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BETWEEN THE FAME AND JOANNE: PARALLELS OF LADY GAGA'S CAREER WITH BUSINESS STRATEGIES IN COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

ENTRE THE FAME E JOANNE: PARALELOS DA CARREIRA DE LADY GAGA COM ESTRATÉGIAS DE NEGÓCIO EM AMBIENTES COMPETITIVOS

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ABSTRACT

In 2018, the American singer Lady Gaga celebrates a decade of the release of her first pop album, *The Fame*. Ten years ago, the world through a series of more successful and awarded songs of the new generation, capable of breaking records in the disputed music industry. As every product has its lifecycle, Lady Gaga's music has come to decline, but the singer has been able to react and maintain her competitive edge. In the ups and downs of the market, Lady Gaga is a strong analogy of product changes, amalgamating itself to revitalize her sector, articulating the internal activities, repositioning herself; an image of the challenge that is accomplished in reinventing herself. Thus, from this historical analysis in which the organisation is viewed as a persona, this work reflects on survival strategies in an environment of rapid change and that requires at the same time, identity and constant adaptation. The approach is qualitative and descriptive, based on real cases of the corporate context that work as parallel to the storytelling created from the Gaga case. As a result, a conceptual model on business strategy in competitive environments is presented, which aggregates different schools of thought of the organizational strategy and that can be verified in future researches.

Keywords: Competitive advantage; Strategy; Lady Gaga; Brand; Positioning.

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RESUMO

Em 2018, a cantora norte-americana Lady Gaga comemora uma década do lançamento de seu primeiro álbum de música pop, The Fame. Há dez anos, o mundo via surgir uma das cantoras mais bem-sucedidas e premiadas da nova geração, capaz de bater recordes na disputada indústria fonográfica. Como todo produto tem seu ciclo de vida, a música de Lady Gaga chegou ao seu declínio, mas a cantora soube reagir e manter sua marca competitiva. Nos altos e baixos do mercado, Lady Gaga proporciona uma analogia forte de mudanças de produtos, amalgamando-se para revitalizar seu setor, articulando capacidades internas, reposicionando-se; uma imagem do desafio que muitas empresas enfrentam em reinventar-se. Assim, a partir dessa análise histórica em que a organização é encarada como uma pessoa, este estudo de caso reflete sobre as estratégias de sobrevivência em um ambiente de mudanças rápidas e que exige, ao mesmo tempo, identidade e adaptação constante. A abordagem é qualitativa e de natureza descritiva, fundamentada em casos reais do mundo corporativo que funcionam como paralelos ao storytelling criado a partir do caso Gaga. Como resultado, é apresentado um modelo conceitual sobre a estratégia de negócio em ambientes competitivos, que agrega diferentes escolas de pensamento da estratégia organizacional e que poderá ser verificado em pesquisas futuras.

Palavras-chave: Estratégia. Lady Gaga. Marca. Posicionamento. Vantagem competitiva.

1 INTRODUCTION

Some state that the history of humanity can be narrated through its cultural manifestations; the cultural scheme seems to order history in retrospect, therefore, it organizes it (SAHLINS, 2006). If it is true that life is an imitation of art (as the famous British writer Oscar Wilde would say), it is possible that, in order to understand social phenomena, artistic images contribute by teaching through analogies, thus creating bridges between human cognition and the reality (ROBBINS, 2011).

By becoming a market, as is the case today (art is technically reproduced and marketed), art may reflect aspects of organisations' survival strategies. Analogously to business competition, artists must beat competitors and remain competitive if they are to sell their art; in fact, they do not do it without the management of businessmen and the support of big corporations. The equivalence between art and any other product, or of the artist and an organisation, is evident (BENJAMIN, 1987).

This is the premise of this work: that art and artist are an image of what the modern organisation does to succeed in the competitive market; are a metaphor. A metaphor is a creative way of creating meanings that broaden the understanding of what is meant to be described. It is a valuable (albeit imperfect) point of view in deepening the understanding of certain dimensions of a situation (MORGAN, 2009). Intentionally, this work chose, to create this image, the music market and a singer who has, over the years, survived in this sector.

Here, therefore, the metaphor regarding organisational strategy has a name: Stefani Germanotta. A New York girl, who at age 22 was already performing at nightclubs and writing songs for Britney Spears, was immediately successful in her musical debut (HARDING, 2009). Under the pseudonym "Lady Gaga" (bringing in the name an eccentricity that pop music had not seen for a long time), Germanotta released her debut album *The Fame* on August 19, 2008, and spliced countless hits on top of the radios in the world, such as *Just Dance* and *Poker Face*.

The formula for success seemed infallible: electro-pop beats that explored typical 80's synthesisers; easily memorised lyrics in repetitive chorus; sensuality-laden dance clips; and a controversial image that garnered numerous headlines on entertainment sites (BENTO, 2018). Not by chance, the name "Lady Gaga" generates more than 15 million results in a Google search (for comparison, "Madonna" generated less than 13 million results in the search done by the authors).

