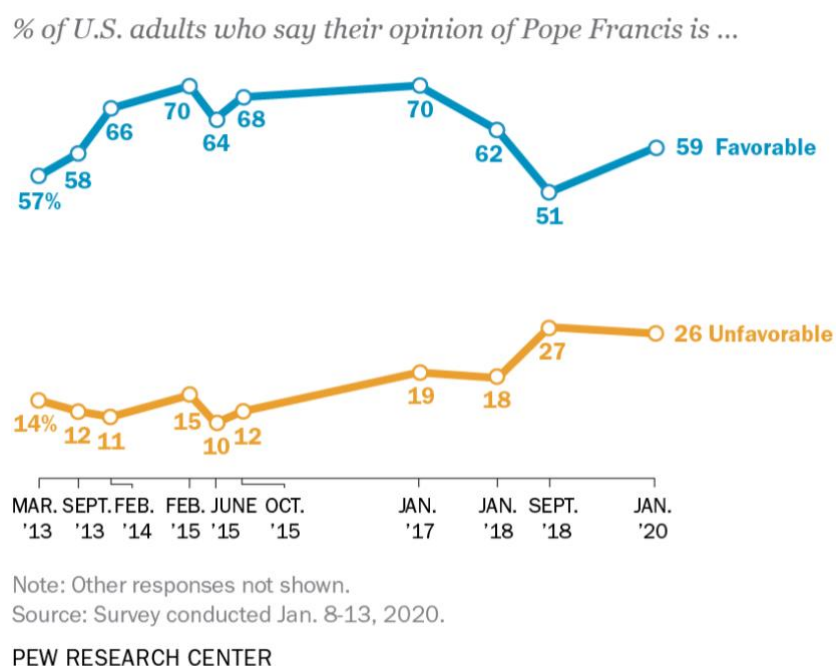
The report conducted in April 2020 on a large American sample by the Pew Research Center found similar results and that would make clear that even before Covid-19 (this survey was distributed in January 2020), the figure of Pope Francis was re-gaining consensus in the U.S.A. Indeed, in this continent, in 2018 either Catholics or non-believers started to question the Church and the Pontiff, but this was principally related to a series of sex abuse scandals among American priests that came out during the year.

The main critic toward Pope Francis was a lack of clear and undeniable conviction for all the guilty parties, however it is known that Bergoglio sees in sexual abuse one of the most horrible sin a person could do; in the movie *“Pope Francis – A man of his word”* he affirms *“La Iglesia no puede quedar indiferente a esto. Frente a la pedofilia, tolerancia cero! [...] Eso no tiende salida de otro tipo, porque es un crimen, no...peor! Es dejarlo con vida, pero destruido”* which means not only that the Church must not cover any case of pedophilia, but also that the Pope has no tolerance for such thing, which he considers worse than a crime, it is like to destroy someone inside and let him live with it.

Anyway, American population perceived a lack of punishment from Pope Francis and the Church as well, this was also verified by another study of the Pew Research Center, in which it was explained how, about the topic *“sexual abuse scandal”*, Pope Francis obtained 54% of opinions *“excellent”* or *“good”*, versus 31% *“only fair”* or *“poor”* in 2014, instead in 2018 data overturned and just 31% of the evaluations were positive against 62% negative (Pew Research Center, 2018).

As it was preannounced at the beginning of this paragraph, sex abuse scandal crisis has been managed in the following years and in the Figure 3 it is possible to appreciate the new growth in public opinion of Pope Francis.

Fig. 3 – Six-in-ten U.S adults view Pope Francis favorably (Pew Research Center, 2020)





### 1.1.3 During Covid-19 pandemic

Clearly, the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19 marked a turning point for the approval of many world leaders. Saint Leo University between September and October 2020 conducted a survey among American population about Pope Francis' actions during the first months of this global emergency and it showed good outcomes. This investigation attested an increasing trend in the approval for Pope Francis in 2020: from 52.2% of approval in February 2020 (which is a percentage in line with the one provided by Gallup international at the end of 2019), to 56.4% in October 2020 (Saint Leo University, 2020).

This growth was also testified by the growing number of people that listened to the Pope more carefully during pandemic. In this harsh 2020 Pope Francis has been authoritative and cozy; the data extracted from Auditel Italia on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (the day of the Urbi et Orbi address and blessing) strengthen this last statement. Pope Francis' universal prayer in the first lockdown warmed people's hearts and a great part of the Italian population followed the event on live TV. In Italy the total amount of viewers exceeded 17 millions: Pope Francis' historical walk, alone through the rain in the desert Saint Peter square registered a record audience, beating the biggest TV events, like Sanremo Music Festival or President Mattarella's year-end speech.

Another event during pandemic was the Via Crucis of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 when almost 8 million of Italian people chose Pope Francis as their night show. The only TV events with more share and total viewers in Italy last year were Giuseppe Conte's live speeches. In Figure 4 it is reported a table with data from Auditel Italia regarding major TV events in Italy since the beginning of pandemic.

Fig. 4 – Major Italian TV events since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic.

Processing from data Auditel (19/3/2021)

Event	Date	Share (average)	Italian viewers
Giuseppe Conte's speech	26/4/20	74,58%	24 031 000
Urbi et Orbi blessing Pope Francis	27/3/20	64,60%	17 400 000
Year-end speech president Mattarella	31/12/20	64,95%	15 272 000
Last night Sanremo Music Festival 2021	7/3/21	53,50%	10 715 000
Sanremo Music Festival 2020	04/02/2020 - 08/02/2020	54,78%	10 113 600
Napoli - Juventus, Coppa Italia final	17/6/20	39,60%	10 202 000
Il commissario Montalbano - 14a season	09/03/20 e 16/03/20	36,10%	9 437 000
Via Crucis Pope Francis	10/4/20	25,60%	7 927 000

During the pandemic, Pope Francis has been constantly caring about the people: from workers to the least of societies. Pope Francis always preaches to not leave anybody behind, exhorting people (priests in the first place) to not forget about who is in the need. He also formed a special Covid-19 commission in Vatican City to solicit the Church in providing possible concrete solutions to the critic socio-economic situation (Vatican News, 2020).

Even though Pope Francis stopped the majority of his initiatives in 2020, he decided to make a private visit to Assisi for preparing the release of his third encyclical "*Fratelli Tutti*" and in 2021 he was able to travel to

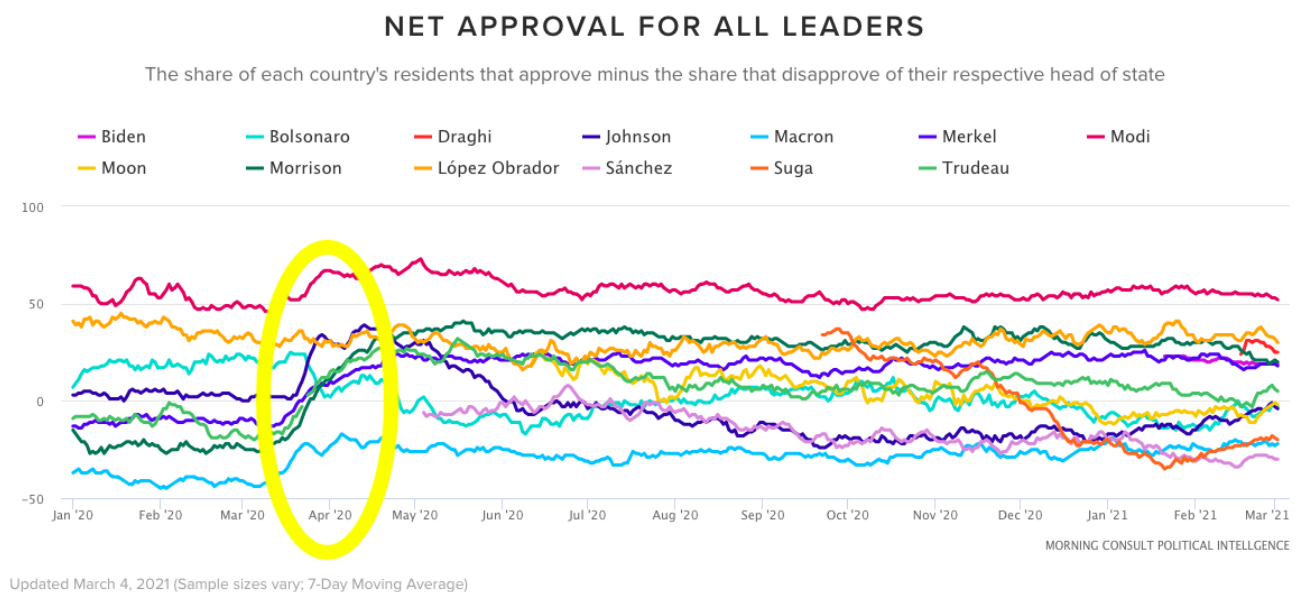
Iraq. Pope Francis made an historical and unprecedented decision, he went to Iraq between March 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2021 to spread peace between religions and brotherhood among peoples. The most iconic moment of this apostolic journey was a Mass celebrated with Iraqis Catholics in Erbil’s Franso Hariri stadium.

The first ever papal visit of this country had a global coverage due to the importance and uniqueness of this decision: some of the biggest newspaper underlined the security and sanitary danger the Pope was going to face (The Irish Post, 2021), the BBC qualified this trip as “his riskiest visit yet” (BBC, 2021).

However, it is right to say that Covid-19 was a catastrophic event, but initially it brought benefits to the image of the majority of world leaders. Indeed, during the first months of this pandemic, people trusted more their own figures of leadership. All politics leaders gained approval in March/April 2020, that would explain the growth of consensus toward Pope Francis in 2020 (as testified by the Saint Leo University) as well.

The problem was that many world leaders dissipated the consensus they gained in the first months of emergency, while others were able to strengthen their leadership. Through the Figure 5 (which is taken from Morning Consult report of March 4<sup>th</sup> 2021) it may be noticed how the Net Approval Rating of all major world leaders went up in March/April 2020, at the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic:

Fig. 5 – Net Approval for all leaders (Morning Consult, 2021)



Even if relevant data are not available yet, it seems the Pontiff was one of the few who preserved the consensus gained and not wasting it in the second half of 2020, as instead it happened to Justin Trudeau, Boris Johnson (Morning Consult, 2021), Donald Trump (Gallup International, 2021), Bolsonaro (Statista, 2020) and Giuseppe Conte (Istituto Ixé, 2021).

Lucio Brunelli, head of Tv2000, affirmed that pandemic time was the first global moment in which people realized all the stereotypes about the Pope were false. Through the online daily Mass from Domus Sanctae Marthae, people had the chance to truly know Pope Francis (Vatican News, 2021). This period had also a strong impact on the reputation of the Pontiff: for the first time, people profoundly bonded with Pope Francis, not forming or listening to simplifications about him. The online streaming Mass has been a success for two months and it was another example of Pope Francis' communicative power during Covid-19 time.

Live Mass scored more than 30% of share (Tv + online streaming viewers), an astonishing result if it is considered the time the Mass was on air (7:00 am) and the fact that even in silent phases of the celebration, people did not switch from Pope Francis and that was an evidence about people's participation to these moments. Pope Francis suspended the online Mass in May 2020 to not spread too much the image of a "virtual Church" (Vatican News, 2021).

2020 was not only Covid-19, this year had other key events which impacted the Pope's influence in the world. The biggest political reassessment was the presidential election in the U.S.A, with Donald Trump's departure in favor of Joe Biden. As it is known Donald Trump has always been seen in contrast with pope Francis and the already cited decrease of Pope Francis in the U.S was also connected to the difficult relationship with Trump. Unfortunately, there are no accessible data about the change of Pope Francis' equity in the U.S.A after 2020 elections, it would be necessary to deepen the reputation of the Pontiff in the American continent during these first months of Joe Biden's presidency.

These premises show why Pope Francis is a unique case of study, one of the most influential global voices, with a high rate of consensus in many different parts of the world. If in this section data about Pope's reputation were collected, in the next one it is given an overview about the topics Pope Francis more cares about.

## **1.2 Pope Francis' Pontificate**

The secondary data investigation gives reliable evidences about Pope Francis' consensus, which is equal or sometimes far better than the one of other global leaders. Why do people like this Pope?

In this section will be discussed the topics Pope Francis have cared the most during these 8 years of Pontificate, his main works, his apostolic journeys and other humanitarian emergencies.

### **1.2.1 The least and the poor**

The Pope of simplicity has never neglected poor's condition in the world. One of the most important Pope Francis' call to action has always been to be present for those who are marginalized and in the need. He himself remembers that the most iconic moment of the Conclave in 2013 was what Cardinal Cláudio Hummes told him after the papal election: "*Don't forget the poor!*" (AA, 2013).

Since 2013, Bergoglio has always tried to be a living example of poverty: his choice to live in Domus Sanctae Marthae and not in the traditional apostolic palace was the first papal symbol of concreteness about this theme. Not by chance, his first papal apostolic journey was headed to Lampedusa, a crucial territory for homeless migrants. During this trip he took position alongside all the migrants, he declared the world was getting used to poor people's pain and he denounced the "*globalisation of indifference*" (The Guardian, 2013).

With the first apostolic exhortation "*Evangelii Gaudium*" of November 2013, Pope Francis published an innovative document, an important change for a Church that moved into modernity: in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis clarified that role of the Church is to go out from palaces and visit whoever is in the need. Focus of this exhortation is a harsh critic toward an economic system, wrongly built to crush the last ones and a universal call to politician parties to really care about poor people (Bergoglio, 2013). Pope Francis' proximity to poor people in the years has attracted critics and association with communism values, but these disputes were always rejected by the Pontiff.

Pope Francis' commitment for the least has never stopped: from the speech at the European Parliament in 2014 to the lunch shared with poor people in Bologna in 2016 and, the same year, the apostolic visit in Lesbo to meet refugees. It is symbolic the importance Pope Francis gave to the World Day of the Poor, that was born in 2017 and it is now celebrated every year the third Sunday of November.

### **1.2.2 Young generations**

Pope Francis often talks to young people during his homilies, exhorting them to dream big but knowing to live in the reality they experience every day. The Holy Father is used to look after the young generations and unemployed, many times he made complaints to politicians to their low effort in contrasting the unemployment rate among under25.

Pope Francis has tried during his papacy to bring young people closer to Christ, especially during the World Youth Day: in Rio in 2013, in Krakow in 2016, and in Panama in 2019.

Furthermore, Pope Francis has found a variety of situations to get in touch with young adults, teenagers and children, in the majority of his apostolic travels he has tried to reserve a meeting space with younger people. Pope Francis seems to address his message particularly to young adults, and his fourth apostolic exhortation, named "*Christus Vivit*", was targeted to this segment of population. Pope Francis dealt with many topics: the role a young man or young woman plays in the society and vocational discernment were just two of the many.

Pope Francis talks with images and expressions of closeness and he always seeks to establish a friendship with young people. In his work Pope Francis showed all of his modernity, clarifying that what he wrote was a consequence of all his meetings with either young believers or non-believers. With this, it is easy to see a key point of Bergoglio's pontificate: his messages are constantly addressed to everybody. Maybe one of the causes of Pope Francis' wide consensus among young generations is the universality of his words.

In the final words of *Christus Vivit* it can be appreciated Pope Francis' esteem and passion toward young generations: *"Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. [...] The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us"* (L'Osservatore Romano 2018; Bergoglio J.M., 2019)

### **1.2.3 Environment protection**

What was never missing in Pope Francis' pontificate has been a constant concern for the environment protection and a sustainable investment in natural resources. In the encyclical *"Laudato si"*, the Holy Father affirms: *A true 'ecological debt' exists* (Bergoglio J.M., 2015 [51]). This is the most iconic action brought on by Pope Francis regarding environmental sustainability, the Pontiff makes connection between global economy and social balances to describe an emergency scenario: the man and the environment progress simultaneously, they go hand in hand, if the environment perishes, so the man will do and vice versa. Pope Francis considers a priority to provide environmental education for the people to create an *"ecological citizenship"* (Bergoglio J.M., 2015 [211]).

Pope Francis receives appreciation particularly from Millennials and Gen-Z on this topic, these segments of population reveal to be more sensible on this matter (Submittable, 2020) and they are becoming more careful about their environmental impact when they purchase something (Heo, 2019).

Pope Francis has been trying to stimulate governments to act responsibly, respecting the set goals of the Paris Agreement of 2015. Moreover, in his last apostolic exhortation *"Querida Amazonia"* it can be noticed the ecological matter is preponderant, but it is always connected to social situations and economics interest, that is why the definition "Green Pope" is way too simplistic.

### **1.2.4 Brotherhood among peoples and religions**

One of the most controversial aspect of Pope Francis' papacy has been his opening to dialogue with different people and religions, the Holy Father committed himself in the promotion of peace and dialogue with what/who is considered different.

During the first year of his pontificate, one of the most relevant episodes was the Angelus of September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, when Pope Francis asked to the parties involved in the Syrian conflict *"to look at each other as brothers and decisively and courageously to follow the path of encounter and negotiation"* (Bergoglio, J.M, 2013). Through this speech, the Pope announced a universal prayer for Syria and other territories of conflict. This announce was not addressed only to Catholic Christians, but to every man. In the same year, the motu proprio was issued *"for the prevention and countering of money laundering, the financing of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction"*. The purpose of this motu proprio was to condemn any transactions related to financing terrorist initiatives and an exhortation for the control bodies to continue to carry out their important job.

Pope Francis tried to reach out and to bond with heads of governments and leaders of different religions, indeed that has been the goal of many apostolic journeys. With Bergoglio, the Church of Rome certainly has got closer to the Orthodox Church and the Muslim community.

Pope Francis' trip to Iraq between March 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 represented something that had never happened. The Holy Father desired a lot this visit, because it was considered a crucial step for the progress of dialogue with different religions, he showed to the world not only a dialogue is possible, but even desirable. Apart from Bergoglio, in the past no Pope ever came into these territories, where Muslimism is prevailing.

Regarding Pope Francis' relationships with state leaders, the most conflictual was the one with the ex-USA president Donald Trump. As presented in the paragraph 1.1.2, Pope's approval decrease among American population was also facilitated by the bad relationship between the Church and Trump's chairmanship.

Brotherhood was also the main topic of Bergoglio's last encyclical "*Fratelli Tutti*" (published in 2020). Once again, the Pope opened his message to the entire global population and at the beginning of his work, Pope Francis summarized what he said during the meeting in Abu Dhabi with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al- Tayyeb: "*God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters*" (L'Osservatore Romano, 2019).

### **1.2.5 Church reforms – Simplicity and Transparency**

The process of modernization can be found in the new internal asset of the Church, too. Pope Francis put in act a series of revolutionary re-organizations of the Curia, for example many new dicasteries were implemented, the most important in this analysis is the Dicastery for Communication, discussed in paragraph 1.3.2.

Nowadays one of the most significant issues is the *Predicate Evangelium* reform, thanks to this the central Dicastery for the Church will become the Dicastery for Evangelization and that is another proof of Pope Francis' desire to see a walking Church, that goes all around the world and gets its hands dirty.

Pope Francis rearranged the Istituto per le Opere di Religione (IOR) and the penal code of the Vatican, exacerbating repercussion for those who commit abuse against children and those who make crime against humanity, such as war crimes, terrorist activities or environmental obscenities.

About Vatican economy, Pope Francis set up a specific Secretariat and a Council to boost up management and control of resources and actions of the Holy See. During pandemic time, due to a decrease of revenues for the Vatican City, Pope Francis has ordered to cardinals and clerics a pay cut of 10% to provide assistance for other expenses (Reuters, 2021).

Through these few lines about Church reforms (many others were not cited, but they would be relevant), it is evident Pope Francis during these last eight years, not only has been representing a global revolution, his innovative idea has been having huge repercussions on the Internal asset of Vatican City, as well. Pope Francis has always cared about transmitting an image of the Church in line with his message: if the Church had not

showed itself poor and transparent, people would have not seen in Pope Francis someone reliable and authentic.

