

BRAND BUILDING AND ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract:

Sustainable growth has become a major topic of discussion among corporate and business analysts. To achieve this, the organization should master all the aspects of innovation including the development of right practices to make innovation happen. A dedicated process is needed for **TRANSFORMATION**. A process that nurtures and commercializes good ideas and a strong sense of commitment to innovation is the need of the hour for carving the **right differentiation**. When we look at the top most companies, they are the ones with broad-based innovation capabilities enjoying higher customer satisfaction, greater loyalty, faster revenue growth, stronger earnings, and ultimately, dramatic lifts in investor returns. The transition from customer satisfaction to delightedness and now customer fascination has emerged just because of the innovative strategies. The focus of this paper is to how we can adopt innovative strategies in brand building and enhancement. **The lingering question – “What next?” is the mantra for progress.**

Keywords: Brand, Innovation, Brand Personality, Living Brands, Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Marketers Don't Build Brands – Consumers Do!

BRANDS ARE SO ubiquitous in our consumerist world that they attracted attention in the most unlikely quarters, such as The Economist, which carried a cover story on a book called No Logo, on the subject of branding. People want brands, the article said in effect, because they offer an identity, an anchor in a featureless world, a reassuring sense of familiarity and a sensual experience. To the itinerant global business class as well as the tourist, seeing the logos and signs of brands, is like finding a trusted friend in far away corners of the world. Brands are therefore eminently suited to the description of ‘vehicles for superior value delivery’ and deserve all the attention they get in the modern world.

Review of Literature:

Brands are a means of differentiating a company's products and services from those of its competitors; customers will pay a substantial price premium for a good brand. The fundamental concern of brand building literature experienced a dramatic shift in the last decade. Branding and the role of brands, as traditionally understood, were subject to constant assessment and redefinition. The American Marketing Association (AMA) definition of a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (p. 404).

Before the shift in focus towards brands and the brand building process, brands were just another step in the whole process of marketing to sell products. "For a long time, the brand has been treated in an off-hand fashion as a part of the product" (Urde 1999, p. 119). Kotler (2000) mentions branding as "a major issue in product strategy" (p. 404). As the brand was only part of the product, the communication strategy worked towards exposing the brand and creating brand image. "The challenge today is to create a strong and distinctive image" (Kohli and Thakor 1997, p. 208). Kapferer (1997) mentions that before the 1980's there was a different approach towards brands. "Companies wished to buy a producer of chocolate or pasta: after 1980, they wanted to buy KitKat or Buitoni. This distinction is very important; in the first case firms wish to buy production capacity and in the second they want to buy a place in the

mind of the consumer" (p. 23). Brands perform an economic function in the mind of the consumer, "the value of the brand comes from its ability to gain an exclusive, positive and prominent meaning in the minds of a large number of consumers" (p. 25). Therefore branding and brand building should focus on developing brand value.

The Functions of the Brand for the Consumer

Function	Consumer Benefit
Identification	To be clearly seen, to make sense of the offer, to quickly identify the sought-after products.
Practicality	To allow savings of time and energy through identical repurchasing and loyalty.
Guarantee	To be sure of finding the same quality no matter where or when you buy the product or service.
Optimization	To be sure of buying the best product in its category, the best performer for a particular purpose.
Characterization	To have confirmation of your self-image or the image that you present to others.
Continuity	Satisfaction brought about through familiarity and intimacy with the brand that you have been consuming for years.

Hedonistic	Satisfaction linked to the attractiveness of the brand, to its logo, to its communication.
Ethical	Satisfaction linked to the responsible behavior of the brand in its relationship towards society.

Adapted from Kapferer (1997)

Brand Strategy and Policy

Branding Strategy indicates how the firm chooses to use branding as an integral part of its overall marketing strategy. It is another dimension of marketing strategy. The brand name is the centre around which the entire marketing mix is built up. The brand name can incorporate all marketing efforts together either in the consumer mind or in the marketing programme. Branding simplifies control of the commercial process. It gives necessary advertising and promotional support in order to make the product recognizable and to create consumer patronage.