Gaga looks like a “reified product,” custom made for a generation that transited between physical CDs and their replacement by digital sales through so-called streaming platforms. The internet era has called for a new way of marketing music and has imposed an increasingly dependent relationship between music, visual art and social networks, which allow for constant interaction between the artist and her fans (HSM, 2016).

The Lady Gaga brand was expected to reach its peak on the singer’s third studio album, ArtPop. In it, Gaga explores to the maximum all the characteristics that built her fame, which means more dancing hits, sensuality, and many controversies. But something seems to have gone wrong: ArtPop sales were below expectations and some critics pointed out both excesses and lack of originality in the singer’s new album. Added to the health problems that Gaga faced in the same period and public discontent with her manager, the moment seemed to foreshadow the dreaded decadence (BELANCIANO, 2016; GILL, 2013).

Perhaps predicting the approximation of the validity of its product was that Lady Gaga developed, in parallel to ArtPop, a project completely different from everything that had been done previously: a jazz album recorded in collaboration with the renowned American singer Tony Bennett. *Cheek to Cheek*, released just over 10 months after ArtPop, won a Grammy, was critically acclaimed and revealed previously unknown Gaga vocal qualities. After working to cleanse her image, the singer gained prestige and at least part of the space she had been losing in the competitive entertainment industry (BARBOSA, 2017).

Not by chance, Gaga’s latest work, the album *Joanne*, kept the distance from the electronic beats that made her famous. It was neither absolute commercial success nor unanimity of criticism, but it showed the singer’s ability to remain relevant and, the most important: to sell. The Joanne World Tour ended in 2017 as the most profitable female tour of the year (ALLAN, 2018).

2 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach, the one in which the researcher makes claims of knowledge-based mainly on constructivist perspectives, that is, considering the subject’s relationship with the environment as an explanatory model of knowledge (CRESWELL, 2010).

In this sense, the research is descriptive in nature, promoting the dialogue of the extensive prescriptive literature on the organizational strategy with practice and, from this reflection, generating a hypothetical conceptual model that can be tested in the future. (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994).

As for the means of investigation, this research used secondary data obtained through documentary research. Data related to tour profitability, album, and singles performance are made available annually by the US magazine Billboard, which specialises in information on the music industry; other information was collected on Lady Gaga’s own official website.

Also, to give the study more background, reports, interviews, testimonies, as well as literature theorists, as well as publications that refer to popular music were gathered. All this data generated what is called “storytelling,” which in scientific research is about extracting a story from its original context and treating it as an objectified social fact. The point of analysis is about how markedly similar histories manifest themselves in different organisations (SWAP et al., 2001).

The use of different examples of the corporate world in parallel to the phases of Lady Gaga’s career as a business archetype refers to the comparative method. On its use in the social sciences, Bloch apud Cardoso and Brignoli (1975) points out the search for explaining similarities and differences that compose two series of analogous nature, taken from different social means. Therefore, the study of the trajectory of the artist, compared to cases in the corporate world,

even when dealing with distinct market sectors, i.e., considering their singularities and variations, will present significant dimensions for the point of view of the analysis in question. The facts have sufficient kinship to illuminate each other (GOLDMAN, 1969).

3 LADY GAGA: A PICTURE OF WHAT IS TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY

What does the story of Lady Gaga have to do with strategy? Apparently, a lot. In the ups and downs of her career, Gaga seems to have gone through the different stages of what is known in marketing theory as “Product Life Cycle” (PLC). It is a natural path through which most products and services go - a pattern of growth-fall-maturity, but which, if it does not suffer the intervention of strategic company actions, can result in its death (KOTLER, KELLER, 2012) .

The ascension and decline phases of Lady Gaga’s career are a first of many indications of similarity between the path taken by an artist and business history. As a metaphor, Gaga produces an image composed of distortions, an incomplete and even potentially misleading idea about organisational strategy. At the same time, however, it may draw attention to certain aspects of the strategy with more intensity, emphasising a certain way of seeing (MORGAN, 2009).

When Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and, Lampel (2010) set out to examine the “elephant” of strategy (how the authors characterised the theme in its complexity - another metaphor), they turned first to the constituent parts of this elephant, the so-called “Schools of Thought” of strategy (MINTZBERG; AHLSTRAND; LAMPEL, 2010). In the same way, this work will break down in parts the connection points between the career of Lady Gaga and the organisational strategy. To make the parallel more interesting, different examples from the corporate world will facilitate the reader’s transition between the music market and what is intended to apply to similar contexts.

Thus, the analysis begins by looking at what kind of product Lady Gaga had to offer when launched into the music market, which may explain the sudden success.

3.1 Lady Gaga and “music-art”: *The Fame* era

What is the customer looking for when listening to music or going to a show? What needs does he seek to cater for by consuming this type of experience? Perhaps the answer lies in the very job of the person on the stage - the artist: the consumer looks for art. This means that in this market, the customer wants not only the music, theatre or fashion products marketed in isolation but also an experience that art can more broadly provide (FISCHER, 1987).