### **1.2.6 Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse scandals, especially the ones that involve children, are described by Pope Francis with the harshest expressions, it was reported one of them in paragraph 1.1.2. In December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was born. During that time the O'Brien case was rising up, he was an archbishop of Scotland guilty of sexual misconduct accuses and tough words came out from the United Nations to the Church, for not punishing adequately the responsible in that kind of situation.

Pope Francis has never wanted to cover anything, on the contrary he made public all the judicial acts of the Church and he stimulated the Church to help public organizations in the process of proof individuation of sexual abuse scandals.

Sexual abuse scandal, unfortunately, has often affected the Church, as already said that was the primary cause of Pope Francis' image decrease in the U.S in 2018. The scandal of Pennsylvania revealed a dossier regarding the last 70 years and found more than 1000 victims of sexual abuse connected to Church representatives. Obviously, the Church condemned these actions, as reported by Vatican News in August of 2018, but other files emerged the following year. At the end of 2019, La Stampa wrote that more than 5000 lawsuits with respect to pedophilia could have started against the Church in the U.S (La Stampa, 2019).

## **1.3 Vatican Communication 2.0 – Pope Francis' communication revolution**

*“At the end, we will not be asked whether we were believers or not, but if we were believable”*  
(Rosario Livatino)

The biggest revolution of Pope Francis' Pontificate from a marketing perspective is certainly the communicative one. This 2.0 revolution should be analyzed in two ways: the first one concerning Pope Francis' direct communication: his expressions, his body language, what he says etc. and the second one regarding the communication channels of the Holy See especially the use of media by the Vatican.

### **1.3.1 Pope Francis' communicative power**

Pope Francis chose a communicative way in discontinuity with the one used by his predecessor. Eight years ago his first informal and colloquial gestures left the world speechless, nowadays we are used to a Pope who hugs children, gives casual greetings and many other gestures which normally we did not associate with the leader of the Church, before Bergoglio.

Pezzini states that Pope Francis is perceived “modern” in what he says, even though this is quite unexact according to him. Core of Pope Francis’ communication is the evangelical message, more than any humanitarian cause and that is not a strangeness or a news. The new, in Bergoglio, is the way to communicate and the context in which he operates and tries to re-announce the Gospel (Pezzini, 2017). Pezzini for example studies how Pope Francis uses parables, which make possible to everybody a full comprehension of what the Holy Father states.

### **Facial expression**

Facial expressions are a primary characteristic of great orators: every facial detail could reinforce or weaken what is being told. Even the silence is a form of language and in Pope Francis’ speeches sometimes silence and pauses are more catching than words.

To highlight this, Pezzini chooses the papal visit to Auschwitz, when Pope Francis decided to say nothing, he stayed there staring speechless. That is one example of those moments when Pope Francis gave power to silent communication (Pezzini, 2017).

Another peculiar element, extremely needful in Pope Francis is smiling. It is interesting Pozzato’s contribute about it. He explains that in religious context, smiling was associated with negative secondary meanings. On the contrary, he makes clear Pope Francis cannot be understood if his smile is taken out. A smile is the maximum expression of colloquiality and that represents a substantial separation with rituality (Pozzato, 2017). So, through Pope Francis’ smiling it can be marked another opposition with the Church of the past. This tendency to smile was noticed since his election and since the first historic “*buona sera*” and Pozzato underlines Pope Francis’ ease is natural, but he also has the capacity to show himself very institutional if required, next section on body language will shed light about this.

### **Body language**

Pope Francis seems to be joyful and effusive in situations among common people, when his predecessors remained on a more formal level; instead he tends to be profoundly institutional if the context requires so (meetings with state leaders, speeches at institutional bodies etc.), refusing to ingratiate the listener and offering a poor body language (Pozzato, 2017). For example, in the meeting with Donald Trump in 2017 it can be noticed his posture: hands at his sides, serious look and plain attitude.

It seems Bergoglio’s body language is always in contrast with what people would expect from a Pope: where predecessors were distant, he shows himself close, where appearance would be important and media coverage on him is high, he does not offer an expansive communicative body language. It could be said this Holy Father knows how to disappoint expectations.

Pope Francis’ unpredictability is one of his unique qualities as human brand: the unpredictability brings risk and that is leading the Church to cope what is risky, what goes beyond; once again, Pope Francis body language is a believable representation of a Church which is open to dialogue with what is different: other religions,



atheism etc. This willingness to risk is used in a reflexive way (Sedda, 2017): every listener is brought to ask himself: Pope Francis is risking, he shows himself unpredictable, am I capable of doing the same?

Moreover, Francis' body presents three particularities (Leone, 2017):

1. It is a "Latin" body, which means close: he caresses, hugs and seeks physical contact, but he is never perceived ambiguous or inappropriate and he ends to be seen as a nice old grandfather.
2. It is a "social" body, which means projected towards social context. When Pope Francis is in public, he never shows submissiveness or fear, he always tries to approach people closely.
3. It is a "transversal" body, which reveals a unique capacity of adaptability in different contexts. Pope Francis constantly meets people: everyday people, famous figures, state leaders etc. and he seems to feel comfortable in any situation.

### **Dressing code**

Pope Francis' dressing choices have caused many reactions. Both the necklace with the crucifix and the papal ring are new elements in the dressing code: Bergoglio's predecessors used gold materials, instead he chose silver. Pope Francis' watch and shoes are less magnificent than those used in the past and they contribute in creating an image poor and sober of his Holiness, who prefers to wear the minimum to be distinguished from others (Mangano, 2017). His choices attracted the curiosity of people and the *Corriere della Sera* defined him as a Pope "*indifferent to clothing style*" in the edition of March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

As Mangano states, Pope Francis is not indifferent, his choice to not satisfy actual dressing codes is a representation of Saint Francis' poverty (Mangano, 2017). Media coverage about Bergoglio's clothing accessories has been wide, for example Bloomberg appointed the Holy Father as "*un-luxiorus*" after the choice of the watch (Bloomberg, 2015) and the choice to not wear the traditional red shoes was profoundly commented by the *Washington Post* and the *Telegraph*. Therefore, even in dressing codes it can be put in evidence another shade of the Pope: what is ordinary becomes as important and produces as reactions and interest as what is extraordinary.

### **1.3.2 Management of Vatican Media**

Previous sections introduced some innovative communicative codes associated with the Pope. But even a bigger revolution has affected the communication channels of the Holy See during this papacy. The institution of the Dicastery for Communication in 2015 (even though the official name took place just in 2018) was the most significant reform.

This Dicastery has played a crucial role in the implementation of new kinds of communication, and this responsibility was set off in the apostolic letter as *motu proprio* by Pope Francis with these words: "*to reorganize the framework of communications of the Apostolic See, certainly moves towards a unified integration and management*" (Bergoglio, 2015). This is still the base of the statute of the Dicastery.

The emergency to use right communication channels to effectively reach the target is a goal every brand needs to pursue; the message must be effectively received by the right person. For the Holy See this is even harder, because Pope Francis widened the audience of the Church. Nowadays, companies decide to invest in planning integrated marketing communication campaigns because a synergic and efficient use of communication channels produces better performances than isolated use of un-integrated channels (Batra & Keller, 2016).

The goal is to offer a variety of touchpoints between the Holy Father and people all around the world and to render every touchpoint a supplement to his message. Therefore, the Dicastery for Communication tries to produce a whole unified and consistent communication among all touchpoints. Through digitalization, Vatican News and social media platforms became indispensable to provide this integrated experience to the people.

### **Vatican News**

This web portal was launched in 2017 and its institution was the most iconic innovation brought on by the Dicastery for Communication. Vatican News fulfills two functions: the first is the *apostolic* one, it is a web space where visitors listen to Pope's homilies and messages, they can find useful tools to help their prayers; the second is the *informative* one, because this portal is divided into four sections (Pope, Vatican, Church and World) and it provides news on several topics with constant updates (Peaverini, 2017). As Peaverini underlines, the centrality of Vatican News is Pope Francis and core values of the portal web are inclusion and distance reduction between the enunciator and the enunciate (Peaverini, 2017).

Especially during pandemic time, the importance of Vatican News rose up, without it people could have not stay close to Pope Francis and the process of increasing global approval maybe would have not been achieved. It can be affirmed Vatican media revolution has become even more urgent because of the pandemic. For example all the faithful who were used to participate Sunday morning at the Angelus in Saint Peter Square, have started to virtually join the Pope and Vatican News has been helping and leading this transformation.

### **Twitter**

Pope Francis is on Twitter with nine official profiles, they all share same contents in nine different languages. The English account is the main one, it has 19 million of followers and each profile shares one/two tweets a day, or more if special events/recurrences are taking place. For example, during Apostolic visits the number of tweets increase a lot. This social does not offer big space or creative tools to users, Pope Francis' profiles do not share images, just words. Even if characters are limited, this social accomplishes an evangelic function. Pope Francis' twitter profiles do not inform (instead it is one of the two functions of Vatican News), they are everyday pills about the Gospel and the evangelic message. The purpose is to give to followers at least one thought a day to stimulate prayer. Scholars state that @Pontifex profiles are used in a catechetical way and this is a prominent element in the establishment of a leadership (Narbona, 2016).

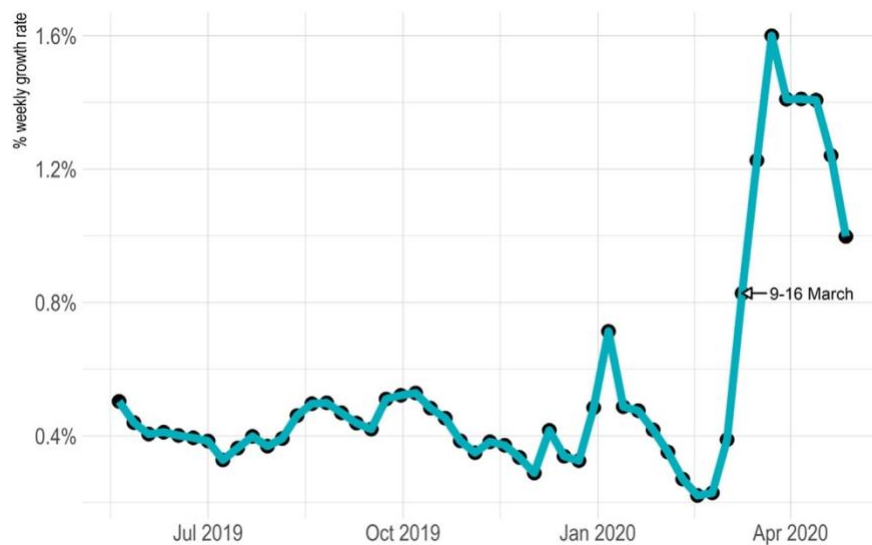
Fig. 6 – Pope Francis’ twitter profiles

Account	Language	Followers
Pontifex	English	18.8 mln
Pontifex_pt	Portuguese	5 mln
Pontifex_de	German	654k
Pontifex_es	Espanol	18.6 mln
Pontifex_pl	Polish	1 mln
Pontifex_ln	Latin	951k
Pontifex_fr	French	1.6 mln
Pontifex_ar	Arabic	506k
Pontifex_it	Italian	5 mln

Pope Francis presence on Twitter aroused interest among experts, his success on this social is quite controversial because normally it is used more for informative reasons (Haman, 2020), that would be in contrast with Narbona’s statement.

Both analysis are correct, it is true Twitter normally has appeal for people looking for information, especially live news, on the other hand Pope Francis’ leadership is stronger than this tendency and followers seem to know @Pontifex is not a source for news, but they likely read few lines about Pope Francis’ thoughts anyway. During Covid-19 pandemic, Twitter has become an information pole even more attractive for citizens. 64,8% of state leaders members of the United Nations regularly tweet in reference to Covid-19 events, and this has been causing a strong gain of follower base for leaders on twitter (Haman, 2020). In figure 7 the graph shows the huge increase of followers fan base of leaders’ profiles started in March 2020.

Fig. 7 - Growth of followers for leaders’ profiles on Twitter (Haman, 2020)



## Instagram

In 2017, 90% of Instagram users were under 25 (Smith, 2017), that makes clear why Pope Francis is present on this social media: to get in touch with younger generations.

The profile “*fransiscus*” has 7.8 million of followers (update 3/31/2021) and contents shared are always images or video of the Pope. This profile is unique, but texts are produced in different languages: English, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French and sometimes Polish and German.

As in Vatican News, Pope Francis’ figure is totally pivotal. This information is very relevant in the use of Instagram: that is the papal profile, not the profile of the Church. In figure 8 it can be appreciated how the Instagram profile of *fransiscus* turns around papal activity. In a scale with Twitter and Vatican News, Instagram has more informative power than Twitter but less than Vatican News, and less cathectic strength than both of the precedent channels discussed.

However, if *fransiscus* profile is compared to @Pontifex on Twitter it is evident a large distance in the number of followers, but Instagram followers (which are younger than Twitter followers) tend to interact more in terms of comments and reactions.

Fig. 8 – *fransiscus* profile feed (update 03/18/2021)



#### 1.4 Conclusions on Pope Francis’ relevance

This first analysis revealed Pope’s Francis relevance, his story and his enormous communicative abilities. Every gesture or decision, ordinary or revolutionary, stimulates debate all around the world.

Pope Francis’ capacity to generate curiosity and word of mouth are unique, he is an example of leadership, indeed, as presented, people well perceive his authority. One of the key elements underlined in this chapter is the perfect connection between Pope Francis’ words (what he says) and actions (what he does), he seems to be perceived as a believable man.

In the next chapter it will be given an overview of human brand theory, the reader will have the chance to

consider constructs such as authenticity and attachment. The challenge of this work is to test if verified model (as Keller's Customer Based Brand Equity) could be applied to Pope Francis.

Pope Francis is a world leader, that has just been demonstrated, so what would happen if we consider him as a human brand or a celebrity? What is the difference between a human brand and a celebrity?

If theoretical models are tested about Bergoglio as a human brand, that could have important consequences for the strategic managing of a Pope.

## CHAPTER 2

### Human Brand Literature Review and CBBE model

#### 2.1 Human brands literature review

Human brands theory is one of the most discussed and controversial topics in marketing, management and sociology. After Thomson's definition of human brand in 2006, this remained a grey area for almost a decade and very few works investigated the topic until 2015. However, in the last five years a growing number of researchers decided to conduct studies about human brands theory, which has now become extremely popular and useful to explore the role of celebrities and influencers in endorsement practices (Levesque & Pons, 2020).

Thomson states "*Human brands refer to well-known persons who are subject to marketing communication practices*" (Thomson, 2006), that is a broad definition: almost any celebrity could be considered in these terms, indeed human brands have common traits with celebrities. It is well known that celebrities can influence consumers with their choice to bond with a brand, or a humanitarian cause; a celebrity has the power to establish a persuasive communication with the audience. Some examples of successful celebrities' endorsements are listed below:

- Leonardo di Caprio and global environmental emergency (United Nations, WWF, Fiat etc.);
- Serena Williams and Nike;
- Lionel Messi, Kobe Bryant and Turkish Airlines;
- Robin Williams and Nintendo.

Human brands theory presents three crucial pillars (Ki et al., 2020):

1. Human brands, just like any brand, are distinguishable. They are unique, every person has some traits or qualities that render him/her different (Moulard et al., 2015), that is why any human brand should be strategically managed (Thomson, 2006);
2. Human brands are capable of bonding strong connections with fans, followers or listeners;
3. Strong brand-consumer relationships more easily lead to positive marketing outcomes (Thomson, 2006).

#### 2.1.1 Thomson's contribute: ARC model

A question that needs to be answered is how to ensure the effectiveness of a human brand, what are the key elements of success for such people? Thomson finds some relevant constructs in the likeability process of human brands, he discovers emotional attachment is a sort of orthogonal dimension and it involves satisfaction, loyalty, and favorability (Thomson, 2006).

Emotional attachment is defined as "*the intensity of a person's target-specific emotional bond with a human brand*" (Thomson, 2006) and it differs from brand attachment, which Ambler et. al, 2002 identifies as "*How loyal the customer feels toward the brand*". Thomson's innovative contribution has been confirmed through

the years, emotional attachment has become the most relevant construct in the study of human brands, its uniqueness and relationship with other sub-dimensions (involvement, satisfaction and brand attitude) makes it very significant (Thomson, MacInnis and Park, 2005).

Celebrities' ability to establish lasting connections with consumers depends on emotional attachment. Thomson focuses his work on detecting the antecedents of this construct and he finds three:

1. **Autonomy:** it is a person's need to perceive freedom and that his/her activities are self-chosen, self-governed and self-endorsed (Thomson, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000);
2. **Relatedness:** it is a person's need to feel close with others (Deci and Ryan, 2000) and to feel a sense of intimacy (Thomson, 2006);
3. **Competence:** it is a person's need to go after feelings of effectiveness and achievement (Deci and Ryan, 2000)

He points out these people's needs as causes of emotional attachment and he builds his ARC (Autonomy – Relatedness – Competence) model. Thomson's scheme identifies human brands as figures capable of satisfying people's need of autonomy, relatedness and competence.

Emotional attachment is so important because it determines the probability with which people accept and well perceive product/service endorsement by a human brand: the more the attachment, the more an endorser has the power to influence listeners (Ki et. Al, 2020). Huang et al., 2015 similarly define *idol attachment* as a key antecedent of human brand loyalty (Huang, Lin & Phau, 2015).

### **2.1.2 Role of authenticity**

In his work, Thomson does not cover the role of authenticity. However he briefly discusses this issue in the managerial implications of his study, assuming that perceived authenticity could be an antecedent for human brand success. In 2015, Moulard et al. came up with a definition for this construct which is "*the perception that a celebrity behaves according to his or her true self*" (Moulard et. Al, 2015).

A positive relationship between authenticity and human brand perception was already verified at the end of XX<sup>th</sup> century (Cole & Leets, 1999), but no evidences were available about the causes of authenticity: How and when is a human brand perceived as authentic?

Moulard et. al find two key antecedents:

1. **Rarity:** "*It is the degree to which the celebrity is seen as uncommon*" (Moulard et. Al., 2015) and it has three sub-dimensions:
  - A. Talent, which is the inner capacity of a celebrity in his/her field;
  - B. Discretion, which is how much a celebrity decides to be exposed;
  - C. Originality, which is the perceived creativity and independency of a celebrity.

2. Stability “*It is the degree to which the celebrity is perceived as unwavering*” (Moulard et. Al., 2015) and it can be divided into three sub-categories:

- A. Consistency, which is the perception of changeability of a celebrity;
- B. Candidness, which is the coincidence between what a human brand says and feels;
- C. Morality, which is the perception that a celebrity represents or not strong values.

Authenticity and attachment are considered indispensable, they respectively are responsible for human brand success (Cole & Leets, 1999) and human brand likeability (Thomson, MacInnis and Park, 2005).

At the end, it could be stated the more consumers perceive authenticity and attachment toward a human brand, the more is the value of a human brand, because the greater is the potential influence on consumers.

### **2.1.3 Need for interaction**

People’s need for interaction cannot be underestimated; indeed, likeability and attachment process will not take place if a human brand is not interactive. Centeno & Wang study celebrities and they theorize the Stakeholder-actor co-creation of human brand identity model, which highlights the role of interaction in the human brand identity process: the creation of a human brand is a process co-carried on by the relationship (and interaction) between three stakeholders actors: Celebrity, Consumers/Fans and Media/Advertisers (Centeno & Wang, 2017):

- *Focal Stakeholder-actor (Celebrity)*, which regards celebrities’ ability to establish emotional attachment;
- *Primary Stakeholder-actor (Consumers/Fans)*, which takes into account the role of consumers in spreading a human brand. During the era of social networks, this is precisely referred to the amount of people who share what a human brand does or says and to the volume of word of mouth generated by consumers;
- *Instrumental Stakeholder-actors (Media, Advertisers etc.)*, which is the variable of the co-creation process related to workers: managers, media agencies, press and every stakeholder who decides to give or to give not visibility to a human brand.

