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PERSONAL BRAND MARKETING, A NECESSITY FOR THE CORPORATE DIFFERENTIATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBALIZATION OF SOCIETY

Literature
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Abstract

Offering from the point of view of its characteristics and also interesting to analyze is what the specialists call 'brand'. This term is relatively new in the area of marketing, and it stirs interest especially as far as its two components are concerned: the situation of the contemporary society, on the one hand, and the marketing, i.e. the efforts the corporation undertakes in order to be chosen by the clients, on the other.

The peculiarities and, at the same time, the variables of each brand reside in the economic, social, educational, financial, political, religious or any other type of specificities, that are different first and foremost from one product to another, but also from country to country, and we could even add, from region to region.

The conceptualization of brand

The etymology of the word 'brand' takes us back to the old inhabitants of Scandinavia, for whom the term '*brandr*' meant 'to burn'. It is starting from this root that the word reached the Anglo-Saxon world, where, given the development of the animal trade, it represented the way in which the cattle breeders marked their names (through branding) on their animals, so that they should be able to recognize them. Thus, the cattle marked with a particular sign belonging to a well reputed farmer as far as cattle breeding was concerned stirred interest to a greater extent than the ones belonging to farmers who were not as respected (at the same time, the same method was used to protect from the animal thieves).

This utility of 'marking' products with a particular sign has so far remained unchanged. However, the oldest reference to the term was traced down in 3200 B.C. in Pharaohs' Egypt, where it made reference to the inscription of the manufacturer's name and his place of origin, made on a brick. The builders from Egypt used such burnt-clay bricks for houses, temples and walls. Their quality varied among the builders, according to the recipe applied or the quality of the materials used. Closer to our times, in 1862, Dona Amalia Lucia Victoria Moreau entered the small distillery that her husband had bought in Santiago de Cuba and was surprised to find a fruit bats colony that had sheltered on the shelves from the room. Familiar with the local traditions that saw in bats a sign of a family's prosperity, unity and health, as well as a representation of good luck, she immediately understood the opportunity of marking the rum that was produced in their small distillery with the graphical representation of a bat, a proposition that her husband accepted straight away. Given the low level of alphabetization from those times, the rum produced and marked with the bat sign became known as a source of miraculous powers, good luck and health

due to the sign that everybody could easily recognize.

In his *The Brand Handbook*, Olins Wally states that brands and the branding are omnipresent and universal. Media is obsessed with brands and everybody now uses the word 'brand'. The radical changes that occurred in the field of branding have recently brought him to the center of attention. These changes include:

- the evolution of digital technology
- the issuing of the idea of great visibility company
- branding gravitates from the periphery to the center of the main preoccupations in a company
- branding circulates in different countries, regions and cities, and it also penetrates the charity organizations, the artistic field and the academic environment
- and, perhaps the most important aspect of them all, the changing of the attitude displayed by the society, which is directed now towards environment issues, as well as the creation, in the 21st century, of a more responsible society (Olins W, 2009).

It is still Olins Wally who emphasizes the fact that almost everything that is linked to the field of branding, including terminology, is continually changing. Up to the eighties, 'brand' referred to perishable consumer goods from the supermarkets. Practically, it addressed the only public of the organization – the consumer. When the corporation addressed all of its types of public, the construction 'corporate identity' was used. It was, at the time, the personality of the corporation on its way to chiseling. Nowadays, the tangible manifestation of the corporation's personality is called 'corporate brand'. Although the term 'corporate identity' fights a tough fight for the rearguard, it is the term 'corporate brand' that wins. Thus, the term 'brand' can refer both to the corporation, in its whole, and to its products and services. Likewise, the word 'brand' has connotations that, from a

financial point of view, can be accounted for more easily than terms such as 'identity', 'image' or 'reputation', that it completes or replaces altogether. What all the categories of the corporation's public perceive from the identity that was created and projected is the 'corporation image'.

Branding is a whole process of creating, maintaining and supporting of a brand. It is the most important form of communicating and relating with possible clients. The image of a brand is built in time, receiving a certain value. The clients contribute to this thing, by helping the brand have profit, develop. As a matter of fact, this is the very purpose of any brand: making profit of what it does, selling, reinforcing, and maintaining its position on the market, at the least.