Branding is not something that can only be applied to the end product. The brand is a way of representing the customer's experience of buying and owning the product, and the organization's processes and attitudes are part of its creation.

Brand Building: A ubiquitous process

Brand building is now a ubiquitous process. It has moved beyond the boundaries of the business world, and is being embraced by other groups such as government agencies, churches, charities and educational establishments.

Within the business world, the business-to-business sector is fast learning the lessons of the brand building so ably demonstrated by the business-to-consumer sector. Brand thinking within an organization also demands that a view is taken on how connections can best be made with the customers in the marketplace. Channel choices have to be evaluated and selected to achieve the following:

- The channels chosen are the most appropriate combination of channels through which to interact with the customer base.
- The customer experiences highly positive interactions within those channels.
- Where customers interact with more than one channel, the customer experiences a 'single unified view'.

The brand therefore becomes the sum total of the customer's experience.

Customers create brands;

Organizations create brand identities.

Brand = \sum customer experience

The brand is the total of the customer's experience

The brand management process consists of

- brand launch;
- maintenance;
- enhancement.

The majority of marketers usually find themselves working on existing brands, where the brand values are already established and need to be maintained, and also perhaps enhanced from time to time to reflect changes in the marketplace. Those assigned to the task of creating new brands have the opportunity to plan to bring a new entity to the market.

Market understanding acquired through market research should have identified an opportunity with potential buyers. The brand proposition can then be created. This is, essentially, where the sources of added value based on factors over and above functional performance can be created for customers and other relevant parties.

Many leading-edge companies use the multiple markets model (Mitchell (1999) to identify who these other relevant parties might be and to guide their thinking about brand development.

Brand Building: Tell a Story

Story-telling is one of the strongest forms of brand-building. We all love stories, and story-telling is a big part of our culture. It's how we convey ideas, make a point, and communicate with impact. These brief, to-the-point scenarios, case studies and examples about how your company delivered effectively will not only demonstrate a track record of success, but reinforce your brand effectiveness. When integrated into your pr effort, story-telling can make the phone ring, and build your brand.

Build a Brand Culture:

Brands have evolved from being products with purely functional benefits into highly emotionalized personalities that represent an entire intimate lifestyle to consumers. This marketing story always begins and ends with the integration of real lives and the role and successful establishment of brands within those real lives. Lives first, lifestyles second. Becoming a legitimate part of people's lives is the new minimum price of brand entry and is the only method for a brand's sustained longevity. The challenge inherent in this new requirement is that it requires a far greater understanding of and genuine sensitivity to the human condition, psychology, and cultural influences.

Associate with Human Values:

As brands play a more emotionalized role in people's lives, any brand's intrinsic value will be linked to the degree to which it is value-based. The fact is that consumers now demand far more personal contact from highly emotionalized, living brands. This means that marketers need to develop increasingly intelligent ways to provide some level of personal intimacy between their brands and their customers. Culture creates the best brands – but in order to allow this to happen, we need to understand the collective dreams and true needs on which culture and/or cultures are built.

Discovering an intelligent way to respond to consumers' realities (*The Beauty of Reality*) is always the most successful approach and is the only real way to build stellar brands that will stand the test of time. The concept of the everyday hero is well expressed in a veritable landslide of recent ad campaigns featuring “real people”. Using real people in branding efforts is a way to bring the brand to life on a more intimate level and to “share the hero spotlight” – traditionally reserved for the brand – with the consumer.

Dove's “Campaign for Real Beauty”, created by O&M Chicago, is a great example of using real people in a campaign for positive social effect. This now much-celebrated campaign used real women as models to convey an ideal of “natural”, uncontrived, universal beauty and to challenge traditional notions of perfect beauty by featuring a diverse group of women and, more recently, girls. The ads were a hit when aired in the Television.