This model could be noticed in figure 9.

Attachment, authenticity and need for interaction are three pillars of Human Brand Theory. In figure 10 it is created a representation of Human Brand in relationship with the three main studies presented. On the right, the co-creation identity process from Centeno & Wang and the key role of interaction in the genesis and managing of a human brand. On the left, the antecedents of Human Brand success and likeability, from Moulard, Garrity & Rice and Thomson.



Fig. 9 - Stakeholder-actor co-creation of human brand identity (Centeno & Wang, 2017).

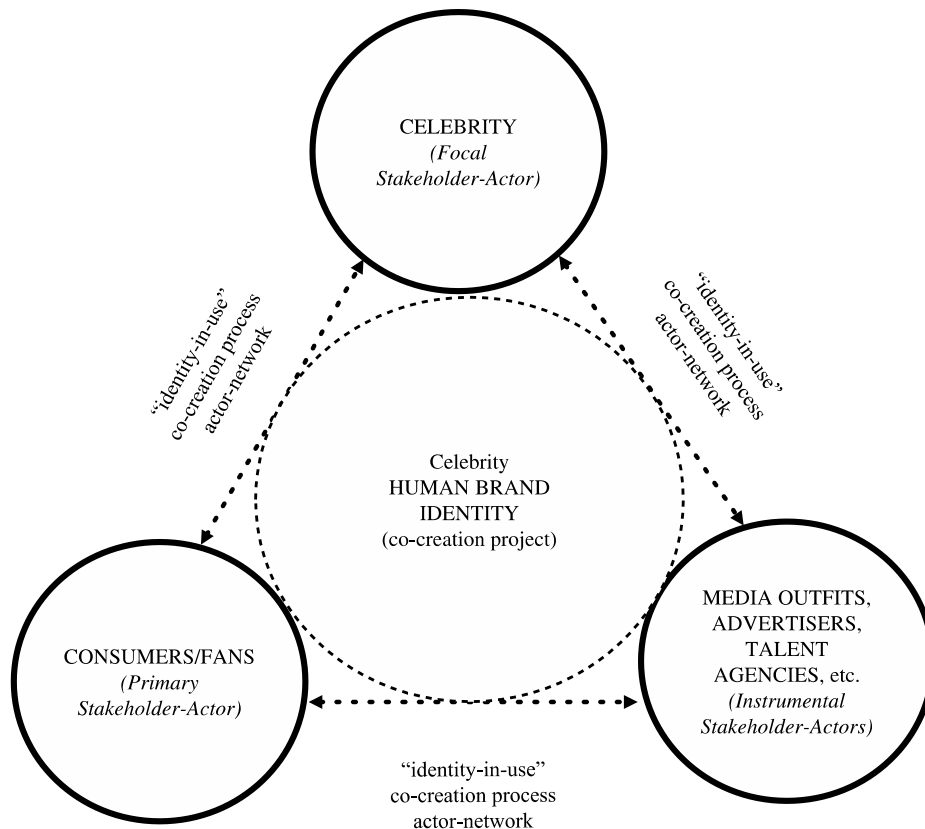
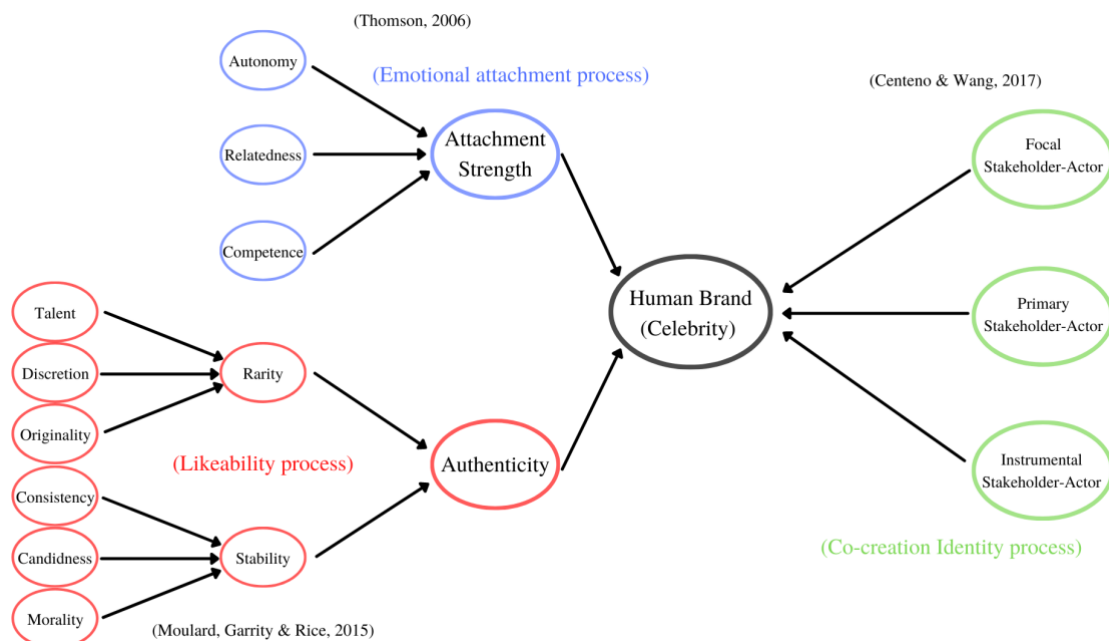


Fig. 10 – Model elaborated from Centeno & Wang, 2017 and Moulard, Garrity & Rice, 2015 and Thomson, 2006



## **2.2 Celebrity theory literature review**

This review brings to light how strong is the association of human brand theory with celebrities, this has always been the main context to study for researchers; the current situation proves a gap in the literature for the application of human brands knowledge, we know very few about human brands outside of celebrities. In this section different kind of celebrities are discussed.

First of all, celebrities are intangible assets for firms (Rindova, Pollock & Hayward, 2006), their potential value for a brand is enormous and yet, celebrities remained quite unexplored in marketing research until the end of the XX<sup>th</sup> century (Gamson, 1994). In his work Gamson states that in the past celebrities were closely associated to merit and ability, but at the end of the last century, celebrity became the people who showed great personality and lifestyle (Gamson, 1994). Similarly, McCracken uses the word lifestyle to investigate the attractiveness of celebrities (McCracken, 1989).

McCracken and Gamson demonstrate celebrities are not only those who gain popularity due to merit or specific ability, but those who people look at for lifestyle and inspiration, as well. That is why the term celebrity could be spread to many different fields and that is what has happened in the last years; it is now provided an overview of different fields where celebrities can arise:

### **CEOs**

CEOs are the face of firms, in the years it has been studied how journalists over-attribute a firm's performances to CEO's actions (Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004) and in doing so, the position of CEOs has become stronger. In their investigation, scholars individuate in the celebration of CEOs a consequence of "*America's infatuation with celebrities*" (Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004).

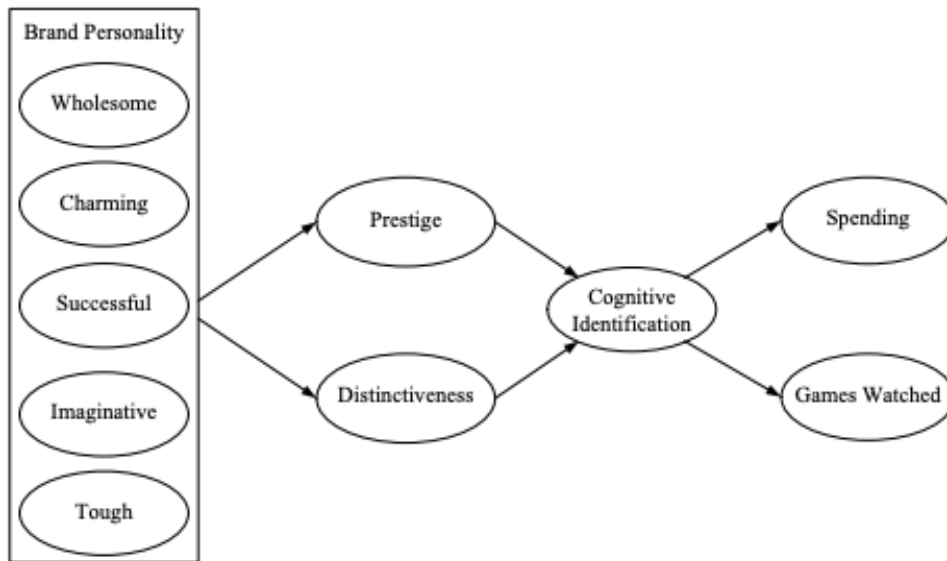
CEOs' role is so crucial that it has been said they carry the "burden of celebrity" (Fombrun, 1996), indeed certified CEOs are more remunerated when their performance turns out to be high, at the same time the increasing fame of a CEO brings with it always higher expectations, just like a celebrity (Wade et al, 2006). Celebrity CEOs are a revolution that has been taking place especially in the last twenty years: Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffet, Bill Gates etc. all these top managers not only have been the leading figure of their respective business, they have become global celebrities, even movies were based on their stories (*Jobs* and *The Social Network* are some examples).

### **Sports**

Carlson, Donovan and Cumiskey elaborate a verified model to investigate the relationship between brand personality and consumers in sports context. Brand personality contains five dimensions (figure 11) and it leads to prestige and distinctiveness, which are the antecedents of cognitive identification. Cognitive Identification is the second-last construct of their theory and it has a positive impact on both final dimensions

(the end-goals of a sport team): number of games watched and team-related retail spending (Carlson, Donovan & Cumiskey, 2009). This model is reported in fig.11.

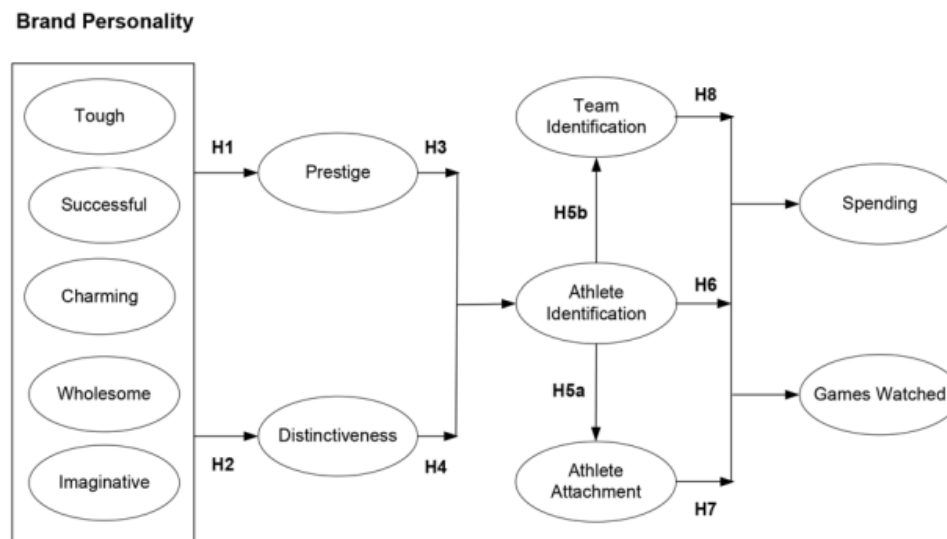
Fig. 11 – Conceptual model Consumer-brand relationships in Sport (Carlson, Donovan & Cumiskey, 2009)



Years later, Carlson and Donovan re-analyze this model introducing the role of human brand in sports. Indeed, in their previous model it is unclear how much the cognitive identification would be attributable to the whole team instead of some singular athletes. Scholars test that athlete identification has a positive impact on emotional attachment and identity with the team, by showing how consumers consider athletes as living human brands (Carlson and Donovan, 2013).

They re-elaborate their model as presented in figure 12, pointing out human brands’ remarkable role in the sport industry.

Fig. 12 – Conceptual model of athlete identification (Carlson & Donovan, 2013)



## **Music and movie industry**

Human brands have been studied in music and movie industry, as well. Music artists possess similar associations and features of brands (Huang, Lin & Phau, 2015): the strength of the emotional bond between music artists and fans is similar to the one between human brands and consumers. Brand loyalty is a consequence of attachment and purchases of idols' music products are the way to preserve the relationship with human brands (Huang, Lin & Phau, 2015).

In show business we appreciate, more than ever, the construct of attachment. Oprah Winfrey is the subject of an investigation on consumer attachment: her personality traits reveal that brand personality appeal is a moderating factor of attachment and attachment outcomes (Lopez & Braig, 2015).

Show business industry is the most evident example where to observe attachment. Indeed the result of Thomson's study of 2006, which is the most considerable investigation of this literature review, is obtained from evaluating movie stars (Orlando Bloom, Ben Affleck etc.).

## **Politician**

The last field where human brands can be traced is politics. If in show business the attachment is the most relevant construct, in politics party leaders need to maintain authenticity (Speed, Butler & Collins 2015). Two relationships are critical for a voter; the first one is with the ideology or policy, the second one is with the party. That is why there are two challenges for politicians, at least for the leaders of a party: 1. To be clear and reliable with electorate about the promises and policy, that fulfills the first critical relationship and that is the construct of authenticity. 2. To be perceived as a leader with authority over the party, which fulfills the second critical relationship and that is the construct of authority (Speed, Butler & Collins 2015).

### **2.2.1 Celebrity and endorsement**

Nowadays such celebrities are the first choices of international brands for endorsement initiatives. Even though endorsement process is not taken into account in this research, to give a full overview about the construct of celebrity it seems urgent to provide a glimpse of celebrity endorsement theory.

Celebrity endorsement is governed by four main theories (Schimmelpfennig, 2020):

1. Source credibility: credibility is a crucial factor for endorsers, if people perceive an endorser as inadequate or fake, they do not pay attention. Credibility is a set of expertise and trustworthiness, and recent studies make clear the second variable is more relevant than the first one (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018), on the contrary in the past expertise was more determining (Ohanian, 1991);
2. Source attractiveness: in the past attractiveness was something linked to physicality, it was believed physical charming endorsers communicated more effectively than endorsers with un-attractive bodies. That is no more accurate, attractiveness is involved with mental abilities and lifestyle (Erdogan, 1999);

3. Match-up hypothesis: attractiveness is not sufficient, an attractive endorser with low fit with the brand endorsed is less effective than an un-attractive endorser with high fit with brand endorsed (Liu et al., 2007). Moreover, the fit perceived between endorser and target audience is significant for the message receiver (Koernig & Boyd, 2009);

4. Meaning transfer model: McCracken is maybe the most acclaimed author on this theory. He states: *“Celebrities have particular configurations of meanings that cannot be found elsewhere”* (McCracken, 1989). He exposes celebrities evoke unique mind associations, which are transferred to brands.

### **2.3 Spiritual leader: un-explored area in human brands and CBBE model introduction**

What would happen if human brand theory was applied to some new contexts? Human brands are too much identified with celebrities, instead they are just a part (a broad one) of human brand possible applications. Surely, singers, sportsman, CEO's and politician are celebrities who can be analyzed and managed as human brand, what about other contexts? What if human branding theory was applied to a spiritual leader?

The figure of spiritual leader should be more studied. If we consider the three pillars offered by Ki et. Al, 2020 discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter it is clear a spiritual leader possesses all the three requirements: he/she has some unique and distinguishable traits, he/she is able to establish a deep bond with his/her listener and his/her activity could produce positive outcomes on listeners.

Spiritual leaders are people who try to pursue high-level goals, a full knowledge about how to manage and to brand these figures could help them in developing effective practices to better communicate and reaching their target. Most of the time, religion is a context that researchers normally do not take into account for marketing studies, this is a waste because religious contexts have some unique features and a wise marketing research could reinforce theoretical knowledge and widen pre-existing models to different scenarios.

Pope Francis' communication revolution (presented in chapter 1) and a strategic integration of communication channels represent an historical improvement for the Church, that is one proof about the importance of binding a marketing perspective to a religious context.

Could a Pope, one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the world, be defined as a human brand? A goal of this work is to test if Pope Francis is a human brand and if Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model could be adapted to a spiritual leader.

In 1993, Keller builds his Customer Brand Based Equity model (which is illustrated in next sections) and yet, there are a few valid works that apply this model to the field of celebrities or human brands.

Scholars use Keller's model to endorse and they find endorser credibility is extremely impactful on brand equity (Spry et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2015). Again, the importance of credibility is presented as a crucial mediating factor between an endorser and a brand.

For human brands, a study explores a possible application of CBBE model to professors finding that some constructs related to brands are replicable for professors (Jillapalli & Jillapalli, 2014). Probably, Jillapalli's study is the only reliable application of CBBE model to a human category. Apart from this, no evidences were collected about CBBE application to human brands in the last years.

Originally, Keller comes up with this model thinking just about brands, that would explain the lack of studies about CBBE application to human figures, at the same time the current situation renders an investigation about CBBE model to Pope Francis as a human brand extremely valuable.

Before considering the CBBE model, some key definitions need to be provided, in order to understand the structure of the model.

## **2.4 Brand Equity**

Brand equity has known a broad variety of definitions during the last thirty years; at the beginning of 1990s Farquhar fixes one of the first definition of brand equity: *"it is the 'added value' with which a brand endows a product"* (Farquhar, 1989), two years later Aaker theorizes brand equity as *"a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service"* (Aaker, 1991).

Similarly, Keller enriches this definition deepening the concept of differential effect, he affirms *"Customer Based Brand Equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand"* (Keller, 1993). Keller's differential is a consequence of people's brand knowledge, which is a construct formed by brand image and brand awareness (Keller, 1993; Faircloth et al., 2001).

These definitions are consumer-perspective, as the one of Kamakura and Russell who state brand equity is the value of a brand to consumers (Kamakura & Russell, 1993).

Besides, brand equity is extremely relevant from a financial perspective, because brand equity is defined as the most reliable value to measure marketing investments (Simon & Sullivan, 1993) or the health condition of a brand (Pappu et al., 2005). More in general, brand equity is a crucial indicator for a brand, high performances on brand equity produce a positive impact on consumer satisfaction (Nam et al, 2011), customer loyalty (Keller, 1993), consumer preferences and purchase intention (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995).

Strong brand equity and financial well-being are synonyms: if brand equity is valuable all the advantages listed above are verified and the brand becomes more attractive for stakeholders as well (Simon & Sullivan, 1993).

These two perspectives (consumer based and financial based) render brand equity one of the most studied and relevant indicators for business. Either financially or in marketing terms, brand equity should be considered a prior value. These different approaches in the investigation of brand equity lead to a variety of models.

In the financial perspective, brand equity is seen in relationship with cash flows and competitive advantage, which are key elements of a business activity, but they do not inquire about consumer's role, that is why the focus of this work will not be the Financial Based Brand Equity model.

On the other hand, a Customer Brand Based Equity (CBBE) model is particularly interesting for marketing perspectives, especially if human brands are the topic of discussion; as it was illustrated before, no researches are available on this topic.

## **2.5 Customer Based Brand Equity model**

With CBBE model, Keller wants to clarify what is the path to be taken in order to build a strong brand, identifying the power of a brand in what consumers know and feel about that brand (Keller, 2001). He is focused on the strategic aspects of brand equity and the implications of such variable for marketers.

Keller's model takes into account different constructs, which are here briefly discussed.