In this perspective, artists, like companies, seek to add value to their products and services in terms of customer perceived benefits, which are not only functional but also emotional (KOTLER and KELLER, 2012). Like Cirque de Soleil, which increased numbers of choreography and musical theatre to the feeling of nostalgia brought by the circus canvas, singers add visual style, cinematography, media content, among other “products” linked to their brand.

The shift in perspective from the product of an artistic nature to the experience of art may explain Gaga’s sudden and explosive success. Martin Kupp, associate professor at the European School of Management and Technology and author of “The Fine Art of Success - Knowing Great Artistic Works for Creating Great Business,” conducted a case study on Gaga’s career in 2011, highlighting the multifaceted public personality of the singer: “Lady Gaga transcends the boundaries of the sectors, and it is not really clear if she is a musician, an artist or a stylist,” said Kupp (ANDERSON; RECKHENRICH; KUPP, 2011;

In an interview for MTV, in September 2008, the singer already revealed the desire to unite music, fashion and theatricality in her artistic performance, which she has been exploring since her first album, *The Fame*. For Gaga, contemporary pop culture lacked the combination of music with visual aspects that generated a more complete artistic experience, capable of fascinating the consumer. In other words, the artist needed to re-conquer true fans:

With my music, it's a party, it's a lifestyle and it's about making the lifestyle the forefront of music [...]. When I'm writing music, I'm thinking about the clothes I want to wear on stage. It's all about everything completely - performance art, pop art, fashion. For me, it's all about bringing everything together and being a real story that will bring back the super fan. I want to bring this back. I want the image to be so strong that fans will want to eat and sip and lick every part of us. Lady Gaga (HARRIS, 2008, p. 1).

Some say that Gaga's artistic product was built not so much from originality but rather from the simple combination of dance floor compositions and old references from the pop world remodelled by the singer, starting with the surname Gaga (which came from Radio Ga Ga, a song of the band Queen). But it is difficult to measure how much an artist offers something genuinely avant-garde. The fact is that Gaga's "music-art", original or copy, provided her with an advantage that put her above what other competing singers did at the time (ANDERSON; RECKHENRICH; KUPP, 2011).

3.2 Product Life Cycle: From Rise to Decline in *ArtPop*

Products and brands are like organisms: they go through different stages, through growth, certain declines, until they reach some stability when they are already mature; sometimes they perish until they die, but companies use different strategies to stay competitive, and thus, to eternalise (KOTLER, KELLER, 2012). It is not easy to determine the current stage of a product, but the product life cycle concept is useful for analysing the likely course of the product (or category, brand) over the time it is in the market (CHURCHILL, 2000).

In fast-moving markets, there is not always time to enjoy the ascension phase. Recall, for example, the case of the Canadian manufacturer Research in Motion (RIM): in the same year that the mobile phone giant, owner of Blackberry phones, via its actions reached the mark of \$140 (this in 2007), Apple launched its first iPhone model, with a touch screen. Five years later, RIM's share of smartphones had fallen from 50% to less than 1% (WHARTON, 2015). As in organisms, it seems that artists and companies acquire diseases that hinder their development or suddenly shorten the phases of greater vigor.

In Gaga's case, the top of the career seems to have been reached between the years of 2012 and 2013. After the success of *The Fame* and *The Fame Monster* (an extended play of the first album), Gaga was successful in the album *Born This Way*, it's the second studio album to reach the top-selling second CD in the world in 2011 (second only to Adele's "21"). Still investing in dance floor music, *Born This Way* spawned Gaga's most lucrative tour to this day, yielding approximately \$227 million.

From there, one has to question how far the singer's work has remained in dialogue with her audience. Gaga seemed more and more immersed in her music-art concept: she did model work, partnerships with plastic artists and even presented herself at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (ZAMBELO, 2013), experiences that served as inspiration for the artistic proposal of her third album, *ArtPop*. The large mass of young pop music consumers, however, still listened to generic compositions such as 2012's big hit, "Gangnam Style," by the South Korean "Psy". In addition, when Gaga released the predominantly electro-pop sound of *ArtPop* in 2013,

the most played song that year was another hit: Robin Thicke's *Blurred Lines* was a pop made up of the mixture of African American rhythms like R&B.

ArtPop was technically debated, criticised and even endorsed by some journalists (such as Forbes's Nick Messitte, who considered the album reviews incoherent), but in the current mass-music scene, "less is more", the opposite to the path chosen by Gaga. It seems that her clients wanted art, but nothing sophisticated like Botticelli (Gaga used fragments of the work *The Birth of Venus* on the *ArtPop* cover). In addition, the singer had worked for more than two years on the project, enough time in a market like music, new trends and idioms to emerge, quickly making what was new old fashioned (ZAMBELO, 2013). The result: *ArtPop* sold just over 2 million copies, far below the more than 12 million copies sold by *The Fame*, and was unable to chart its singles at the top of American radio stations.

