

# What happens when brands grow older than their audience?

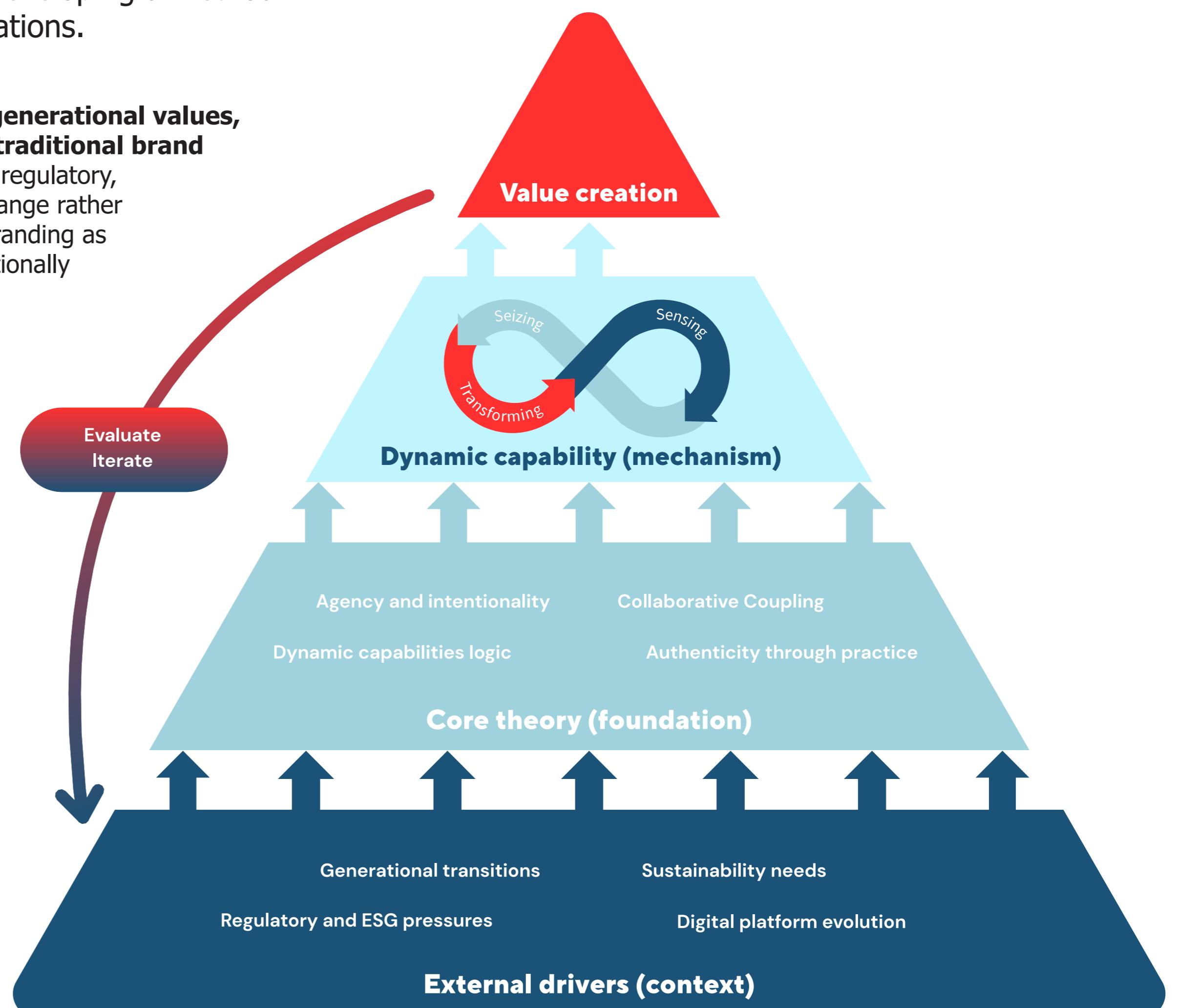
Transformative Branding as a design-driven capability: developing a method and toolkit to help organisations evolve with new generations.

## Brands increasingly struggle to remain culturally relevant as generational values, expectations, and definitions of authenticity shift faster than traditional brand strategies can adapt.

At the same time, organisations face growing regulatory, sustainability, and transparency pressures that demand substantive change rather than symbolic communication. This project positions Transformative Branding as a design-driven dynamic capability that enables organisations to intentionally evolve in response to these conditions.

Building on **dynamic capabilities theory** (Teece et al., 1997), Transformative Branding operates through a continuous cycle of **sensing, seizing, and transforming**. Sensing focuses on developing cultural intelligence: understanding generational world-views, stakeholder expectations, and emerging tensions between what organisations claim (vision), how they operate (culture), and how they are perceived (image). Seizing translates these insights into shared strategic direction through collaborative interpretation, co-creation, and prioritisation. Transforming embeds change through organisational learning, experimentation, and adaptive governance, ensuring that values are enacted in practice rather than communicated superficially.

Rather than treating authenticity as a fixed brand attribute, this framework conceptualises authenticity as an outcome of practice. Through repeated cycles of sensing, seizing, and transforming, organisations build the capacity to remain legitimate, trustworthy, and socially relevant over time. The pyramid visualises how external drivers, such as generational transitions, ESG regulation, digital platform dynamics, and sustainability challenges, feed into this capability, resulting in long-term value creation, organisational resilience, and societal impact.



## From theory to method

To operationalise Transformative Branding as a learnable capability, this project translates theory into a structured design method. The method was developed to be accessible to non-experts while retaining analytical rigor, enabling cross-functional brand teams to engage meaningfully with complex strategic challenges.

Central to the method is Vision-Culture-Image (V-C-I) mapping (Hatch & Schultz, 2001), which structures the sensing phase by making misalignments explicit. Individual reflection precedes group discussion to reduce hierarchy effects and surface tacit knowledge before it is filtered by group dynamics. By sequencing activities from reflection to collective sensemaking, the method supports psychological safety, shared ownership, and deeper insight generation. This ensures that generational tensions are not immediately solved, but first understood.

## The Transformative Branding workshop toolkit

The method is embodied in a facilitated workshop toolkit designed to teach Transformative Branding through practice. The workshop guides participants through the full sensing-seizing-transforming cycle using canvases, visual models, and collaborative exercises.

During seizing, mixed-expertise groups interpret prioritised tension fields and explore strategic directions without jumping prematurely to solutions. In the transforming phase, insights are translated into a shared, time-bound transformation roadmap that identifies goals, sequencing, and enabling conditions. Reflection and follow-up are embedded to reinforce learning and sustain momentum beyond the session. Together, the method and toolkit demonstrate how Transformative Branding can function not as a static framework, but as an organisational capability that helps brands evolve alongside new generations in an authentic, responsible, and future-oriented way.



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From Millennials to Alphas: Generational Shifts as a Catalyst for Futureproof, Authentic, and Sustainable Brand Transformation.

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