- Brand Knowledge: It is related to people's ability to have in memory and identify a brand. Keller conceptualizes brand knowledge *"as a consisting of a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked"* (Keller, 1993). Keller identifies knowledge with memory structure and states brand knowledge is formed by brand awareness and brand image;

- Brand Awareness: It is referred to consumers' ability to point out a brand in different circumstances (Rossiter & Percy, 1987); awareness is the extent of likelihood and ease with which a brand is evoked in people's mind (Keller, 1993). Brand Awareness has two subdimensions, which are brand recall and brand recognition. Recall is the ability to come up with a specific brand when it is provided an external stimulus about a product category. For example, if we consider sport clothes industry and your first thought is Nike, that is brand recall.

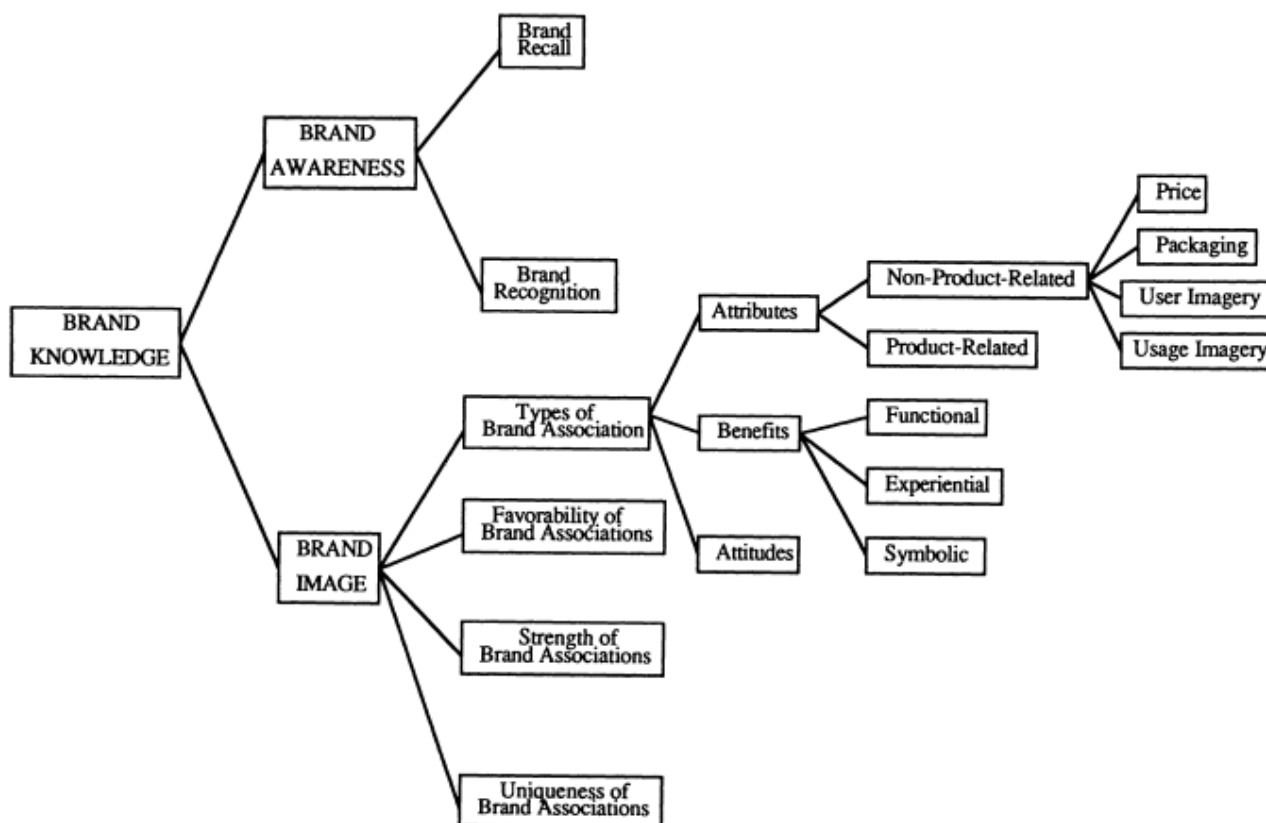
Recognition is the ability to recognize a brand when a prior exposure to a brand is given (Keller, 1993). For example, if walking on a street I see Starbucks' logo and I am able to identify that precise logo with the brand Starbucks', that is brand recognition.

These are the two sub-dimensions of awareness, which is one of the most meaningful constructs for having a powerful brand for three reasons (Keller, 1993): 1. The more the awareness, the more a brand comes up in people's mind associations, 2. Awareness is necessary to be present in people's considerations set for purchases, 3. It has a direct impact on consumer decision making process and it is a prior requirement for the establishment of brand image;

- Brand Image: It is linked to “*brand associations held in consumer memory*” (Keller, 1993) and brand associations are all those information that people come up with when they think of a brand. Clearly this definition is very wide, indeed Keller classifies brand associations for types, favorability, strength and uniqueness.

All of these constructs are put together in Keller’s model and they compose the dimensions of brand knowledge, in fig. x it is represented the structure of this scheme

Fig. 13 – Dimensions of Brand Knowledge (Keller, 1993)



A full comprehension of what is Brand Knowledge is mandatory for Keller’s definition of brand equity, as already presented before he says brand equity is “*the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand*” (Keller, 1993). It is evident that brand knowledge is the pivotal term of the definition, consumer response to marketing stimulus is a consequence of brand associations: the more a brand provokes unique, strong associations, the more is the brand knowledge, the more the consumer response will be positive.

The question is: How to establish a strong brand knowledge? How do strong brands build their position on the market? The CBBE model tries to address an answer for marketers.



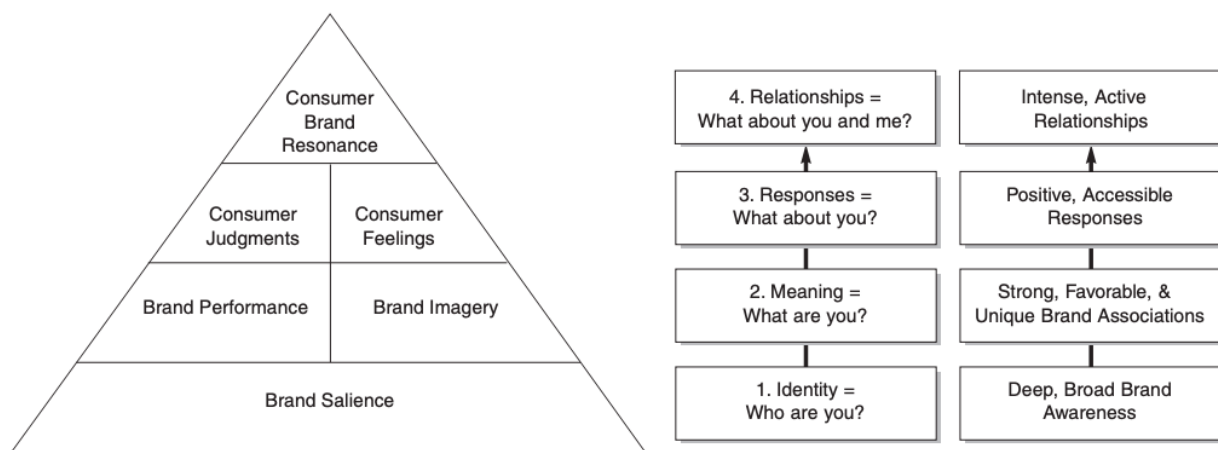
The first step is brand identity, that defines who you are. Brand name should not be underestimated, evidences demonstrated the effectiveness of mnemonic brand names or CEO brand names (Keller, 1993). What is crucial is the memorability of a brand name, if a name lacks originality or stickiness, the process of brand associations difficultly takes place.

### 2.5.1 Brand Salience

Identity corresponds to the first building block of the Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid (figure 14) and it is called Brand Salience. That is the foundation of the model and it provides three key functions (Keller, 2001):

1. Brand image and the strength of brand associations are influenced by salience;
2. The more the salience, the more the probability of being considered in a purchase process;
3. When “low involvement” purchases occur, people tend to base their decisions just on salience.

Fig. 14 – Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid



But, Brand Salience per se does not bring competitive advantage, it is necessary but not sufficient. In their evaluations, people consider either the meaning or the image of brands, these are the blocks of Brand Performance and Brand Imagery (Keller, 2001).

### 2.5.2 Brand Performance and Brand Imagery

Brand Performance relates to the capacity of the product/service to well performs and be perceived by customers, the central matter is *“To what extent does the brand satisfy the utilitarian, aesthetic and economic needs and wants of customers in its product or service category?”* (Keller, 2001).

In Brand Performance a variety of considerations are evaluated, such as: product/service reliability and durability, service efficiency, style and design and price. High performances normally lead to competitive advantage, they are required to build a valuable positioning on the market.

Brand Imagery brings up the intangible characteristics of a brand. It measures how a brand succeeds in satisfying people's psychological and social needs. However, needs vary a lot among people, indeed Keller,2001 underlines the first intangible category referable to a brand is *User profile*.

Imagery is also the outcome of a series of changeable situation, such as the point of purchase (For example I could buy the new Apple in an Apple Store or in MediaWorld, what are the differences for the purchase experience?) or the history, because a brand could (or could not) be able to evoke past experience to a consumer: first-purchases are different than repetitive purchase experiences.

### **2.5.3 Brand responses: consumer judgments and feelings**

After experiencing a product or a service, people tend to elaborate opinions about what they have paid for. These responses are consequence of brand performance and the set of associations evoked in consumer's mind by the brand are called Brand judgments (Keller, 2001).

CBBE model identifies four major kinds of judgments: about quality, credibility, consideration and superiority. It could be noticed these are computable indicators, as Keller,2001 states: judgments arise from the "head".

On the contrary, brand feelings tend to be more subjective and unverifiable, Keller's brand-building feelings are Warmth, Fun, Excitement, Security, Social approval and Self-respect. Both types of responses have a direct positive effect on consumer behavior.

### **2.5.4 Consumer Brand Resonance**

This is the final block of Keller's CBBE model and it considers the importance of establishing a relationship with consumers. If we look at the long term, Brand Resonance is the most relevant block of the model: end goal of a brand is not to sell one more unit of product, but to build solid relationships with consumers and to be sure they develop loyalty and interest towards the brand.

Keller,2001 describes four categories of brand resonance:

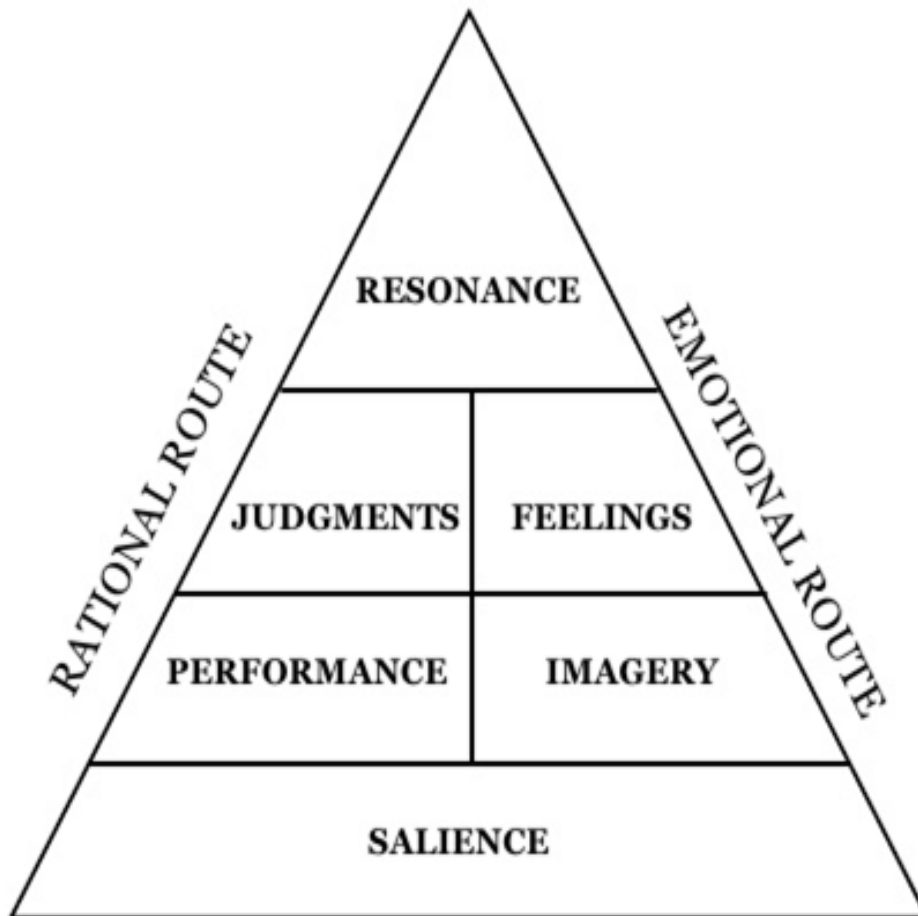
- *Behavioral loyalty*: It means the repetition of purchase, how often people stick to the decision to choose that brand;
- *Attitudinal Attachment*: Attachment was discussed previously in this chapter; Keller here refers to a similar concept: people should not choose the brand just for necessity, they should look forward to having a new experience with it;
- *Sense of community*: Every brand can stimulate a sense of belonging to the brand community, establishing group relationships among consumers;
- *Active engagement*: That is the strongest evidence of brand loyalty, because it comes off only when consumers dedicate energies and time to interact with the brand and promote it with third parties.

### 2.5.5 Different paths to reach an end goal

In Figure 15 it can be noticed the building process for a strong competitive positioning for brands; the right-hand side of the pyramid is the emotional route, while the left-hand side is the rational one (Keller, 2009).

Keller states both routes could be profitable for a brand in reaching the resonance block, but for a sustainable competitive advantage position the right-hand side cannot be underrated. In the long-term, emotions are what move people and what cause a real loyalty towards a brand (Keller, 2009).

Fig. 15 – Different paths for the CBBE pyramid (Keller, 2003)



### 2.6 A CBBE model for Pope Francis

The Customer Based Brand Equity model has some peculiar characteristics and presents unique elements to study what is the right path to build a strong brand equity, it is the most effective tool to investigate Pope Francis' equity. Clearly, all the six building blocks presented should be slightly modified in order to render the model suitable for a Pope. As already told before, originally brands are the target for Keller's scheme, if the subject to study is a human brand the model needs some adjustments.

### **2.6.1 Human Brand Salience**

First of all, brand salience is quite controversial for a Pope. The awareness of a Pope has not always been broad and clear. If we think just for a moment about the paradoxal scenario presented in *The Young Pope* by Paolo Sorrentino in which Pope Pius XIII<sup>th</sup> refuses to let his image available for the faithful, we understand the importance of being recognized and recalled for a Pope.

Pope Francis' awareness is global, but he is also one of the most world leaders who is tried to be manipulated by people and media. During the years people addressed him as the "Populist Pope", however McCormick draws up a socio-political work to demonstrate the low reliability of such definitions (McCormick, 2021).

Everyday people try to put in a box Pope Francis with some new labels, these are oversimplifications without real objective proofs. Pope Francis has been called the "Communist Pope" and American researchers affirm he presents Marxist inclinations (Thliza, 2020), some others defined Pope Francis as a "Rock Star Pope" when he travelled to Philippines in 2015.

Anyway, all of these tendentious definitions lack of trustworthiness, at the same time they make clear how impactful is a full awareness of who the Pope really is. In chapter 1 it is explained the key responsible role of the Dicastery for Communication and the channels integration process started in 2015. Without it, Pope Francis in these years could have developed less awareness, consequently his likeability (and all the next CBBE building blocks) could have not been reached.

### **2.6.2 Human Brand Performance and Human Brand Imagery**

Brand Performance deals with the ability of a brand to satisfy consumers' needs. The analysis in chapter 1 briefly discusses what was people's major need when Pope Francis became Pope: a Church they could identify with.

Pope Francis' performance is principally tied to the mission of spreading a Church that people could consider shareable and remarkable. Pope Francis knows the Church makes mistakes, he himself declares some of them and yet his communication power (Par. 1.3.1.) shows to the world a new image of the Church.

As broadly stated in Chapter 1, Pope Francis' choices and his lifestyle started a series of internal and external revolution and people, either catholic faithful or other faithful or non-believers, positively consider his performance. Nowadays he still is one of the most appreciated world leaders.

On the right-hand side instead, the first step for the emotional path is Brand Imagery, which is the ability of brands to satisfy consumers' psychological and social needs.

Once again, if we take a look at data provided in Chapter 1, it is fair to state Pope Francis does not engage matters and questions which are relevant only for the faithful, what he supports are mostly global causes (environmental sustainability, life conditions for the poor, brotherhood among people etc.).

Certainly, Pope Francis tries to take care of people's psychological needs through the Catholic faith but he is also accountable for social needs. Many studies testify Millennials and Gen-Z have a higher social attention than previous generations, for many of these people the Pontiff is a landmark, he is one of the few who gets involved in social problems, that is why he encounters people's social needs.

### **2.6.3 Consumer Judgments and Consumer Feelings**

For what it concerns Consumer Judgements and Feelings, it has been certified in chapter 1 people's approval rating towards Pope Francis. These building blocks of Keller's model are maybe the most suitable for an application of the pyramid to a human brand.

Through social media, fans and followers can easily make judgements about celebrities or human brands. Reports provided by Gallup International and Pew Research Center very well describe how people all around the world judge Pope Francis; collecting data about consumers' (faithful or non-faithful) judgements it is quite easy for human brands nowadays, that is why these building blocks almost make no difference with the original CBBE model.

However, the difference between judgements and feelings for a human brand is much more subtle than the one for a brand. Normally brands provide products or services to people, who experience them and then they express an opinion. With a human brand, this process does not happen, there is not the moment of the purchase which crucially divides the consumer experience in pre-purchase and post-purchase.

For Pope Francis, judgments should be people's reactions to what the Pontiff chooses, writes or simply does. For example, judgments are critics to his encyclicals, appreciation toward his humanitarian social commitment, admiration for his apostolic journeys, refuses to a homily etc. These are all consequences to some concrete actions put in place by Pope Francis; somehow encyclicals, public speeches, apostolic journeys, homilies etc. are sort of the moment of purchase, it is the time when people experience Pope Francis.

Feelings instead are even more subjective and stronger (that is why Keller defines them as more relevant for a sustainable competitive advantage), they do not tend to change in relationship to one event or another. Normally, people who declare to have positive feelings towards a leader, do not easily change their feelings even if he/she is making mistakes. For human brands, judgments are more instant, feelings are more stable.

### **2.6.4 Human Brand Resonance**

About Resonance building block, some differences with the original model should be marked out. When Keller's path is structured for brands, goals of brand resonance are loyalty, commitment and attachment.

This issue is quite controversial for a Pope: should the people develop loyalty toward the Pope or toward the Church? Who or what is the target of CBBE model for Pope Francis?

A declination of resonance is mandatory for applying the pyramid to Pope Francis as he seems to present a variety of end goals. In order to construct a revised CBBE model for Pope Francis, three different end goals come out:

1. End goals toward himself. That is the Keller’s classical end goal: brand is here substituted with human brand (Pope Francis);
2. End goals toward his political standpoints: Pope Francis also wants people (citizens, but principally politicians and other world leaders) to listen to the issues he addresses and to change people’s attitude about global causes (environment, poverty etc.);
3. End goals toward the Church: Pope Francis is a religious leader and another of his goals is to get the people closer the Catholic Church, especially the ones who are away.

In figure 16 Pope Francis’ end goals are represented in three separate building blocks.