This difference in expectation between supply and demand resembles the RIM case again. In 2007, the company sought to offer, on a small screen of cellular, all the functionalities of a computer. Meanwhile, Steve Jobs was focusing on an innovative but at the same time simple model - the iPhone, with just two physical buttons and combined features of iPod, phone and internet browser (WHARTON, 2015). To some extent, Lady Gaga's career between *The Fame* and *ArtPop* recalls the rise and fall of RIM's BlackBerry: the more sophisticated, the better it seemed to get until it reached a point in its lifecycle where its higher quality simply became obsolete (BULOW, 1986).

The challenge of swiftly adapting to the market seems greater in businesses dealing with long-running projects such as IT companies and much of the artistic production that can not be changed at any time. Many singers perceive changes in the market in the midst of a new project and seek to adapt it by changing compositions or recruiting new producers, which usually results in fragmented work and no personality.

This seems to have been the great misconception of the BlackBerry Storm cell phone project, launched a year after the iPhone, a fatal mistake that RIM made in attempting, unthinkingly, to incorporate trends already launched by Apple in the smartphone market (MCNISH, SILCOFF, 2015). In Lady Gaga's case, the disaster was smaller because the output was simpler: to shorten the life of *ArtPop* and to leave for new projects.

3.3 Repositioning the brand: the *Cheek to Cheek* project

When a company is in a crisis of image, often generated by successively mistaken steps, it is crucial to have a strong brand and a solid base of customers who retain at least part of their business, giving them time to review their strategies and reposition itself on the market (KOTLER and KELLER, 2012).

Schultz (2001) emphasises the importance of brand as perceived value by the customer when he states that "brand promise or value proposition is not a slogan, an icon, a color or a graphic element, although all these aspects can contribute. On the contrary, it is the heart and soul of the brand" (Schultz, 2001, p.8). The brand is something that remains fixed in the consumer's mind, constituting a set of attributes such as personality, values, associations, and quality, that influence the purchase process (CRESCITELLI; FIGUEIREDO, 2009).

The personality of the brand contributes to differentiate it in the market. The stronger this identity, the greater will be the preference for it to add sincerity, emotion, competence, sophistication, and robustness. Gill and Dawra, 2010, Kotler and Keller 2012, 274 will say that "the brand needs to be carefully managed so that its value does not suffer depreciation."

Being "branding" has always been a strong point of Lady Gaga (BARBOSA, 2017). The proof is that despite *ArtPop*'s poor performance, Gaga remained relevant. Her shows became visually unique, making the "ARTPOP Ball Tour" an estimated \$ 83 million (well below the *Born This*

Way tour, but still a respectable number). Also exploring what is known as “mass intimacy”, Gaga developed with her fans a relationship of affective ties constantly nourished by social networks; nicknaming them “little monsters,” while calling herself the “Mother Monster” (HSM, 2016).

After *ArtPop*, Gaga and her business owners seemed to be aware that something should be done to keep customers in the music business buying the singer’s brand. As a product whose obsolescence is programmed (BULOW, 1986), Gaga’s electro-pop sound should be replaced by something new, which for the singer meant leaning on what was perhaps her greatest competence: her voice. Thus, in a skillful strategic move, Gaga joined the celebrated jazz singer Tony Bennet and released, just over ten months after *ArtPop*, the collaborative jazz album *Cheek to Cheek*.

Betting on already established compositions and in partnership with great artists of the genre, Gaga and Bennett sought to introduce standard jazz to a younger audience in a production of universal appeal (REICH, 2014). It made sense: there was a big gap in the genre left by the popular British singer Amy Winehouse, who passed away in 2011 as a young woman and with a career of great success.

Although its release did not take place until the end of 2014, *Cheek to Cheek* was already in Gaga’s plans since 2012 and was only delayed due to the singer’s health problems during the *ArtPop* tour. The delay seems to have been providential, as the new project came at a time when Gaga needed to quickly regain recognition from the music industry and the public about her talent and prominence. *Cheek to Cheek* reached the top spot on the Billboard chart, was awarded a Grammy and won a tour that grossed \$ 15.3 million, a high number for the genre. It also garnered critical acclaim from critics, especially on Lady Gaga’s vocals on the album.

The effect of *Cheek to Cheek* went beyond that: it brought versatility to Gaga’s career and added value to her portfolio, a good strategy for companies seeking to diversify their performance. As Doorasamy (2015) points out, good portfolio management has the power to generate competitive advantage; creating, evaluating, developing and pursuing the development of new products allows companies to change strategic direction, avoiding stagnation and improving their market competitiveness (DOORASAMY, 2015; PORTER, 1985).

By attacking a new market to reposition its brand, the move made by Gaga also underscores the limitations of the PLC concept. As Kotler and Keller (2012) elucidate, the strategies implemented by the organisations make the stages of life of the products and brands change and gain new contours in the face of the market and, above all, of competition (KOTLER; KELLER, 2012).