Real does not mean better; it just means real. Fantasy is also a “real” human need. If you simply fix your sights on a real perspective (real or real fantasy), with any luck, you will observe the obvious.

Collaboration:

Brands inherently will need to assume a humanistic vision and become based on collaborative, need-based marketing strategies – strategies grounded in consumer respect. One of the best examples of a brand created through real understanding and respect for the consumer is the label created by the legendary Arnold Scaasi, a veritable pioneer in the area of consumer-centric customized fashion. His love of women and his genuine interest in who they are and who they want to be driven continue to drive his brand.

In pursuit of collaborative relationship, we have to continue to work hard to **CONNECT** with consumers – from many different angles, using all our many different tools, and always remembering that just as in any relationship, the objective is to try to stay close and keep consumers happy.

Innovation: A Strategic Priority

Our corporate and personal futures depend on how well we serve the customer – a blindingly obvious truism – until we see evidence of it having been ignored in yet another new

product failure. The customer thus comes first not because of any philosophical reason but because he or she ultimately pays for the factories, offices tower blocks and research labs. Hence, in discovering ways to serve customers better, continuing innovation is the first natural corollary. It must be relevant and makes sense, arising not just from technological advance but from an in-depth understanding of the customer, the way she lives and the world she lives in. For example, as Business World reported, ‘Kellogg has now come to terms with the fact that the Indian customer is a tough cookie – changing his food habits isn’t a cakewalk. Today, Kellogg has revised its strategy and instead of targeting the mass market, it has a more focused niche in mind’.

The bottom line is that while global players have to have a presence in India for strategic reasons, building a brand and a successful business in this country requires resourcefulness, innovativeness and a flexible approach on a scale they had probably not imagined earlier. Therefore, exploring ways to discover the sources of such potential consumer acceptance or ‘what they are willing to pay for’ is the core of this paper.

Improving Consumer Value: A Key Driver

Consumer insights, innovative products, and processes based thereon as well as creative people are essential for intelligent tackling of the world’s problems and complexities a little bit better than we have so far been able to. The main purpose of enterprise is:

- i. The understanding of customers beyond mere numbers;
- ii. The linking of such insights to business goals; and
- iii. The innovative strategies along the value chain to achieve these goals.

Customerization:

As consumers do really want to be surprised, delighted, and connected continuously in new and innovative ways, customization and interactive technology is an ever important aspect of brand building and enhancement – strategies grounded in consumer empowerment. One of the best examples of a brand created through true customization and interactive technology is **Dell**. You can build your own computer on its site with its choice-board tool. Each computer is then tailor-made according to the request and shipped to the customer directly. This model made dell till recently among the most profitable around. All major manufacturers including apple now have a choice-board on its site.

Brand Habitation:

Creating a “living brand” by developing a never-ending, nonintrusive brand web that reaches all consumer touch points in the most exciting, emotionally vibrant ways is possible

through brand experience lifestyle participation. To perpetuate a living brand is to evolve continuously. To change, change, change and then change again.

Classical branding was all about consistency. Life-enabling branding is all about evolution. Life is never static. So, too, is a living brand. It must continue to actively seek out original, relevant, and consensual vehicles of its expression. And when a brand becomes outmoded, it quite simply must redefine itself or die. Brands are not gods. And consumers have embraced a new era of enlightenment.

Customer Fascination:

Boredom is just the reverse side of fascination: both depend on being outside rather than inside a situation, and one leads to the other. Now a days, customer is fascinated by “good brands” those who practice ethical branding (e.g. “jaago re” ads of tata tea) and also should enlist tomorrow’s vision now.

CONCLUSION:

To conclude, branding is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem. It’s not merely getting your target market to choose you over the competition. And to achieve this, we need to have a dedicated brand experience lifestyle participation process where the value is maximized by the customers as the customers are respected and empowered. That’s nothing but the “**LIVING BRANDS**”. Areas for future research that if conducted could help understand the brand building and enhancement mechanism better such as technology and organization structures.

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