Fig. 16 – Pope Francis’ end goals (Resonance building block)

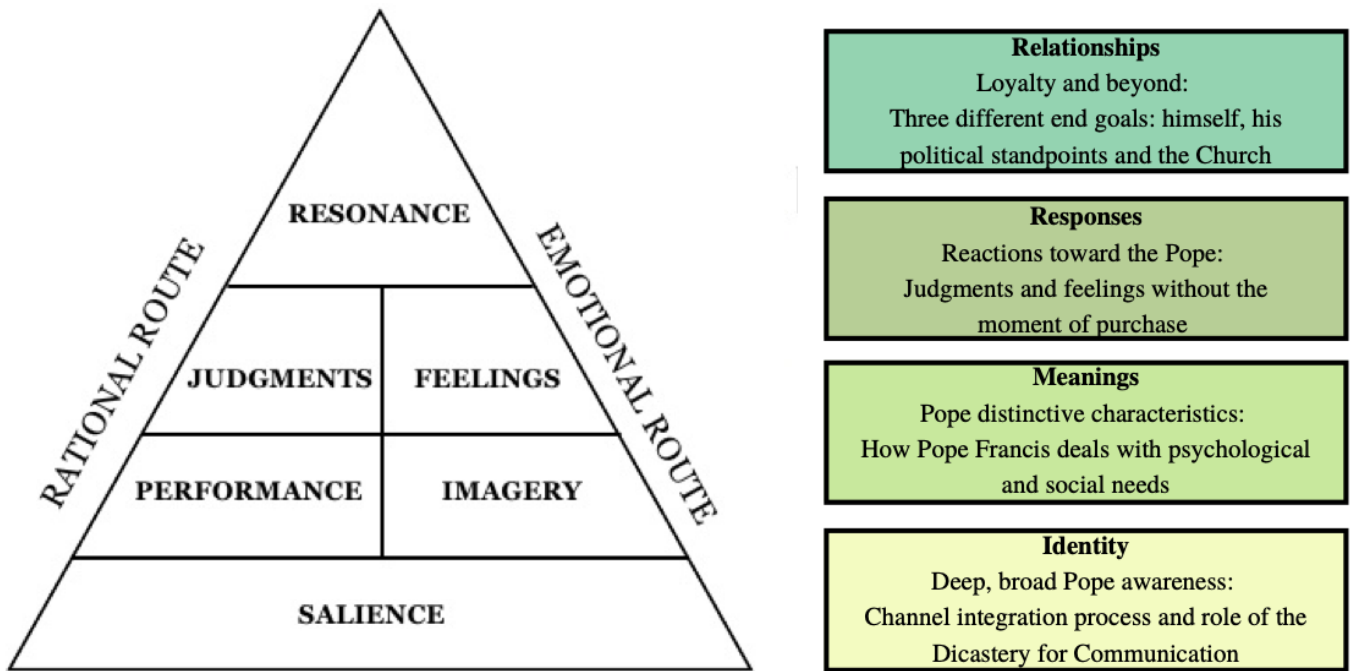


### 2.6.5 CBBE pyramid for Pope Francis

A new pyramid can now be structured for Pope Francis, in figure 17 it is summarized the CBBE pyramid model for Pope Francis with specific declinations for each building block.

Even in the revised model, two distinct routes can be traced to reach the resonance block: the emotional one and the rational one. It is likely that Pope Francis needs to run across different paths to bring different audience segments to the resonance block. For example, I expect faithful to go through emotional routes more easily than non-believers.

Figure 17 – CBBE model for Pope Francis



## 2.7 Marketing for Religious organizations

Spiritual leaders are heads of religious organizations, these contexts represent a gap in the literature for human brands research. Religious organizations are defined as “*social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and exchange supernaturally-based general compensators*” (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987). Compensator is a term which refers to something as a reward, which cannot be traced or explained without ambiguous evaluations.

Religious organizations are not self-sustainable, their growth is connected to the external environment and to the amount of faithful (Wuthnow, 1994), but if many different religions rise up, rivalry among them could bring to a competitive scenario, a market scenario.

Years ago, religious traditions were much more prominent and impactful for societies or governments, but now they encounter more difficulties and as Berger states, religious activity is subjected to the dynamics of market economies (Berger, 1967).

Historical studies of religious organizations show the difficulties in describing a competitive scenario, as Miller affirms, this “industry” is not particularly attractive and it is very hard to draw up long-term competitive positions (Miller, 2002). In his work, Miller provides evidences about religious contexts as an interesting and an unexplored field for strategic management tools.

Nevertheless, religious organizations are a relevant unique industry, they play a key role in societies even for the nonreligious, religious structures represent the core of a community (Putnam 2000; Youngblood & Winn, 2004).

In the last century, a marketing approach for religious organizations was unimaginable. As it is known, brands were the first to come up with marketing tactics, then non-profit organizations started to draw inspiration from such knowledge, now it seems the time for marketing knowledge to be mixed with religious organizations (Stevens, 2006). Stevens underlines the necessity to engage effective marketing tactics to well locate the religious organizations, he uses the Adoption Process, which is a model structured for the decision-making process of consumer's purchase. This model, as the CBBE, presents awareness as the first block.

Stevens, 2006 declares marketing approach brings four major advantages to religious organizations:

1. Knowledge: religious organizations lack to satisfy their constituents, instead marketing tools have the ability to measure and improve consumers' satisfaction;
2. Communication: As previously stated, religious organizations look forward to attracting new faithful from the external environment, but they lack of a wise managerial approach and they tend to miss the target;
3. Economics: Most of the time, religious organizations put into practice un-efficient decisions, a marketing approach makes every dollar spent to be worth, avoiding wasting of money or sub-optimal choices;
4. Integration: A marketing contribute could help religious organization in providing to the people a consistent message, without risking of being misunderstood; this point has also been tested by the study of Vatican News and its benefits on the Catholic Church.

The main problem is the controversy encircled the use of marketing knowledge by religions, they are seen as conflictual (Wrenn, 2010). This assumption is false, there are similarities between these two fields and they both could benefit if they met.

Wrenn, 2010 raises question such as: can Christianity be marketed? Should the Church be marketed? He points out marketing tools and spiritual identity could work together; ten years later with Pope Francis and the Dicastery for Communication we know this is true. Nowadays marketing communication tools are even defined as "vital" for religious organizations (Iyer S., Velu, C & Mumit, A., 2014).

## **2.8 Research Question**

Human brands theories have never been applied to spiritual leaders, who are guiding figures for religious organizations. This industry does not present a high number of works in marketing research and it brings with it a gap that needs to be fulfilled.

This work wants to address Pope Francis, one of the most famous spiritual leaders in the world and one of the most appreciated world leaders, as a human brand. The renewed CBBE model has been chosen to investigate how Pope Francis' brand equity changes in relationship with different people.



This research wants also to highlight what paths of the pyramid are more recommended for different segments of population, we remember Pope Francis needs to reach three different end goals, it is likely agnostic/atheistic people tend to reach the resonance block differently from Catholics.

The research question is:

How Pope Francis' brand equity is perceived among people who differ in religious belief and how do people reach the highest block of the pyramid?

## CHAPTER 3

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 Model

The focus of this study is the investigation of Pope Francis' brand equity depending on people's religious belief. I want to collect data to demonstrate the process that is behind Pope Francis' brand equity among different segments of population, exploring if the Pontiff runs different peripheral routes to reach the top blocks of the Customer Brand Based pyramid and to what extent his resonance goals are reached by the sample.

This phenomenon is investigated through a revised CBBE model, the six main blocks are preserved (Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgments, Feelings and Resonance), but significant modification is made to adapt the model to a human brand, especially on the "Resonance block".

The independent variable of this model is the religious belief, people were asked to declare their religious orientation among for options:

1. Atheist (I do not believe in God's existence);
2. Agnostic (I could believe in God's existence, but I have no faith);
3. Non practicing believer (I believe in God's existence, but I do not take part in activities of my religious community);
4. Practicing believer (I believe in God's existence and I actively participate in my religious community).

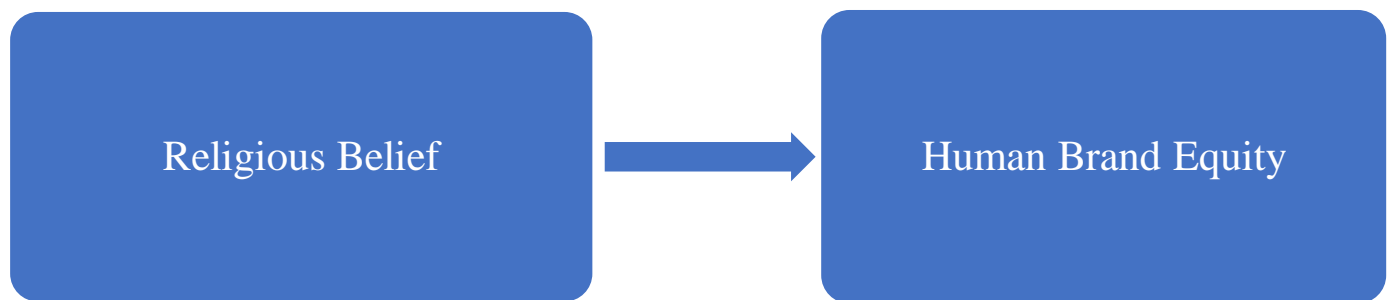
As presented before, the dependent variable (Brand Equity) is the result of all the blocks comprised in Keller's pyramid. In order to measure it, we briefly present again all these dimensions:

- Salience: it deals with awareness and it defines how easily a human brand can be recognized (brand recognition) and recalled (brand recalled);
- Performance: it identifies the ability of human brands to satisfy consumers' needs;
- Imagery: it describes the extent a human brand satisfies consumers' psychological and social needs;
- Quality: it is the global judgment that people make regarding a human brand;
- Credibility: it is the sum of trust and steadiness that people tend to attribute to a human brand;
- Consideration: it defines how much people tend to retain a human brand in their consideration set;
- Superiority: it determines the supremacy of a human brand over competitors;
- Feelings: it is the result of all emotional responses that people tend to give to a human brand;
- Resonance: it is the extent to which people are led to the end goals of a human brand: In this study Pope Francis' end goals have been identified into: one toward himself, one toward the Church and one toward his socio-political standpoints.

I suggest there is a significant difference in Pope Francis' brand equity for people who differ for religious belief. Indeed, if significant differences in at least one block of the pyramid are registered, that means overall brand equity is going to be different for the segments of this sample.

For this reason, the model has been constructed to study just one main effect:

1. The direct effect of religious belief on Pope Francis' brand equity



My hypotheses are:

H1: Religious belief critically affects Pope Francis' brand equity. I expect to find differences in global perception of the Pope among the four different category groups identified.

H2: I expect Pope Francis' brand equity to be at its highest among practicing believers and at its lowest among atheist. In the middle I expect to find agnostic (closer to the atheist) and non practicing believers (closer to practicing believers).

### 3.2 Methodology

The CBBE model has been studied through a survey realized on Qualtrics and distributed via WhatsApp. People were asked to complete a survey in which they had to evaluate Pope Francis along different steps of the Keller's pyramid.

This survey presented eleven question blocks:

- I. Introduction: in this block people got to know the purpose of this study and were introduced to the figure of Pope Francis through a brief summary of his Papacy;
- II. First thought: people were asked to write down their first recall when they think about Pope Francis;
- III.-VIII. CBBE Model: Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgments, Feelings and Resonance;
- IX. Spillover: this block wanted to highlight if positive changes in people's behavior were caused by Pope Francis;

X. Religious belief: people were asked to identify themselves as atheist, agnostic, practicing believers or non practicing believers;

XI. Socio-demographic: in the end people had to declare age and gender.

The survey reached more than 200 people, but only 152 respondents (n=152) correctly completed the questionnaire. The youngest people who participated are 19 years old, the oldest is a 72 years old male.

Regarding the age, this sample presented three different generation segments:

- 33.6% (n=51) is under 25
- 32.9% (n=50) is between 25 and 34
- 33.6% (n=51) is 35 or more.

The gender distribution was equally distributed: 48.7% (n=74) male and 51.3% (n=78) female.

All data have been analyzed through the statistic software SPSS.

### **3.3 Measures**

The six steps of the pyramid have been measured by a series of items:

- “Salience” has been measured through two items: how often do you hear news regarding Pope Francis and how often do you think about him. A 5-point Likert Scale (1=Never, 5= Very often) has been used.
- “Performance” has been measured through two items: to what extent does Pope Francis have unique characteristics as spiritual leader and how well does Pope Francis perform his role of religious leader. A 5-point Likert Scale (1=Not at all, 5= Very much) has been used.
- “Imagery” has been measured through one item, in which people evaluated Pope Francis along a list of 15 attributes, declaring how much every single adjective well defined the Pontiff. Here is the list of adjectives: Empathetic, Merciful, Resilient, Reliable, Consistent, Charismatic, Pragmatic, Goal Oriented, Steady, Smart, Stubborn, Brave, Humble, Patient and Hearty. A 5-point Likert Scale (1=Not at all, 5= Very well) has been used.
- “Judgments” has been measured through four different blocks of questions: Quality, Credibility, Consideration and Superiority. Quality considered two items: what is your overall opinion of Pope Francis and what is your personal assessment of Pope Francis; Credibility considered five items: how skilled do you think Pope Francis is as a spiritual leader, how effective do you think Pope Francis is as a spiritual leader, how much do you trust Pope Francis, how much do you respect Pope Francis and how much do you admire pope Francis; Consideration considered two items: how likely would you be to recommend that others follow Pope Francis and how personally relevant do you find Pope Francis; Superiority considered two items: how unique is Pope Francis as a pope and to what extent

does Pope Francis offer messages and actions that other leaders cannot. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure all these items.

- “Feelings” has been measured through seven items: does Pope Francis give you a feeling of – Warmth, Joy, Inspiration/Elevation, Calm, Relief, Gratification, Hope. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure all these items.
- “Resonance” has been measured through three different blocks, the first one was Pope Francis’ resonance toward himself, this block considered four subsets: Loyalty, Attachment, Communality and Engagement.

Loyalty was “I consider myself loyal to Pope Francis” and “I follow Pope Francis whenever I can (both online/offline)”; Attachment was “I really love Pope Francis” and “Pope Francis is special to me”; Communality was “I really identify with people who follow Pope Francis” and “I feel a deep connection with others who follow Pope Francis”; Engagement was “I really like to talk about Pope Francis with others” and “I am always interested in learning more about what Pope Francis is doing”. The second one was Pope Francis’ resonance toward his socio-political standpoints and it has been measured through six items: “I think people can make difference with everyday small actions to contribute to the social well-being”, “I think everybody can be a protagonist of the change starting from everyday actions”, “thanks to Pope Francis’ Papacy I am more aware of social issues such as marginality” (poor, migrants etc.), “I am more careful toward the well-being of the environment”, “I put more attention on social justice” (human rights, social inclusion etc.), “I am more sensible toward interreligious issues”.

The third one was Pope Francis’ resonance toward the Church, which has been measured by four items: thanks to Pope Francis – “I trust more the Church”, “I feel closer to the Church”, “I feel more involved in the Church”, “I think the Church could renew itself by going out of itself and searching out people, especially those who are in the peripheries”. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure all these items.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Before proceeding with data analysis, this scale needed to be validated by a reliability test. The Cronbach’s alpha is the value used to check reliability, so I have conducted the reliability analysis on each block of the scale. The minimum value to consider the alpha as reliable is 0.6, if every block presented a Cronbach’s alpha greater than or equal to this minimum, the model could be considered reliable.

On SPSS, through “Analizza → Scala → Analisi di affidabilità” I have obtained this value for each block:

- Salience (2 items) Cronbach’s alpha = 0,765 ( $\alpha=0,765$ ,  $n=152$ );
- Performance (2 items) Cronbach’s alpha = 0,688 ( $\alpha=0,688$ ,  $n=152$ );
- Imagery (15 items) Cronbach’s alpha = 0,886 ( $\alpha=0,886$ ,  $n=152$ );

- Quality (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,925 ( $\alpha=0,925$ , n=152);
- Credibility (5 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,888 ( $\alpha=0,888$ , n=152);
- Consideration (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,783 ( $\alpha=0,783$ , n=152);
- Superiority (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,686 ( $\alpha=0,686$ , n=152);
- Feelings (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,910 ( $\alpha=0,910$ , n=152);
- Resonance1 (8 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,948 ( $\alpha=0,948$ , n=152);
- Resonance2 (6 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,910 ( $\alpha=0,910$ , n=152);
- Resonance3 (4 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,913 ( $\alpha=0,913$ , n=152);
- Spillover (4 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,896 ( $\alpha=0,896$ , n=152).

All the scales turned out to be reliable, the Cronbach's alpha of "Performance" and "Superiority" seemed to be questionable, (it is known that a minimum of 0.7 gives more certainty about the fairness of the scale), but even with values between 0.6 and 0.7 we could consider the model as reliable.

In order to measure if significant differences in mean values were present, I needed to conduct two studies on SPSS:

1. One-way ANOVA: this is the test to measure the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables;
2. Post Hoc analysis: they reveal if significant differences are present among the four religious belief layers and on what dependent variable.

### 3.4.1 Data results - ANOVA

One-way ANOVA is the test that points out if there are significant differences in mean value among the different conditions of the independent variable: atheist, agnostic, practicing believers and non practicing believers. Atheist were addressed as "group 1", agnostic as "group 2", non practicing as "group 3" and practicing as "group 4".

So, the null and the alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \mu_{atheist} = \mu_{agnostic} = \mu_{non\ practicing\ believers} = \mu_{practicing\ believers}$$

$$H_A: \mu_{atheist} \neq \mu_{agnostic} \neq \mu_{non\ practicing\ believers} \neq \mu_{practicing\ believers}$$

In the next figure ANOVA outcomes are reported, the analysis has been conducted at 95% confidence interval, so where the pvalue (SIG. in figure 18) is lower than 0,005, it means the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative should be accepted.

Wherever pvalue < 0.05, significant differences can be traced in mean comparison between the four groups. On the contrary, where pvalue is more than 0.05, no significant difference can be found in mean comparison.

Figure 18 – One Way ANOVA results

IV	DV	N	MEAN	ST. DEV.	ANOVA	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
ATHEIST	SALIENCE	15	2,167	0,617	Between Groups	38,074	3	12,691	27,357	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	2,640	0,670	Within Groups	68,661	148	0,464		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	2,902	0,654	Total	106,735	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	3,606	0,718						
ATHEIST	PERFORMANCE	15	3,933	0,563	Between Groups	3,710	3	1,237	3,316	0,022
AGNOSTIC		25	4,180	0,720	Within Groups	55,185	148	0,373		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	4,207	0,632	Total	58,895	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,423	0,565						
ATHEIST	IMAGERY	15	3,893	0,496	Between Groups	1,657	3	0,552	2,150	0,096
AGNOSTIC		25	4,075	0,660	Within Groups	38,003	148	0,257		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	4,129	0,437	Total	39,660	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,235	0,485						
ATHEIST	QUALITY	15	4,067	0,623	Between Groups	5,653	3	1,884	3,971	0,009
AGNOSTIC		25	4,200	0,878	Within Groups	70,227	148	0,475		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	4,463	0,684	Total	75,880	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,613	0,628						
ATHEIST	CREDIBILITY	15	3,707	0,580	Between Groups	9,259	3	3,086	8,595	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	4,064	0,642	Within Groups	53,140	148	0,359		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	4,322	0,573	Total	62,399	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,490	0,602						
ATHEIST	CONSIDERATION	15	2,667	1,011	Between Groups	31,070	3	10,357	14,918	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	3,160	1,087	Within Groups	102,746	148	0,694		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	3,622	0,748	Total	133,816	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,035	0,734						
ATHEIST	SUPERIORITY	15	3,967	0,581	Between Groups	4,131	3	1,377	2,994	0,033
AGNOSTIC		25	4,020	0,823	Within Groups	68,073	148	0,460		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	4,049	0,678	Total	72,204	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,352	0,640						
ATHEIST	FEELINGS	15	3,191	0,932	Between Groups	8,900	3	2,967	4,951	0,003
AGNOSTIC		25	3,629	0,899	Within Groups	88,690	148	0,599		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	3,833	0,675	Total	97,590	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	3,990	0,746						
ATHEIST	RESONANCE1	15	1,392	0,486	Between Groups	68,353	3	22,784	27,602	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	2,170	0,999	Within Groups	122,170	148	0,825		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	2,537	0,908	Total	190,524	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	3,405	0,940						
ATHEIST	RESONANCE2	15	3,000	1,153	Between Groups	15,508	3	5,169	6,320	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	3,487	1,097	Within Groups	121,602	148	0,818		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	3,805	0,879	Total	136,570	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	4,024	0,781						
ATHEIST	RESONANCE3	15	1,633	0,566	Between Groups	80,101	3	26,700	32,890	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	2,520	1,152	Within Groups	120,148	148	0,812		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	2,677	0,902	Total	200,250	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	3,775	0,856						
ATHEIST	SPILLOVER	15	1,517	0,658	Between Groups	59,557	3	19,852	21,621	0,000
AGNOSTIC		25	2,260	1,110	Within Groups	135,893	148	0,918		
NON PRAC. BELIEVER		41	2,726	0,808	Total	195,450	151			
PRAC. BELIEVER		71	3,426	1,030						

As we can see in the last figure, each dependent variable, except for Imagery, presents a pvalue lower than 0.05, so the null hypothesis must be rejected and we accept the alternative hypothesis:

$$H_A: \mu_{atheist} \neq \mu_{agnostic} \neq \mu_{non\ practicing\ believers} \neq \mu_{practicing\ believers}$$

At least one of the four group differs for mean in each block of the pyramid, as expected. Every block, but not the “Imagery”, which is, as already said, the extent to which a human brand can satisfy people’s psychological and social needs. This study states, people’s psychological and social needs are satisfied in the same way, either if you are a catholic believer or not.