Another lesson that can be learned from the *Cheek to Cheek* episode in Gaga’s career is that to stay competitive, it is sometimes necessary to join forces. The music industry, like other market sectors, imposes entry barriers for artists who wish to migrate from a genre (PORTER, 1986). It would not be different with Gaga and her pretence of singing jazz, which has a completely different audience of commercial pop music. So the collaboration with Tony Bennett, who at the time was a well-established jazz singer with more than fifty years of career was essential for Lady Gaga to succeed.

Likewise, Fiat, a national champion who for decades took pride in its Italian heritage, merged with Chrysler in 2014, combining features with the almost century-old American manufacturer. Without this union, it would be difficult for the automaker to compete with the major automotive conglomerates that have emerged from global mergers in recent years (EBHARDT, LEPIDO, 2014).

Also, the iPhone would not have become Apple’s most successful product had it not been for the partnership with America’s largest phone operator AT&T in the development of the project (ELGAN, 2007; COHAN, 2013).

Partnerships such as that of Gaga and Bennett arise not only as answers to the needs of the market but also in the pretension of teaching the market to consume a new product or to

revise the perception of the brand. Just as Apple led smartphone users to let go of buttons by offering touch screen technology, to some extent, Lady Gaga taught her audience to consume jazz, while much of the jazz audience learned to listen to Gaga (PADRÃO; RIBEIRO, 2017).

The position of the brand in the market depends on the organisation's ability to identify the signals issued by its audience, but also to exploit its competencies to teach the customer how to satisfy their needs, even if they do not know them yet (KOTLER, KELLER, 2012).

3.4 Diversifying her own strategy: *Joanne*

When Lady Gaga emerged in the music industry, the mix of different art concepts under the packaging of pop culture caught the attention: it was an eccentric but at the same time commercial singer. However, her voice seemed dazzled by the high electronic beats of her songs.

Cheek to Cheek revealed to the world a new Lady Gaga, more sophisticated and elegant, although her characteristic extravaganza remained in the use of wigs, loaded makeup and exuberant clothes in her shows. At the album's launch, it was followed by a performance at the Oscars and innumerable appearances that evidenced her vocal qualities, such as when she sang the American national anthem at the opening of the Super Bowl in early 2016; and a week later, paying tribute to David Bowie at the Grammy Awards.

The changes in Lady Gaga were many: putting her voice in the foreground; adapting her costumes to the most palpable fashion trends; eliminating religious references that provoked protests; creating a performance style of stage more easily appreciated by the general public. Apparently, the result of these and other adaptations seems to have been positive in allowing the singer to access new markets, explore different musical genres and establish herself as an industry-respected singer (Carter, 2018, DOLAN, 2014, PARTRIDGE, 2014).

All this converges to *Joanne*, the last studio album released by the singer in 2016. Joanne was Lady Gaga's aunt, who passed away still young and who gave her the second name of baptism (*Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta* is the singer's full name), serving, therefore, like a hook so that Gaga explored her family inheritance in the new album. The musical style is dance-pop, but with influences of soft rock, country and folk, a more classic and emotionally introspective material than all of her previous albums.

Joanne debuted at number one on the Billboard charts (setting a record for the same singer), received two nominations at the Grammy Awards and a tour that, even early interrupted by her new health problems, raised \$ 94.9 million (SARMENTO, 2016).

It is interesting to analyse the promotion strategy adopted by Gaga for *Joanne*: before the concerts in great arenas, Gaga created a promotional tour called *Dive Bar Tour*, a small digression of presentations in American bars transmitted live by the official page of the singer. According to Gaga, the mini-tour aimed to reinforce the "back to roots" aspect of the album and accentuate its American atmosphere. In addition to the musical genre change, Gaga decided to add patriotism to her new work (ROLLING STONE, 2016).

The strategy could not be more correct since, in 2016, the United States was living a new and intense process of a presidential campaign. Not surprisingly, Gaga was cast in February 2017 to hold the Super Bowl break show, the final match of the main US football league. The show is part of the most watched sporting event in the world and symbolic of American national pride (GERAQUE, 2018).

Gaga's move on the *Dive Bar Tour* seems to have brought to Joanne elements of the focus strategy (PORTER, 1986) since the action was directed primarily at Gaga fans and goes from places typical of American culture, bars in New York. Even though she later evolved into TV

presentations and stage shows, Joanne seems to position herself as a middle ground between *The Fame*'s mass product and *Cheek to Cheek*'s distinctive work (ROLLING STONE, 2016).

The product/market matrix of Ansoff (1965) can be very useful in evaluating how Gaga diversified her own strategy throughout her career. For Ansoff (1965), there are four different strategies that can improve a company's business: the first, "market penetration", is when the company seeks to increase its share in its home business; the second, "market development", is the quest to conquer new markets with products already marketed; "New product development" is the third form of strategy in which new products are offered to the usual market; Finally, "diversification" is the strategy of reaching new markets with new products (ANSOFF, 1965).