More clarifications could help to fully comprehend the ANOVA test, with the Bonferroni test (next paragraph) it is possible to point out which mean group differs from the others in each block and to what extent that happens.

Before analyzing it, I would like to highlight the importance of standard deviation in this sample: the highest blocks of the pyramid tend to cause much higher standard deviation than the first blocks. For the Salience and Performance, we can notice these Standard Deviation:

Salience SD:

Atheist: 0,617 – Agnostic: 0,670 – Non practicing believers: 0,654 – Practicing believers: 0,718;

Performance SD:

Atheist: 0,563 – Agnostic: 0,720 – Non practicing believers: 0,632 – Practicing believers: 0,565.

People who belong to one of the four group declare very similar answer, all the values are between 0,5 and 0,8 which are quite low standard deviations. This suggests that is very hard to find two people belonging to the same group and having completely different opinions of Pope Francis’ Salience or Performance. If this is quite true for the first two blocks of the CBBE pyramid, in the highest blocks we find the opposite. Look at the Standard Deviation of Resonance1, Resonance2 and Resonance3:

Resonance 1 SD:

Atheist: 0,486 – Agnostic: 0,999 – Non practicing believers: 0,908 – Practicing believers: 0,940;

Resonance2 SD:

Atheist: 1,153 – Agnostic: 1,097 – Non practicing believers: 0,879 – Practicing believers: 0,781;

Resonance3 SD:

Atheist: 0,566 – Agnostic: 1,152 – Non practicing believers: 0,902 – Practicing believers: 0,856.

These outcomes demonstrate that opinions are much more distributed, even if significant differences in mean value for the four groups are traced, it is interesting to highlight how much in every group the standard deviation is high. This focus on Standard Deviation could bring to light one suggestion: the more people reach the top of the pyramid, the more answers are distributed in the Likert Scale and it is more probable to find people belonging to the same group but having opposite views on Pope Francis’ Resonance.



### 3.4.2 Post Hoc analysis – Bonferroni test

The Bonferroni test gives us a clear comparison between the groups in each dependent variable, through this we can put in relation two groups a time, analyzing mean differences.

Figure 19 – Bonferroni Test

BONFERRONI TEST					
DV	RELIGIOUS BELIEF 1	RELIGIOUS BELIEF 2	MEAN DIFFERENCES	SIG.	SIG: YES or NO?
SALIENCE	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,473	0,21	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,736	0,003	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,439	0	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,473	0,21	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,262	0,786	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,966	0	YES
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,736	0,003	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,262	0,786	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,703	0	YES
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,439	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,966	0	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,703	0	YES
PERFORMANCE	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,247	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,274	0,835	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,489	0,033	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,247	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,027	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,243	0,539	NO
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,274	0,835	NO
		AGNOSTIC	0,027	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,215	0,446	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,489	0,033	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,243	0,539	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,215	0,446	NO
IMAGERY	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,181	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,235	0,758	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,341	0,114	NO
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,181	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,054	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,16	1	NO
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,235	0,758	NO
		AGNOSTIC	0,054	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,106	1	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,341	0,114	NO
		AGNOSTIC	0,16	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,106	1	NO
QUALITY	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,133	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,397	0,349	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,546	0,036	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,133	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,263	0,804	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,413	0,066	NO
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,397	0,349	NO
		AGNOSTIC	0,263	0,804	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,149	1	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,546	0,036	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,413	0,066	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,149	1	NO
CREDIBILITY	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,357	0,419	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,615	0,005	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,783	0	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,357	0,419	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,258	0,551	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,426	0,016	YES
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,615	0,005	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,258	0,551	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,168	0,927	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,783	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,426	0,016	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,168	0,927	NO

CONSIDERATION	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,493	0,431	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,955	0,001	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,369	0	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,493	0,431	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,462	0,183	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,875	0	YES
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,955	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,462	0,183	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,413	0,075	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,369	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,875	0	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,413	0,075	NO
SUPERIORITY	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,053	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,082	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,385	0,284	NO
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,053	1	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,029	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,332	0,222	NO
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,0821	1	NO
		AGNOSTIC	0,029	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,303	0,144	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,385	0,284	NO
		AGNOSTIC	0,332	0,222	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,303	0,144	NO
FEELINGS	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,438	0,511	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,642	0,04	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,8	0,002	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,438	0,511	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,204	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,361	0,279	NO
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,642	0,04	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,204	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,157	1	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,8	0,002	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,361	0,279	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,137	1	NO
RESONANCE1	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,778	0,058	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,145	0	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-2,013	0	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,778	0,058	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,367	0,684	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,235	0	YES
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,145	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,367	0,684	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,868	0	YES
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	2,013	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	1,235	0	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,868	0	YES
RESONANCE2	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,487	0,609	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,805	0,022	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,023	0,001	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,487	0,609	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,318	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,537	0,07	NO
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	0,805	0,022	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,318	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,219	1	NO
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,023	0,01	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,537	0,07	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,219	1	NO
RESONANCE3	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,887	0,018	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,044	0,001	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-2,141	0	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,887	0,018	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,137	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,255	0	YES
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,044	0,001	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,157	1	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,098	0	YES
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	2,141	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	1,255	0	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	1,098	0	YES
SPILLOVER	ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	-0,743	0,113	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,209	0	YES
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,909	0	YES
	AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	0,743	0,113	NO
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,466	0,345	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-1,166	0	YES
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,209	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	0,466	0,345	NO
		PRAC. BELIEVER	-0,7	0,002	YES
	PRAC. BELIEVER	ATHEIST	1,909	0	YES
		AGNOSTIC	1,166	0	YES
		NON PRAC. BELIEVER	0,7	0,002	YES

As expected, the most differences can be found in the comparison of atheists with practicing believers. Indeed, in every single dependent variable (except for Imagery and Superiority), atheists' mean is significantly lower than the one of practicing believers.

On the contrary, atheists and agnostics tend to be very similar in the evaluation of Pope Francis' brand equity along the CBBE pyramid, except for the Resonance3, in which agnostics declare a significant higher and better evaluation of the Church thanks to Bergoglio's papacy.

Another key element emerging from the Bonferroni test is the position of non practicing believers, their values are always higher than the one of agnostics, but the mean difference is insignificant. The Bonferroni test well points out how close is the perception of Pope Francis between agnostics and non practicing believers. In the next figure it can be noticed which dependent variable significantly changes from one religious belief to one another.

Figure 20 – Mean differences per group

RELIGIOUS BELIEF 1	RELIGIOUS BELIEF 2	DV MEAN DIFFERENCES
ATHEIST	AGNOSTIC	Resonance3
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	Saliency Credibility Consideration Feelings Resonance1, Resonance2, Resonance3 Spillover
	PRAC. BELIEVER	Saliency Performance Quality Credibility Consideration Feelings Resonance1, Resonance2, Resonance3 Spillover
AGNOSTIC	ATHEIST	Resonance3
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	-
	PRAC. BELIEVER	Saliency Credibility Consideration Resonance1, Resonance3 Spillover
NON PRACTICING BELIEVER	ATHEIST	Saliency Credibility Consideration Feelings Resonance1, Resonance2, Resonance3 Spillover
	AGNOSTIC	-
	PRAC. BELIEVER	Saliency Resonance1, Resonance3 Spillover
PRACTICING BELIEVER	ATHEIST	Saliency Performance Quality Credibility Consideration Feelings Resonance1, Resonance2, Resonance3 Spillover
	AGNOSTIC	Saliency Credibility Consideration Resonance1, Resonance3 Spillover
	NON PRAC. BELIEVER	Saliency Resonance1, Resonance3 Spillover

### 3.4.3 ANOVA conclusions

The ANOVA test confirmed the null hypothesis: people who have different religious belief, differently perceive Pope Francis' brand equity. Practicing believers are those who make the most favorable judgements about Pope Francis, followed by non practicing believers, then agnostics, at the end atheists.

No significant differences can be found between agnostics and non practicing believers, but every mean value of the non practicing believers is higher than the one of agnostics. Agnostics are also very close to atheists, especially in the first five blocks of the pyramid, while for Pope Francis' end goals their position is significantly in contrast with atheists.

Practicing believers is the group category that most differs from the others along the pyramid, their overall mean is quite high for every dependent variable (it never goes under 3.4 out of 5) and many significant mean differences can be found with the other three kind of religious belief.

### 3.4.4 "First thought" analysis

This survey also asked people to provide an open answer to the question "What is the first thought you come up with about Pope Francis? What is the most evident episode that comes across your mind when you think about him?"

All 152 answers have been read and classified into different categories; this process could be very helpful to better understand how and what people think when they are asked to recall Pope Francis. This is an important deepening for the block "Salience"; we could consider this as a sort of "pre-block" before the pyramid.

In figure 21 it is reported a graph (in Italian, official language of the survey) in which are drawn the main categories expressed by people as "first thought". The most vivid episode in people's mind seems to be Pope Francis' election, 31 people out of 152 cited this moment as their first recall of Bergoglio. The second most cited category is the one that comprises general episodes of simplicity and humility (his decision to not live in the apostolic palace, his typical dress code etc.), 27 people out of 152 recalled one or more of these cases.

The third major category is the one named "Pope Francis' nature", in which are contained all the very generic answers that recall Pope Francis' humanity and compassion, without referring to some specific episodes. 17 people out of 152 are in this group.

At the end I would like to underline three other categories that come out from this investigation. 11 people out of 152 expressed their first thought of Pope Francis in relation with the LGBT community, his famous speech on the airplane "*Chi sono io per giudicare?*" is one of the most cited episodes by the sample.

It is also interesting how 11 people out of 152 come up with the Urbi et Orbi blessing as their first thought. Once more, it is evident the impact of Pope Francis during pandemic time: his spiritual and human support to



### 3.5 First Conclusions

This investigation brings more evidences about Pope Francis' brand equity in group of people who differ in religious belief. As it was expected, practicing believers are those who better perceive and evaluate Pope Francis, followed by non practicing believers, agnostics and atheists.

In the Salience block, there are significant differences in mean group and we find a high overall value only for the practicing believers (3.606/5.000); other groups do not hear news about Pope Francis and they are not keen to think about him.

For this block it is also relevant the "first thought" analysis, in which people had to declare their first recall of the Pontiff. Pope Francis' election and general episodes of his simplicity or humility are the most cited categories.

For the Performance, every group presents high mean values and the only significant difference can be found in the relation between atheist and practicing believers. People think that Pope Francis has unique traits and he well performs his role. Mean values vary from 3.933 (atheists) to 4.423 (practicing believers) out of 5.000.

Imagery is the most controversial block of the pyramid; no differences can be pointed out from this investigation in these four groups. Mean values range from 3.893 to 4.235 out of 5.000. This means religious belief does not have a clear impact on Imagery, and that this specific block of Pope Francis' brand equity is not affected by religiosity: people tend to evaluate positively Pope Francis' nature either if they are believers or not.

From the results, adjectives that better define Pope Francis are:  
Humble (4.43 out of 5.000);  
Smart (4.37 out of 5.000);  
Brave (4.34. out of 5.000).

The four sub-categories of Judgments present quite homogeneous outcomes for all the categories, except for Consideration in which values are critically lower for all the groups. Through Quality, Credibility and Superiority it was tested if people positively judge Pope Francis' papacy; indeed, the sample declares: To have either a good opinion or personal evaluation of the Pontiff (min mean value – atheist 4.067 out of 5.000, max mean value – practicing believer 4.613 out of 5.000);

To consider the Pope effective, to admire, trust and respect him (min mean value – atheist 3.707 out of 5.000, max mean value – practicing believer 4.490 out of 5.000);

To see in Pope Francis a unique leader, capable to transmit messages that other leaders cannot (min mean value – atheist 3.967 out of 5.000, max mean value practicing believer 4.352 out of 5.000).

On the other hand, mean difference is higher for the Consideration sub-block: very rarely atheist or agnostic people would suggest to somebody else to follow Pope Francis and a few of them consider the Pope personally relevant. Non practicing and practicing believers instead show higher outcomes, but lower than mean values for the other sub-blocks of these two groups.

The Feelings block is in line with previous results: significant mean differences can be found either between atheists and non practicing believers, or atheists and practicing believers.

Resonance1 is the block with lowest values at all. For each group, the overall mean expressed for the first category of resonance (Pope Francis' end goals toward himself) is the lowest overall mean. Atheists, agnostics and non practicing believers do not present positive outcomes for this end goal, Pope Francis is not special to them, they are not interested to be updated on him and they do not consider themselves loyal. Practicing believers instead with an overall mean of 3.405 out of 5.000 are significantly different from the three other categories.

Resonance2 seems the only end-goal block reached by everybody; even if a very few of the sample show high values for resonance1, all the groups seem to be influenced by Pope Francis' socio-political standpoints. Mean values vary from 3.000 (atheists) to 4.024 (practicing believers).

Instead, Resonance 3 shows similar tendency to Resonance 1: low values for the first three categories and a significant difference for the practicing believers.

Finally, spillovers follow the same trend of Resonance1 and Resonance3. The sample did not change his personal behavior following Pope Francis' papacy, except for practicing believers who show considerable values.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study gained important evidences about Pope Francis' perception between atheists, agnostics, non practicing believers and practicing believers. Through the CBBE model, the purpose of this work was to verify how Pope Francis' brand equity changes in groups who differ in religious belief.

As presented in Chapter 1, Pope Francis has been a revolution for the Catholic Church: he broke some old codes and he made space to new ideas, bringing the Church back to the people and inspiring the change. His innovative manner and his historical decisions clearly have drawn some critics and over-simplifications on him, but as demonstrated in the first part of this study, Pope Francis cannot be categorized in some stereotypes.

In particular, his decision to empower the communication of the Church has been playing a key role in this renewal process. His ability to bring the religious communication to an unexplored level is extremely interesting from a marketing perspective. Moreover, in Chapter 2 it was explained how the Human Branding theory tends to be applied to celebrities but very few works consider these theoretical models suitable for other human brands.

Thanks to its adaptability, the CBBE model has proved to be a reliable tool to investigate Pope Francis' brand equity. What is different between a religious leader and a brand is the end block of the pyramid, for Pope Francis the goal is not to bring people to buy a product or a service. As presented in the end of Chapter 2, three different end-goals characterize a religious leader.

The survey reached 152 people and the main hypothesis has been verified by data. Pope Francis' brand equity is at its highest with practicing believers and at its lowest with atheists. But, as said in the first conclusions, not all the blocks of the pyramid show significant differences in mean values between groups. This means that at some point of the route along the pyramid, Pope Francis' perception is quite similar among people with different degree of religiosity.

This research reveals that there are some themes for which Pope Francis encounters global consensus. For example, his socio-political standpoints gain wide consensus among different segments of the population. This Pontiff seems to be able to get in touch with people on humanitarian matters; and people who normally do not follow Pope Francis, somehow are touched and influenced by his socio-political views. Further research could better identify about which topics Pope Francis gains a "universal" influence, not regarding people's degree of religiosity.



The only end goal that seems to be reached by every group is the Resonance<sup>2</sup>, which is Pope Francis' end-goal toward his sociopolitical standpoints. At the same time, Resonance<sup>1</sup> and Resonance<sup>3</sup> do not present high values for non-Catholics. This brings to some conclusions: Pope Francis' communication is effective, the majority of interviewees was able to recall one moment related to Pope Francis and all the groups present good mean value along the pyramid (except for Salience, Resonance<sup>1</sup> and Resonance<sup>3</sup>). Pope Francis' overall perception seems to be positive for all groups, but end goals are missed.

From a marketing perspective, these results show how it is crucial to study different peripheral routes for different segments of population. The tactics put in place so far tend to bring Catholics to the three end goals, but people with other degree of religiosity do not reach these end goals.

What is curious is the good evaluations people express about Pope Francis in the previous blocks of the CBBE pyramid. This means Pope Francis has an impact on people with every kind of religious belief and this is the reason why a major communication effort needs to be made to render Pope Francis' end goals accessible to more people.

An evidence coming out from this study is the consistency of Pope Francis' brand equity along all of the first five blocks of the pyramid. Before the Resonance block, very few people demonstrate to be uninformed or reluctant to the Pope, the majority of the sample shows respect, admiration and seems to consider him as a good leader. A question that stays open is how to bring atheists, agnostics and a part of non practicing believers to better reach the end goals of the pyramid.

A limitation of this study was the size of the sample, as a similar study should be conducted on a wider segment of population, possibly even more heterogeneous than the one of this study. Moreover, other religious beliefs could be involved in the investigation.

My research followed previous studies on the application of CBBE model to Pope Francis and now there are a lot of evidences about how people perceive his human brand equity. What needs to be deepened is the last part of the CBBE pyramid: can Pope Francis improve his ability to bring people to his end goals? What communication efforts can be implemented to facilitate this process? Further research could also examine the relationship between Pope Francis' brand equity and other dimensions, such as age or nationality.

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# SUMMARY

## Introduction

Human brand has been one of the most discussed topics in marketing in the last years. During this decade, scholars have deepened this theory, coming up with new theoretical models. Human brands play a key role in our societies, they have the power to influence people and to bring competitive advantage to companies they decide to bond with.

Human brands have unique characteristics, so the researchers have started to study how to perfectly manage these figures and how to improve their inspiring power on people. Until today, human brands have been associated with four main categories: CEO's, sport, artists/movie stars and politicians; all together, they are considered "celebrities". Celebrities have always been the one and only application for human brand theory, while many other fields would deserve to be investigated. Indeed, a gap in the literature was found in the application of human brand theory to religious leaders.

One of the most influential religious leaders in the world is Pope Francis. His papacy has been representing a change of course for the Church and he is one of the most appreciated global leaders. He was chosen in 2013 by the Conclave to fight the reputational crises that was affecting the Church before his pontificate, and not surprisingly Pope Francis' innovative manner and historical decisions have often left the world speechless. Through his commitment, he is building a new image of the Church either for Catholics or non-believers.

After eight full years of Pope Francis' pontificate, it is very interesting to study how he is perceived by the population and to what extent he is able to influence people with his opinions. This investigation aims to address Pope Francis as a human brand and to study how people who differ in religious belief make judgements about him.