A possible analysis using the matrix of Ansoff (1965) is that Gaga, in her first two albums, sought only market penetration; already in *Cheek to Cheek* the singer bet in the diversification like strategy to remain competitive; finally, Joanne can be understood as a new product for the usual market of Gaga, when the singer returns to commercial pop (even with other influences) as a proposal (ANSOFF, 1965). This explains the great functionality of the *Dive Bar Tour*, that is, to communicate the singer again with her audience of origin; This is a specific marketing strategy to announce a new product to her public (ROLLING STONE, 2016).

Thus, between *The Fame* and *Joanne*, you can see Lady Gaga diversifying not only her artistic product but also the markets of her performance, articulating different strategies of positioning her brand and business.

Perhaps the best current example of a company that adopts different market positions simultaneously is Coca-Cola. The soft drink titan is now able to act in completely different segments and markets, printing its brand on several other beverages such as teas, juices, and dairy, and also in clothes, household goods and even music festivals promoted by the company. It is not by chance that Coca-Cola is always among the most valuable brands in the Best Global Brands ranking (MCWILLIAMS, 2016).

What can explain such different projects get a positive response from the public? One of the possible explanations lies in the concept of strategy as a perspective, but first, it is necessary to mention the strategy approach focused on dynamic capabilities, which can help organisations to gain competitive advantage.

4.5 Dynamic Capacities: the eternal diagnosis between internal and external environment

When analysing the move performed by Lady Gaga in *Joanne*, the American magazine Forbes pointed to a new ability of the singer: to reorient the directions of pop music and set trends. For the magazine, even if the soft rock sound that marks the album *Joanne* is still not the musical genre of the hits that play the most in the radio world (perhaps for the taste of the American public still in transit), Gaga influenced several works that followed, such as Miley Cyrus, Harry Styles, Kesha, and Justin Timberlake, who went the same way (MCINTYRE, 2017).

Lady Gaga acquired the condition of provoking changes in the music market, not just reacting to them, which probably only became possible after mistakes and hits that led to the singer's professional maturity. Today, Gaga is able to recognise her own capabilities and anticipate market opportunities to exploit them. This condition is linked to a model of strategic management that seeks to identify and exploit, within a business, its capabilities, and resources, dynamically, according to the demands of the market: this is what the theory will call "dynamic capacities".

According to Eisenhardt and Martin apud Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2010), companies use different resources in different combinations as markets change or even cause such changes. Under the influence of the Resource-Based View (RBV) approach, the dynamic ca-

pabilities theory understands the enterprise as a system of resources and capabilities that require leverage strategies aligned with the environmental context and that generate value for clients and owners (SIRMON; IRELAND apud MINTZBERG; AHLSTRAND; LAMPEL, 2010). Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997: 516) define the concept of dynamic capacity as “the firm’s ability to integrate, build and reconfigure external and internal competencies in rapidly changing environments.” For Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010), dynamic capabilities are “a contemporary view of adaptive strategy as a conceptual design process” (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, Lappel, 2010, 214).

This adaptive strategy provided by dynamic capabilities is echoed in the continuous application of the SWOT analysis, a model for periodically evaluating the organization’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as environmental threats and opportunities (MINTZBERG, AHLSTRAND; LAMPEL, 2010). It is this dynamic strategic positioning, based on the combination of emerging forces and opportunities that Gaga and her entrepreneurs seem to have been able to accomplish in their different brand strategies: voice, fashion, performance, all this is no longer a tumultuous combination and incomprehensible one-time offer (as in *ArtPop*) to be a set of articulated capacities according to the market demand (TEECE, PISANO, SHUEN, 1997, MINTZBERG, AHLSTRAND, LAMPEL, 2010).

Gaga probably would not have used these different abilities to remain competitive if she had not mastered all the stages of the productive and commercial process of her art. In addition to composing her own songs, Gaga is a musical producer, instrumentalist, and arranger. This has never prevented the singer from having the collaboration of different producers and musicians in the production of her albums, but it is possible to identify a thread that gives meaning to the changes made by the singer in her career. For fans and the general public, the clear presence of Lady Gaga’s personality in her different projects is the guarantee that her brand has an identity, even if in evolution (HSM, 2016).

Perhaps Microsoft’s major flaw in the last decade has been just an incorrect perception of one’s own skills and weaknesses. It has been years of investing in Windows as a mobile operating system (the old Windows Phone, currently Windows Mobile) that is tied to the sale of smartphones, especially after the acquisition of the Nokia brand in 2014. The size of the failure can be expressed in the market share of smartphones in 2016, Windows Phone: less than 1% (WEIR, 2016). Today, under the direction of CEO Satya Nadella, Microsoft has already divested itself of virtually every division focused on the mobile phone market and prioritises investments in cloud computing and artificial intelligence services, and of course, the application of its famous Office in different platforms (CARVALHO, 2017, CIO, 2018).

Although the market offers opportunities, the brand needs to be aware of what it does best (HAMEL; PRAHALAD, 1990). The Joanne era is a step back in Lady Gaga’s career, from the most discreet public image to familiar musical style, to an intimate tour. This step paved the way for Gaga to return to the most watched television shows, to the most notorious events, to popular culture. All this would not be possible without the impeccable voice, compositions that pleased the audience and, of course, the artistic personality of Gaga printed on the project.