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) by Keller is the theoretical model chosen to analyze the Pontiff. Through this, it is possible to examine the process that leads people to bond and to be engaged with a human brand. The six building blocks of the CBBE pyramid are: Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgements, Feelings and Resonance.

This study takes a new perspective, because it considers a religious leader as a human brand; moreover COVID-19 conditions radically changed the role of world leaders; the pandemic time has marked a turning point for many global leaders. Starting from an analysis based on secondary data, this investigation applies a revised CBBE model to the Pontiff and it gains evidences about Pope Francis' brand equity among diverse segments of populations who differ in religious belief. Indeed, atheists, agnostics, non practicing believers and practicing believers were taken into account for this work. The results reveal how Pope Francis is positively judged by people, the CBBE pyramid clearly shows how Pope Francis receives good evaluations in almost every step of the building process for brand equity, but his end-goals are not reached for everybody.

The independent variable of this model is the religious belief, the dependent variable is brand equity and my main hypothesis is that Pope Francis' brand equity changes in relation to the degree of religiosity.

# CHAPTER 1

## Pope Francis' relevance and leadership

### Pope Francis' relevance: a secondary data analysis

It was 19:06 of March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 when the white smoke came out into the sky of Rome and Jorge Maria Bergoglio became the 266<sup>th</sup> Pope of the Catholic Church, choosing the name "Francis". Pope Bergoglio introduced some innovation since the first day of his papacy: before him, there had never been a Pope either coming from the Jesuit order, or Sud-American and no one had never chosen the name of the Saint of Assisi. This gesture was a symbol of Bergoglio's closeness to poor and last people in modern societies. The beginning of his pontificate represented a collection of "*first times ever*", his election and his first choices became hot topics and many experts defined them as shattering (CNN, 2013).

Pope Francis has been a change of course for the Church during these eight years, his spontaneity and simplicity have been constantly reversed in words and actions. This change of course was well perceived all around the world, indeed the global consensus around Pope Francis has always been bigger than the one of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI<sup>th</sup>.

However, Pope Francis and the Church were hit by an image crisis in 2018 due to series of sexual abuse scandals in the U.S., which lead to decrease of the approval for the Holy Father. Nevertheless, Pope Francis is nowadays a figure of global leadership and to understand his relevance, it is necessary to provide an analysis about the reputation of Pope Francis relating to other current world leaders. This study was conducted by collecting secondary data on public opinion about global leaders and it is divided in three sections: A. After the crisis of 2018, B. Before the pandemic, C. During Covid-19 pandemic.

### After the crisis of 2018

Gallup International in its report at the end of the same year highlighted how the world was suffering a "leadership crisis": people did not believe in their own leaders. Among the European government leaders, only two registered a positive overall rating at the end of 2018 (Gallup International, 2019). These outcomes were revealed by interviews conducted on a sample of 50000 people coming from all around the globe.

By the end of 2018 and at the start of 2019, Pope Francis was the global leader with the highest approval rating: 53% favorable opinions vs 23% unfavorable and a net score of +30% (in the previous year was +29%). Appreciation toward Pope Francis seems to be quite homogeneous in the world: the highest percentage of people who declared to have a "very favorable" or "somewhat favorable" opinion of Pope Francis was in Latin America (73%). In Europe and Africa, the approval rating was between 60% and 65%, in USA 55%, in East Asia 51%, in West Asia 26% and in India only 6% because 89% of respondents "do not know" or "do not respond" (Gallup International, 2018).

## **Before the Pandemic**

Fortunately, there are some relevant works about Pope Francis' liking just before the pandemic. These reports are crucial because they make clear what was the perception about the Pontiff just before Covid-19 and how it changed with the global emergency.

A survey realized among Catholic people coming from England, Wales and Scotland demonstrated that 50% of respondents considered Pope Francis "*a change for the better*", instead only 7% "*a change for the worse*"; the remaining portion was in the middle of these two opposite poles. The percentage of "*change for the better*" rose up to 55% if just under30 population is considered (Bullivant, 2020). Among under30 if we look at the people who go to the Mass at least once a week, it is clear that people thought the Pope was doing an *excellent/good* job on several topics

The report conducted in April 2020 on a large American sample by the Pew Research Center found similar results and that would make clear that even before Covid-19 (this survey was distributed in January 2020), the figure of Pope Francis was re-gaining consensus in the U.S.A. Indeed, in this continent, in 2018 either Catholics or non-believers started to question the Church and the Pontiff, but this was principally related to a series of sex abuse scandals among American priests that came out during the year.

## **During Covid-19 pandemic**

Clearly, the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19 marked a turning point for the approval of many world leaders. Saint Leo University between September and October 2020 conducted a survey among American population about Pope Francis' actions during the first months of this global emergency and it showed good outcomes. This investigation attested an increasing trend in the approval for Pope Francis in 2020: from 52.2% of approval in February 2020 (which is a percentage in line with the one provided by Gallup international at the end of 2019), to 56.4% in October 2020 (Saint Leo University, 2020).

This growth was also testified by the growing number of people that listened to the Pope more carefully during pandemic. In this harsh 2020 Pope Francis has been authoritative and cozy; the data extracted from Auditel Italia on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (the day of the Urbi et Orbi address and blessing) strengthen this last statement. Pope Francis' universal prayer in the first lockdown warmed people's hearts and a great part of the Italian population followed the event on live TV. In Italy the total amount of viewers exceeded 17 million: Pope Francis' historical walk, alone through the rain in the desert Saint Peter square registered a record audience, beating the biggest TV events, like Sanremo Music Festival or President Mattarella's year-end speech. Another event during pandemic was the Via Crucis of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 when almost 8 million of Italian people chose Pope Francis as their night show. The only TV events with more share and total viewers in Italy last year were Giuseppe Conte's live speeches.

## **Vatican Communication 2.0 – Pope Francis’ communication revolution**

The biggest revolution of Pope Francis’ Pontificate from a marketing perspective is certainly the communicative one. This 2.0 revolution should be analyzed in two ways: the first one concerning Pope Francis’ direct communication: his expressions, his body language, what he says etc. and the second one regarding the communication channels of the Holy See especially the use of media by the Vatican.

### **Facial expression**

Facial expressions are a primary characteristic of great orators: every facial detail could reinforce or weaken what is being told. Even the silence is a form of language and in Pope Francis’ speeches sometimes silence and pauses are more catching than words.

Another peculiar element, extremely needful in Pope Francis is smiling. It is interesting Pozzato’s contribute about it. He explains that in religious context, smiling was associated with negative secondary meanings. On the contrary, he makes clear Pope Francis cannot be understood if his smile is taken out. A smile is the maximum expression of colloquiality and that represents a substantial separation with rituality (Pozzato, 2017). So, through Pope Francis’ smiling it can be marked another opposition with the Church of the past.

### **Body language**

Pope Francis seems to be joyful and effusive in situations among common people, when his predecessors remained on a more formal level; instead he tends to be profoundly institutional if the context requires so (meetings with state leaders, speeches at institutional bodies etc.), refusing to ingratiate the listener and offering a poor body language (Pozzato, 2017). For example, in the meeting with Donald Trump in 2017 it can be noticed his posture: hands at his sides, serious look and plain attitude.

### **Dressing code**

Pope Francis’ dressing choices have caused many reactions. Both the necklace with the crucifix and the papal ring are new elements in the dressing code: Bergoglio’s predecessors used gold materials, instead he chose silver. Pope Francis’ watch and shoes are less magnificent than those used in the past and they contribute in creating an image poor and sober of his Holiness, who prefers to wear the minimum to be distinguished from others (Mangano, 2017).

### **Management of Vatican Media**

Previous sections introduced some innovative communicative codes associated with the Pope. But even a bigger revolution has affected the communication channels of the Holy See during this papacy. The institution of the Dicastery for Communication in 2015 (even though the official name took place just in 2018) was the most significant reform.

This Dicastery has played a crucial role in the implementation of new kinds of communication, and this responsibility was set off in the apostolic letter as *motu proprio* by Pope Francis with these words: “*to reorganize the framework of communications of the Apostolic See, certainly moves towards a unified integration and management*” (Bergoglio, 2015).

### **Vatican News**

This web portal was launched in 2017 and its institution was the most iconic innovation brought on by the Dicastery for Communication. Vatican News fulfills two functions: the first is the *apostolic* one, it is a web space where visitors listen to Pope’s homilies and messages, they can find useful tools to help their prayers; the second is the *informative* one, because this portal is divided into four sections (Pope, Vatican, Church and World) and it provides news on several topics with constant updates (Peverini, 2017). As Peverini underlines, the centrality of Vatican News is Pope Francis and core values of the portal web are inclusion and distance reduction between the enunciator and the enunciate (Peverini, 2017).

### **Conclusions on Pope Francis’ relevance**

This first analysis revealed Pope’s Francis relevance, his story and his enormous communicative abilities. Every gesture or decision, ordinary or revolutionary, stimulates debate all around the world. Pope Francis’ capacity to generate curiosity and word of mouth are unique, he is an example of leadership, indeed, as presented, people well perceive his authority. One of the key elements underlined in this chapter is the perfect connection between Pope Francis’ words (what he says) and actions (what he does), he seems to be perceived as a believable man.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Human Brand Literature Review and CBBE model**

#### **Human brands literature review**

Human brands theory is one of the most discussed and controversial topics in marketing, management and sociology. After Thomson’s definition of human brand in 2006, this remained a grey area for almost a decade and very few works investigated the topic until 2015. However, in the last five years a growing number of researchers decided to conduct studies about human brands theory, which has now become extremely popular and useful to explore the role of celebrities and influencers in endorsement practices (Levesque & Pons, 2020).

Thomson states “Human brands refer to well-known persons who are subject to marketing communication practices” (Thomson, 2006), that is a broad definition, almost any celebrity could be considered in these terms, indeed human brands have common traits with celebrities. It is known celebrities can influence

consumers with their choice to bond with a brand, or a humanitarian cause; a celebrity has the power to establish a persuasive communication with the audience.

Human brands theory presents three crucial pillars (Ki et al., 2020):

1. Human brands, just like any brand, are distinguishable. They are unique, every person has some traits or qualities that render him/her different (Moulard et al., 2015), that is why any human brand should be strategically managed (Thomson, 2006);
2. Human brands are capable of bonding strong connections with fans, followers or listeners;
3. Strong brand-consumer relationships more easily lead to positive marketing outcomes (Thomson, 2006).

Thomson's contribute: ARC model

### **Thomson's contribute: ARC model**

A question that needs to be answered is how to ensure the effectiveness of a human brand, what are the key elements of success for such people? Thomson finds some relevant constructs in the likeability process of human brands, he discovers emotional attachment is a sort of orthogonal dimension and it involves satisfaction, loyalty, and favorability (Thomson, 2006).

Celebrities' ability to establish lasting connections with consumers depends on emotional attachment.

Thomson focuses his work on detecting the antecedents of this construct and he finds three:

1. Autonomy: it is a person's need to perceive freedom and that his/her activities are self-chosen, self-governed and self-endorsed (Thomson, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000);
2. Relatedness: it is a person's need to feel close with others (Deci and Ryan, 2000) and to feel a sense of intimacy (Thomson, 2006);
3. Competence: it is a person's need to go after feelings of effectiveness and achievement (Deci and Ryan, 2000)

### **Role of authenticity**

In his work, Thomson does not cover the role of authenticity. However he briefly discusses this issue in the managerial implications of his study, assuming that perceived authenticity could be an antecedent for human brand success. In 2015, Moulard et al. came up with a definition for this construct which is "the perception that a celebrity behaves according to his or her true self" (Moulard et. Al, 2015).

A positive relationship between authenticity and human brand perception was already verified at the end of XXth century (Cole & Leets, 1999), but no evidences were available about the causes of authenticity: How and when is a human brand perceived as authentic?

Moulard et. al find two key antecedents:

1. Rarity: "It is the degree to which the celebrity is seen as uncommon" (Moulard et. Al., 2015) and it has three sub-dimensions:
  - A. Talent, which is the inner capacity of a celebrity in his/her field;



- B. Discretion, which is how much a celebrity decides to be exposed;
  - C. Originality, which is the perceived creativity and independency of a celebrity.
2. Stability “It is the degree to which the celebrity is perceived as unwavering” (Moulard et. Al., 2015) and it can be divided into three sub-categories:
- A. Consistency, which is the perception of changeability of a celebrity;
  - B. Candidness, which is the coincidence between what a human brand says and feels;
  - C. Morality, which is the perception that a celebrity represents or not strong values.

### **Need for interaction**

People’s need for interaction cannot be underestimated; indeed, likeability and attachment process will not take place if a human brand is not interactive. Centeno & Wang study celebrities and they theorize the Stakeholder-actor co-creation of human brand identity model, which highlights the role of interaction in the human brand identity process: the creation of a human brand is a process co-carried on by the relationship (and interaction) between three stakeholders actors: Celebrity, Consumers/Fans and Media/Advertisers (Centeno & Wang, 2017):

- Focal Stakeholder-actor (Celebrity), which regards celebrities’ ability to establish emotional attachment;
- Primary Stakeholder-actor (Consumers/Fans), which takes into account the role of consumers in spreading a human brand. During the era of social networks, this is precisely referred to the amount of people who share what a human brand does or says and to the volume of word of mouth generated by consumers;
- Instrumental Stakeholder-actors (Media, Advertisers etc.), which is the variable of the co-creation process related to workers: managers, media agencies, press and every stakeholder who decides to give or to give not visibility to a human brand.

### **Spiritual leader: un-explored area in human brands and CBBE model introduction**

What would happen if human brand theory was applied to some new contexts? Human brands are too much identified with celebrities, instead they are just a part (a broad one) of human brand possible applications. Surely, singers, sportsman, CEO’s and politician are celebrities who can be analyzed and managed as human brand, what about other contexts? What if human branding theory was applied to a spiritual leader?

The figure of spiritual leader should be more studied. If we consider the three pillars offered by Ki et. Al, 2020 discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter it is clear a spiritual leader possesses all the three requirements: he/she has some unique and distinguishable traits, he/she is able to establish a deep bond with his/her listener and his/her activity could produce positive outcomes on listeners.

Spiritual leaders are people who try to pursue high-level goals, a full knowledge about how to manage and to brand these figures could help them in developing effective practices to better communicate and reaching their

target. Most of the time, religion is a context that researchers normally do not take into account for marketing studies, this is a waste because religious contexts have some unique features and a wise marketing research could reinforce theoretical knowledge and widen pre-existing models to different scenarios.

Pope Francis' communication revolution (presented in chapter 1) and a strategic integration of communication channels represent an historical improvement for the Church, that is one proof about the importance of binding a marketing perspective to a religious context.

Could a Pope, one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the world, be defined as a human brand? A goal of this work is to test if Pope Francis is a human brand and if Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model could be adapted to a spiritual leader.

In 1993, Keller builds his Customer Brand Based Equity model (which is illustrated in next sections) and yet, there are a few valid works that apply this model to the field of celebrities or human brands.

### **Brand Equity**

Brand equity has known a broad variety of definitions during the last thirty years; at the beginning of 1990s Farquhar fixes one of the first definition of brand equity: *"it is the 'added value' with which a brand endows a product"* (Farquhar, 1989), two years later Aaker theorizes brand equity as *"a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service"* (Aaker, 1991).

Similarly, Keller enriches this definition deepening the concept of differential effect, he affirms *"Customer Based Brand Equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand"* (Keller, 1993). Keller's differential is a consequence of people's brand knowledge, which is a construct formed by brand image and brand awareness (Keller, 1993; Faircloth et al., 2001).

These definitions are consumer-perspective, as the one of Kamakura and Russell who state brand equity is the value of a brand to consumers (Kamakura & Russell, 1993).

Customer Brand Based Equity (CBBE) model is particularly interesting for marketing perspectives, especially if human brands are the topic of discussion; as it was illustrated before, no researches are available on this topic.

### **Customer Based Brand Equity model**

With CBBE model, Keller wants to clarify what is the path to be taken in order to build a strong brand, identifying the power of a brand in what consumers know and feel about that brand (Keller, 2001). He is focused on the strategic aspects of brand equity and the implications of such variable for marketers.

Keller's model takes into account different constructs, which are here briefly discussed.

- Brand Knowledge: It is related to people's ability to have in memory and identify a brand. Keller conceptualizes brand knowledge "*as a consisting of a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked*" (Keller, 1993). Keller identifies knowledge with memory structure and states brand knowledge is formed by brand awareness and brand image;

- Brand Awareness: It is referred to consumers' ability to point out a brand in different circumstances (Rossiter & Percy, 1987); awareness is the extent of likelihood and ease with which a brand is evoked in people's mind (Keller, 1993). Brand Awareness has two subdimensions, which are brand recall and brand recognition. Recall is the ability to come up with a specific brand when it is provided an external stimulus about a product category. For example, if we consider sport clothes industry and your first thought is Nike, that is brand recall. Recognition is the ability to recognize a brand when a prior exposure to a brand is given (Keller, 1993). For example, if walking on a street I see Starbucks' logo and I am able to identify that precise logo with the brand Starbucks', that is brand recognition.

These are the two sub-dimensions of awareness, which is one of the most meaningful constructs for having a powerful brand for three reasons (Keller, 1993): 1. The more the awareness, the more a brand comes up in people's mind associations, 2. Awareness is necessary to be present in people's considerations set for purchases, 3. It has a direct impact on consumer decision making process and it is a prior requirement for the establishment of brand image;

- Brand Image: It is linked to "*brand associations held in consumer memory*" (Keller, 1993) and brand associations are all those information that people come up with when they think of a brand. Clearly this definition is very wide, indeed Keller classifies brand associations for types, favorability, strength and uniqueness.

### **Human Brand Salience**

First of all, brand salience is quite controversial for a Pope. The awareness of a Pope has not always been broad and clear. If we think just for a moment about the paradoxal scenario presented in *The Young Pope* by Paolo Sorrentino in which Pope Pius XIII<sup>th</sup> refuses to let his image available for the faithful, we understand the importance of being recognized and recalled for a Pope.

Pope Francis' awareness is global, but he is also one of the most world leaders who is tried to be manipulated by people and media. During the years people addressed him as the "Populist Pope", however McCormick draws up a socio-political work to demonstrate the low reliability of such definitions (McCormick, 2021).

## **Human Brand Performance and Human Brand Imagery**

Brand Performance deals with the ability of a brand to satisfy consumers' needs. The analysis in chapter 1 briefly discusses what was people's major need when Pope Francis became Pope: a Church they could identify with.

Pope Francis' performance is principally tied to the mission of spreading a Church that people could consider shareable and remarkable. Pope Francis knows the Church makes mistakes, he himself declares some of them and yet his communication power (Par. 1.3.1.) shows to the world a new image of the Church.

On the right-hand side instead, the first step for the emotional path is Brand Imagery, which is the ability of brands to satisfy consumers' psychological and social needs.

Once again, if we take a look at data provided in Chapter 1, it is fair to state Pope Francis does not engage matters and questions which are relevant only for the faithful, what he supports are mostly global causes (environmental sustainability, life conditions for the poor, brotherhood among people etc.).

## **Consumer Judgments and Consumer Feelings**

For what it concerns Consumer Judgements and Feelings, it has been certified in chapter 1 people's approval rating towards Pope Francis. These building blocks of Keller's model are maybe the most suitable for an application of the pyramid to a human brand.

However, the difference between judgements and feelings for a human brand is much more subtle than the one for a brand. Normally brands provide products or services to people, who experience them and then they express an opinion. With a human brand, this process does not happen, there is not the moment of the purchase which crucially divides the consumer experience in pre-purchase and post-purchase.

## **Human Brand Resonance**

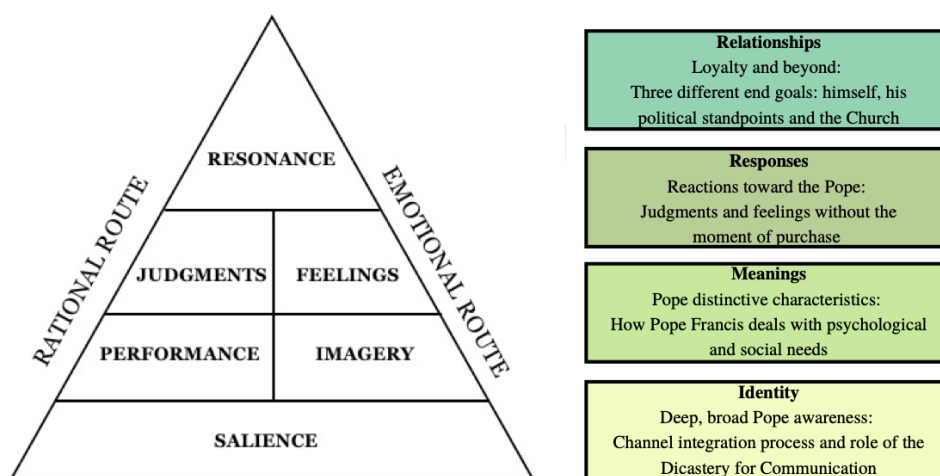
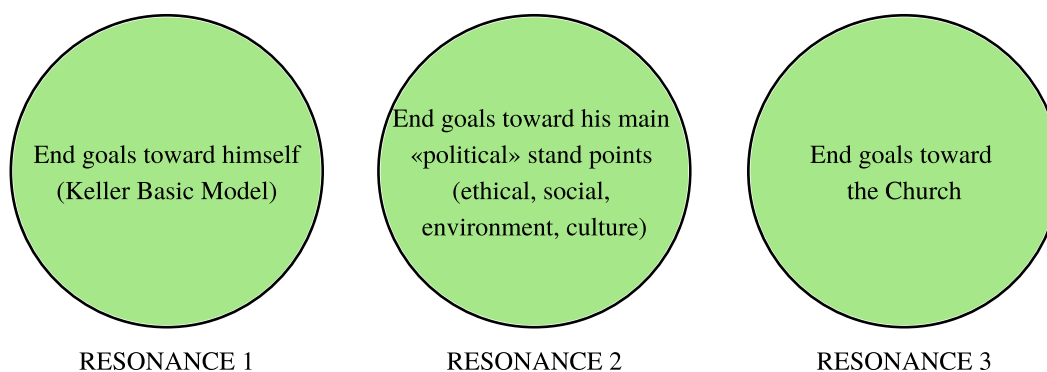
About Resonance building block, some differences with the original model should be marked out. When Keller's path is structured for brands, goals of brand resonance are loyalty, commitment and attachment.

This issue is quite controversial for a Pope: should the people develop loyalty toward the Pope or toward the Church? Who or what is the target of CBBE model for Pope Francis?

A declination of resonance is mandatory for applying the pyramid to Pope Francis as he seems to present a variety of end goals. In order to construct a revised CBBE model for Pope Francis, three different end goals come out:

1. End goals toward himself. That is the Keller's classical end goal: brand is here substituted with human brand (Pope Francis);
2. End goals toward his political standpoints: Pope Francis also wants people (citizens, but principally politicians and other world leaders) to listen to the issues he addresses and to change people's attitude about global causes (environment, poverty etc.);

3. End goals toward the Church: Pope Francis is a religious leader and another of his goals is to get the people closer the Catholic Church, especially the ones who are away.



### Marketing for Religious organizations

Spiritual leaders are heads of religious organizations, these contexts represent a gap in the literature for human brands research. Religious organizations are defined as “social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and exchange supernaturally-based general compensators” (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987). Compensator is a term which refers to something as a reward, which cannot be traced or explained without ambiguous evaluations.

Religious organizations are not self-sustainable, their growth is connected to the external environment and to the amount of faithful (Wuthnow, 1994), but if many different religions rise up, rivalry among them could bring to a competitive scenario, a market scenario.

Years ago, religious traditions were much more prominent and impactful for societies or governments, but now they encounter more difficulties and as Berger states, religious activity is subjected to the dynamics of market economies (Berger, 1967).

## **Research Question**

Human brands theories have never been applied to spiritual leaders, who are guiding figures for religious organizations. This industry does not present a high number of works in marketing research and it brings with it a gap that needs to be fulfilled.

This work wants to address Pope Francis, one of the most famous spiritual leaders in the world and one of the most appreciated world leaders, as a human brand. The renewed CBBE model has been chosen to investigate how Pope Francis' brand equity changes in relationship with different people.

This research wants also to highlight what paths of the pyramid are more recommended for different segments of population, we remember Pope Francis needs to reach three different end goals, it is likely agnostic/atheistic people tend to reach the resonance block differently from Catholics.

The research question is:

How Pope Francis' brand equity is perceived among people who differ in religious belief and how do people reach the highest block of the pyramid?

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **Model**

The focus of this study is the investigation of Pope Francis' brand equity depending on people's religious belief. I want to collect data to demonstrate the process that is behind Pope Francis' brand equity among different segments of population, exploring if the Pontiff runs different peripheral routes to reach the top blocks of the Customer Brand Based pyramid and to what extent his resonance goals are reached by the sample.

This phenomenon is investigated through a revised CBBE model, the six main blocks are preserved (Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgments, Feelings and Resonance), but significant modification is made to adapt the model to a human brand, especially on the "Resonance block".

The independent variable of this model is the religious belief, people were asked to declare their religious orientation among for options:

1. Atheist (I do not believe in God's existence);
2. Agnostic (I could believe in God's existence, but I have no faith);
3. Non practicing believer (I believe in God's existence, but I do not take part in activities of my religious community);
4. Practicing believer (I believe in God's existence and I actively participate in my religious community).

I suggest there is a significant difference in Pope Francis' brand equity for people who differ for religious belief. Indeed, if significant differences in at least one block of the pyramid are registered, that means overall brand equity is going to be different for the segments of this sample.

For this reason, the model has been constructed to study just one main effect:

1. The direct effect of religious belief on Pope Francis' brand equity

My hypotheses are:

H1: Religious belief critically affects Pope Francis' brand equity. I expect to find differences in global perception of the Pope among the four different category groups identified.

H2: I expect Pope Francis' brand equity to be at its highest among practicing believers and at its lowest among atheist. In the middle I expect to find agnostic (closer to the atheist) and non practicing believers (closer to practicing believers).

## Measures

The six steps of the pyramid have been measured by a series of items:

- "Salience" has been measured through two items: how often do you hear news regarding Pope Francis and how often do you think about him. A 5-point Likert Scale (1=Never, 5= Very often) has been used.
- "Performance" has been measured through two items: to what extent does Pope Francis have unique characteristics as spiritual leader and how well does Pope Francis perform his role of religious leader. A 5-point Likert Scale (1=Not at all, 5= Very much) has been used.
- "Imagery" has been measured through one item, in which people evaluated Pope Francis along a list of 15 attributes, declaring how much every single adjective well defined the Pontiff. Here is the list of adjectives: Empathetic, Merciful, Resilient, Reliable, Consistent, Charismatic, Pragmatic, Goal Oriented, Steady, Smart, Stubborn, Brave, Humble, Patient and Hearty. A 5-point Likert Scale (1=Not at all, 5= Very well) has been used.
- "Judgments" has been measured through four different blocks of questions: Quality, Credibility, Consideration and Superiority. Quality considered two items: what is your overall opinion of Pope Francis and what is your personal assessment of Pope Francis; Credibility considered five items: how skilled do you think Pope Francis is as a spiritual leader, how effective do you think Pope Francis is as a spiritual leader, how much do you trust Pope Francis, how much do you respect Pope Francis and how much do you admire pope Francis; Consideration considered two items: how likely would you be to recommend that others follow Pope Francis and how personally relevant do you find Pope

Francis; Superiority considered two items: how unique is Pope Francis as a pope and to what extent does Pope Francis offer messages and actions that other leaders cannot. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure all these items.

- “Feelings” has been measured through seven items: does Pope Francis give you a feeling of – Warmth, Joy, Inspiration/Elevation, Calm, Relief, Gratification, Hope. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure all these items.
- “Resonance” has been measured through three different blocks, the first one was Pope Francis’ resonance toward himself, this block considered four subsets: Loyalty, Attachment, Communality and Engagement.

Loyalty was “I consider myself loyal to Pope Francis” and “I follow Pope Francis whenever I can (both online/offline)”; Attachment was “I really love Pope Francis” and “Pope Francis is special to me”; Communality was “I really identify with people who follow Pope Francis” and “I feel a deep connection with others who follow Pope Francis”; Engagement was “I really like to talk about Pope Francis with others” and “I am always interested in learning more about what Pope Francis is doing”. The second one was Pope Francis’ resonance toward his socio-political standpoints and it has been measured through six items: “I think people can make difference with everyday small actions to contribute to the social well-being”, “I think everybody can be a protagonist of the change starting from everyday actions”, “thanks to Pope Francis’ Papacy I am more aware of social issues such as marginality” (poor, migrants etc.), “I am more careful toward the well-being of the environment”, “I put more attention on social justice” (human rights, social inclusion etc.), “I am more sensible toward interreligious issues”.

The third one was Pope Francis’ resonance toward the Church, which has been measured by four items: thanks to Pope Francis – “I trust more the Church”, “I feel closer to the Church”, “I feel more involved in the Church”, “I think the Church could renew itself by going out of itself and searching out people, especially those who are in the peripheries”. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure all these items.

## Data Analysis

Before proceeding with data analysis, this scale needed to be validated by a reliability test. The Cronbach’s alpha is the value used to check reliability, so I have conducted the reliability analysis on each block of the scale. The minimum value to consider the alpha as reliable is 0.6, if every block presented a Cronbach’s alpha greater than or equal to this minimum, the model could be considered reliable.

On SPSS, through “Analizza → Scala → Analisi di affidabilità” I have obtained this value for each block:

- Salience (2 items) Cronbach’s alpha = 0,765 ( $\alpha=0,765$ , n=152);
- Performance (2 items) Cronbach’s alpha = 0,688 ( $\alpha=0,688$ , n=152);



- Imagery (15 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,886 ( $\alpha=0,886$ , n=152);
- Quality (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,925 ( $\alpha=0,925$ , n=152);
- Credibility (5 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,888 ( $\alpha=0,888$ , n=152);
- Consideration (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,783 ( $\alpha=0,783$ , n=152);
- Superiority (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,686 ( $\alpha=0,686$ , n=152);
- Feelings (2 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,910 ( $\alpha=0,910$ , n=152);
- Resonance1 (8 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,948 ( $\alpha=0,948$ , n=152);
- Resonance2 (6 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,910 ( $\alpha=0,910$ , n=152);
- Resonance3 (4 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,913 ( $\alpha=0,913$ , n=152);
- Spillover (4 items) Cronbach's alpha = 0,896 ( $\alpha=0,896$ , n=152).

All the scales turned out to be reliable, the Cronbach's alpha of "Performance" and "Superiority" seemed to be questionable, (it is known that a minimum of 0.7 gives more certainty about the fairness of the scale), but even with values between 0.6 and 0.7 we could consider the model as reliable.

In order to measure if significant differences in mean values were present, I needed to conduct two studies on SPSS:

1. One-way ANOVA: this is the test to measure the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables;
2. Post Hoc analysis: they reveal if significant differences are present among the four religious belief layers and on what dependent variable.

### Data results - ANOVA

One-way ANOVA is the test that points out if there are significant differences in mean value among the different conditions of the independent variable: atheist, agnostic, practicing believers and non practicing believers. Atheist were addressed as "group 1", agnostic as "group 2", non practicing as "group 3" and practicing as "group 4".

So, the null and the alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \mu_{atheist} = \mu_{agnostic} = \mu_{non\ practicing\ believers} = \mu_{practicing\ believers}$$

$$H_A: \mu_{atheist} \neq \mu_{agnostic} \neq \mu_{non\ practicing\ believers} \neq \mu_{practicing\ believers}$$

Each dependent variable, except for Imagery, presents a pvalue lower than 0.05, so the null hypothesis must be rejected and we accept the alternative hypothesis:

$$H_A: \mu_{atheist} \neq \mu_{agnostic} \neq \mu_{non\ practicing\ believers} \neq \mu_{practicing\ believers}$$

At least one of the four group differs for mean in each block of the pyramid, as expected. Every block, but not the “Imagery”, which is, as already said, the extent to which a human brand can satisfy people’s psychological and social needs. This study states, people’s psychological and social needs are satisfied in the same way, either if you are a catholic believer or not.

### **Post Hoc analysis – Bonferroni test**

As expected, the most differences can be found in the comparison of atheists with practicing believers. Indeed, in every single dependent variable (except for Imagery and Superiority), atheists’ mean is significantly lower than the one of practicing believers.

On the contrary, atheists and agnostics tend to be very similar in the evaluation of Pope Francis’ brand equity along the CBBE pyramid, except for the Resonance3, in which agnostics declare a significant higher and better evaluation of the Church thanks to Bergoglio’s papacy.

Another key element emerging from the Bonferroni test is the position of non practicing believers, their values are always higher than the one of agnostics, but the mean difference is insignificant. The Bonferroni test well points out how close is the perception of Pope Francis between agnostics and non practicing believers. In the next figure it can be noticed which dependent variable significantly changes from one religious belief to one another.

### **ANOVA conclusions**

The ANOVA test confirmed the null hypothesis: people who have different religious belief, differently perceive Pope Francis’ brand equity. Practicing believers are those who make the most favorable judgements about Pope Francis, followed by non practicing believers, then agnostics, in the end atheists.

No significant differences can be found between agnostics and non practicing believers, but every mean value of the non practicing believers is higher than the one of agnostics. Agnostics are also very close to atheists, especially in the first five blocks of the pyramid, while for Pope Francis’ end goals their position is significantly in contrast with atheists.

Practicing believers is the group category that most differs from the others along the pyramid, their overall mean is quite high for every dependent variable (it never goes under 3.4 out of 5) and many significant mean differences can be found with the other three kind of religious belief.

### **“First thought” analysis**

This survey also asked people to provide an open answer to the question “What is the first thought you come up with about Pope Francis? What is the most evident episode that comes across your mind when you think about him?”

All 152 answers have been read and classified into different categories; this process could be very helpful to better understand how and what people think when they are asked to recall Pope Francis. This is an important deepening for the block “Salience”; we could consider this as a sort of “pre-block” before the pyramid. Down here I report all the main categories regarding the first thought and relative number of answers.

First thought categories (Sample: N.152):

“Papal election”: 31

“General episodes of simplicity and humility”: 27

“Pope Francis’ nature”: 17

“Other”: 12

“LGBT Community”: 11

“Urbi et Orbi blessing and support during pandemic time”: 11

“Episodes of Pope Francis’ care for the least”: 9

“Personal meetings”: 7

“Slap to the Chinese”: 7

“Apostolic trips and episodes of meeting with who/what is different”: 6

“Invalid answers”: 6

“Episodes related to the Angelus”: 4

“Episodes of Pope Francis’ efforts to condemn pedophilia”: 2

“Pope Francis on social networks”: 2

### **First Conclusions**

This investigation brings more evidences about Pope Francis’ brand equity in group of people who differ in religious belief. As it was expected, practicing believers are those who better perceive and evaluate Pope Francis, followed by non practicing believers, agnostics and atheists.

Resonance1 is the block with lowest values at all. For each group, the overall mean expressed for the first category of resonance (Pope Francis’ end goals toward himself) is the lowest overall mean. Atheists, agnostics and non practicing believers do not present positive outcomes for this end goal, Pope Francis is not special to them, they are not interested to be updated on him and they do not consider themselves loyal. Practicing believers instead with an overall mean of 3.405 out of 5.000 are significative different from the three other categories.

Resonance2 seems the only end-goal block reached by everybody; even if a very few of the sample show high values for resonance1, all the groups seem to be influenced by Pope Francis’ socio-political standpoints. Mean values vary from 3.000 (atheists) to 4.024 (practicing believers).

Instead, Resonance 3 shows similar tendency to Resonance 1: low values for the first three categories and a significant difference for the practicing believers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study gained important evidences about Pope Francis' perception between atheists, agnostics, non practicing believers and practicing believers. Through the CBBE model, the purpose of this work was to verify how Pope Francis' brand equity changes in groups who differ in religious belief.

As presented in Chapter 1, Pope Francis has been a revolution for the Catholic Church: he broke some old codes and he made space to new ideas, bringing the Church back to the people and inspiring the change. His innovative manner and his historical decisions clearly have drawn some critics and over-simplifications on him, but as demonstrated in the first part of this study, Pope Francis cannot be categorized in some stereotypes.

In particular, his decision to empower the communication of the Church has been playing a key role in this renewal process. His ability to bring the religious communication to an unexplored level is extremely interesting from a marketing perspective. Moreover, in Chapter 2 it was explained how the Human Branding theory tends to be applied to celebrities but very few works consider these theoretical models suitable for other human brands.

Thanks to its adaptability, the CBBE model has proved to be a reliable tool to investigate Pope Francis' brand equity. What is different between a religious leader and a brand is the end block of the pyramid, for Pope Francis the goal is not to bring people to buy a product or a service. As presented in the end of Chapter 2, three different end-goals characterize a religious leader.

The survey reached 152 people and the main hypothesis has been verified by data. Pope Francis' brand equity is at its highest with practicing believers and at its lowest with atheists. But, as said in the first conclusions, not all the blocks of the pyramid show significant differences in mean values between groups. This means that at some point of the route along the pyramid, Pope Francis' perception is quite similar among people with different degree of religiosity.

This research reveals that there are some themes for which Pope Francis encounters global consensus. For example, his socio-political standpoints gain wide consensus among different segments of the population. This Pontiff seems to be able to get in touch with people on humanitarian matters; and people who normally do not follow Pope Francis, somehow are touched and influenced by his socio-political views. Further research could better identify about which topics Pope Francis gains a "universal" influence, not regarding people's degree of religiosity.

The only end goal that seems to be reached by every group is the Resonance2, which is Pope Francis' end-goal toward his sociopolitical standpoints. At the same time, Resonance1 and Resonance3 do not present high

values for non-Catholics. This brings to some conclusions: Pope Francis' communication is effective, the majority of interviewees was able to recall one moment related to Pope Francis and all the groups present good mean value along the pyramid (except for Salience, Resonance1 and Resonance3). Pope Francis' overall perception seems to be positive for all groups, but end goals are missed.

From a marketing perspective, these results show how it is crucial to study different peripheral routes for different segments of population. The tactics put in place so far tend to bring Catholics to the three end goals, but people with other degree of religiosity do not reach these end goals.

What is curious is the good evaluations people express about Pope Francis in the previous blocks of the CBBE pyramid. This means Pope Francis has an impact on people with every kind of religious belief and this is the reason why a major communication effort needs to be made to render Pope Francis' end goals accessible to more people.

An evidence coming out from this study is the consistency of Pope Francis' brand equity along all of the first five blocks of the pyramid. Before the Resonance block, very few people demonstrate to be uninformed or reluctant to the Pope, the majority of the sample shows respect, admiration and seems to consider him as a good leader. A question that stays open is how to bring atheists, agnostics and a part of non practicing believers to better reach the end goals of the pyramid.

A limitation of this study was the size of the sample, as a similar study should be conducted on a wider segment of population, possibly even more heterogeneous than the one of this study. Moreover, other religious beliefs could be involved in the investigation.

My research followed previous studies on the application of CBBE model to Pope Francis and now there are a lot of evidences about how people perceive his human brand equity. What needs to be deepened is the last part of the CBBE pyramid: can Pope Francis improve his ability to bring people to his end goals? What communication efforts can be implemented to facilitate this process? Further research could also examine the relationship between Pope Francis' brand equity and other dimensions, such as age or nationality.