What Lady Gaga and Microsoft have realised is that, rather than “embracing the world,” it is more important to understand the competencies that identify your brand, which make you recognised and consumed by the world, even if the latter - your buyer’s market - is less than the claims already made.

3.6 Perspective and position: why both are inseparable in the strategy

When Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010) sought a definition of strategy, they eventually proposed five: the “5 Ps of strategy”, as the authors’ approach to the topic became

known, is the synthesis of the abundant and heterogeneous theory about strategic management (MINTZBERG; AHLSTRAND; LAMPEL, 2010). Among the five Ps proposed by Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010), those who diverge about the content of the strategy are the concepts of perspective and position: the first concerns the essential way of doing things in an organisation, his great vision for the business; the second refers to the market location where the customer and the product are located; a look outside the organisation. Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010) argue that concepts are not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

An excellent example used by the authors to aid in understanding these concepts is the launch of the EggMcMuffin - a traditional American breakfast - by the McDonald's fast food chain. Is it a change of position of the company (for the breakfast market) or is it just another product within the "McDonald's" way of doing things? The answer seems to depend only on how it is looked at, whether inside (perspective) or out (position) of the organisation. For Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010), the change of position was only possible in this case because the company's perspective was maintained.

Based on these concepts, it is possible to affirm that the changes in Lady Gaga's career - her brand repositioning, the tailoring of her image, the search for markets other than pop music - was only successful because, in some ways, the Lady Gaga way of being has been preserved. The extravagant appearance, the affection in the interpretive modes, the joyful and dancing songs, everything seems, to some extent, to have been kept from the first to the last album.

As previously mentioned, *Cheek to Cheek* was a project that Lady Gaga had glimpsed since 2012, but providentially left the role only after the problems faced in the ArtPop era. Although some questioning about Gaga's actual artistic motivations has emerged (see journalist Mikael Wood's Los Angeles Times review) (WOOD, 2014), it seems that the context in which Gaga's career was found served as a justification for the sudden change of musical genre. In this sense, it was easy for the general public to understand the step taken by Gaga as legitimate and necessary to the moment that the singer lived; if there was a change of perspective of the brand Lady Gaga, this change was careful not to pass on to the customer the idea of lack of identity or even opportunism.

Gaga was criticised when she debuted in the cinemas starring in the film "*Machete Kills*"; two years later, her interpretation in the series *American Horror Story* would yield her a Golden Globe. When she had to cancel shows due to her fibromyalgia (including Rock in Rio Brazil in 2017), she soon managed to produce, along with Netflix, a documentary sharing her drama due to the disease. There is no shortage of ups and downs in Lady Gaga's career, but in her different steps, the singer seems to have succeeded in getting her perspective to prevail over situations at first unfavourable to her (BARBOSA, 2017).

Gaga was able to hone her "music-art" concept, less like an avalanche of poorly connected artistic proposals, more like the ability to explore different skills as the market demands. On the other hand, Gaga knew how to reinforce the values of her brand while it promoted necessary changes in the product that offers, to the extent that the public also changed; and also to provoke changes in the public itself, creating market opportunities, trends, mutual learning. In the midst of all these changes, Gaga's personality, that which gives her brand identity, remains from *The Fame* to *Joanne*.

To conclude this point, another corporate example, this time of a poorly-conducted market positioning strategy: this is the giant Yahoo!. The \$ 125 billion internet portal sold in September 2016 for only \$ 4.5 billion to Verizon. The steps leading to its decline are numerous, beginning with expensive acquisitions of brands such as Flickr and GeoCities, at the time promising, but currently with little relevance. Yahoo! had everything to be Google today, not only for

having been the online guide to web browsing with more access in the United States but also for the opportunity it had to buy Google itself on two occasions when it was still a rising startup (BORNELI, 2016; SOUZA, 2017).

What is striking in the Yahoo! case is the unsuccessful attempts to be a social network, media portal, video sharing site, without obtaining a lasting competitive advantage in any of these markets. These strategic moves seem to clash with Yahoo!'s most basic competency: organising and sharing information on the internet (BORNELI, 2016, SOUZA, 2017). Unlike Lady Gaga, it seems that Yahoo! was missing a business vision, a perspective that would guide its market positioning.

5 ANALYSIS AND RESULT DISCUSSION

There are several differences between what is commonly understood by the market (exchange of goods and services) and the relationship between the artist and her audience. The image of Lady Gaga as a metaphor of organisational strategy obviously has its limitations.

Artists are people, therefore able to establish a personal and effective relationship with their clients; those who become their loyal consumers generally follow them even if the value perceived in their product is reversed, to a large extent the artist is the product to be consumed. Artists are able to reinvent themselves continuously, change the course of their careers, adapt. Hardly a company can migrate to new markets as a singer can switch between different styles and musical genres.

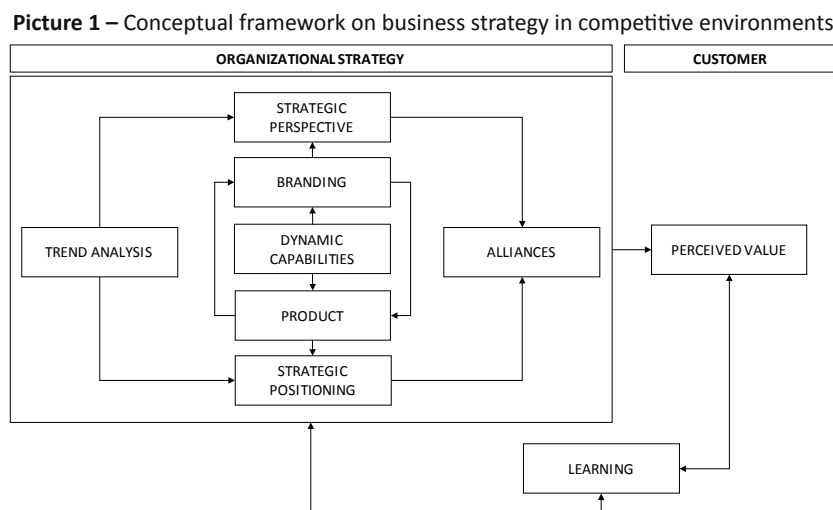
On the other hand, just as Morgan (2009) offered images as a way to understand different facets of the organisation, the "Lady Gaga" metaphor reinforces important aspects of dynamic strategic positioning. The business model that is radically dependent on the brand - the artistic - also helps organisations understand how the strategy must preserve certain attributes essentially linked to the institutional image while allowing changes in its products as an adaptation to the market.

In summary, this work may help organisations understand that:

1. Business strategy must be thought both in terms of product and in terms of institutional image, which makes the customer make the first purchase driven by the value he attributes to the brand;
2. The value perceived by the customer can be high when the product or service offered meets not only one but several of their needs. Adding value to the basic product of the company can also result in reaching new markets, acquiring more customers, partners, and prestige for the brand;
3. In fast-moving markets, business repositioning may be necessary when the declining phase of its life cycle has not yet been reached. This process can be stimulated by the signs of market change, but the change in consumption can also be anticipated by the organisation;
4. Business-to-customer learning is a two-way street when there is a strong relationship between the consumer and the brand;
5. In a strategic repositioning process, alliances and partnerships can provide the sharing of knowledge, resources and even customers, facilitating access to new markets;
6. The articulation of different business strategies is fundamental in fast-changing markets, as it enables the company to be flexible; this diversification can be achieved by developing different products for different markets, increasing organisational adaptability;

7. Dynamic capabilities must be identified and exploited, always under the care of preserving the personality of the brand; different combinations of resources and competencies may be articulated in light of the anticipation of future trends, but what adds value and identity to the brand cannot be disregarded, since it is what gives cohesion to the different strategic actions;
8. Perspective and position are two sides of the same currency called strategy. As a place occupied by the company in the market, the position can be changed, but it should be aligned with the great vision of the business. Changes in perspective should be conducted in a planned manner, with the consent of the client and other stakeholders, as the latter may affect the way the brand is viewed and judged by the market.

Picture 1 presents a framework with the synthesis of these conceptual relations:



Source: Developed by the authors.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A strategy is a concept of multiple faces, as Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010) would say, an elephant that is never fully known. However, the Lady Gaga case, as well as the several cases of the corporate environment briefly discussed in this paper, can elucidate how different aspects of the strategy interact with each other to generate value for the customer, especially in the context of highly competitive markets undergoing rapid transformations.

A strategy is a proper way of identifying the brand and differentiating it from its competitors (a perspective) while defining a market location in which the customer supplies its need (a positioning); a look into and out of the organisation, simultaneously. More than that: strategy is the dynamics between perspective and positioning, which determine each other, according to the signals issued by the market regarding trends and opportunities (HAMEL and PRAHALAD, 1995).

In order to support brand positioning as well as the building of superior value in products, it will require resources, knowledge, and technologies that can be obtained through alliances. The association of institutional image with consolidated and reputable brands can support market repositioning, when necessary.

Finally, the exchange of information with the market will provide a cycle of learning and adjustment of the strategy, giving it dynamism. Thus, the organisation can relocate internal capabilities as it identifies opportunities; repositioning the brand based on market trends; or adopting multiple strategies, taking care of the uncertainties and providing alternatives that make the organisation flexible to change.

As already mentioned, the research has limitations, attending to a specific case of an artist as a business in parallel with companies inserted in a specific market context: the technology industry. Some issues of interest would require a complementary analysis, such as the concepts of plan, pretext and standard found in Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (2010), as well as other approaches to strategy not included in the text.

It seems necessary to explore the interactions found here in later studies, considering broader contexts of business strategy and distinct corporate environments, attesting to the wide validity of the model. Methodological approaches that use statistical analysis may offer a new contribution to future research.

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