In Wally Ollins's opinion, brand has a lot to tell to people who think in a similar manner, no matter where they live and to all of them at once. Brands have been created by marketing agents from the big companies in order to seduce the clients with an eye on selling products through the creation and clear repeated projection of a series of colourful, although simple, ideas. The mechanism of branding was projected and defined by the modern communication techniques. However, the success of the ideas of branding went beyond the most ambitious dreams of its creators. The branding exceeded its commercial origins to such an extent, that its impact is practically incommensurable in social and cultural terms. It spread in the field of education, sports, fashion, tourism, art, theatre, literature, regional and national politics and in almost all of the other domains. Branding is more often than not used by the non-profit charitable organizations that compete against the commercial brands on the emotional territory from people's minds and hearts, for the money from their pockets.

Completing this idea, Cristian C r mid (C r mid C., 2009) describes the evolution of the concept of brand in his

books as follows: at the beginning of the past century, branding had to answer a single question asked by the consumer: - *What is this product?* In the early nineteen-fifties this question turned into - *What is this product used for?* In the late eighties, the question became - *What satisfactions does this product provide?* Today, more than ever, in a globalized world, branding creates groups of consumers. We introduce ourselves, every single time, by the things we consume. We are what we consume. Nowadays, the question is asked from an opposite perspective: the consumer is the one who needs to answer the question '-*Who are You?*' or '*Tell me what you consume so that I should be able to tell you who you Are!*' The belonging to a social group is emphasized also via the brands that we use: the Armani suit, the Bally shoes, the Christian Lacroix shirt, the Rolex watch are elements peculiar to a certain social status, as well as the guarantee of a well-shaped self-image (C r mid C., 2009). The branding is the one that builds their reputation and brings forth their success. Borders that disappear and reappear over night, governments that crash, political leaders who get up on the world's scene with nobody having even heard of them, war or peace, all of these and many more, only via advertisement. It can be looked at as a form of misinformation or manipulation, it can be biased or mainly interested in immediate gain, it can be accused of all the evils in this world...but it cannot be ignored.

In its essence, a brand is all that you want to transmit through the image that you have, starting from the smallest things and up to the most important ones. It is about a whole restless process of creating and maintaining, permanently needing enhancements and always coming forth with something new. The beneficiary of this product is the consumer, who is the only person entitled to decide if the without (the outer image) corresponds to

the within (the image the ‘master’ of the brand has on its product).

The disadvantages of the terms ‘brand’ and ‘branding’ are, nevertheless, numerous and obvious. Branding means: cosmetic, superficial, simplistic, gross and vulgar, easy-to-tease and despise. It still is very strongly associated with the shelves of supermarkets. However, brands and branding are fast, encroaching, self-explanatory and suitable for the age of impact expressions. You can talk about the New York Yankees or the Wharton Business School, Barcelona or James Bond as brands and everyone understands. But you cannot do it as simply with identity or even with image. The ‘corporate identity’ has fewer pejorative associations than ‘brand’, but it is rather soft and fuzzy. Not to mention the fact that it is not self-explanatory. Therefore, it is open to any sort of interpretation, right or wrong.

In the world of trade, the word ‘brand’ has another important advantage against the ‘corporate identity’, that is the fact that brands have clear and direct connection with money, value and profitability. The corporate identity has always been associated with a whole array of factors – the enhancement of recruitment, cheering up, better sells, reducing stocks, so on and so forth, as it has also been with a lot of delicate issues, such as a higher popularity and a better perception.

Types of brand

According to Dan Schawbel, the first person to have established categories of brands, there are three types of brands:

1. *Corporate brands.* The name, the logo and the personality of any society. The corporate brand refers to how one can use a corporation’s brand with the aim of promoting a product.

2. *Brands of certain products/services.* From a pencil and up to a guitar or a car, a product represents something that you can touch. Lawn care

or hairdressing services and up to legal counseling – all of them are services that cannot be touched, but surely enhance the quality of life. A products or services brand exists through the products and services through which the name of the brand is marketed.

3. *Personal brands.* On the contrary, the corporate brand does not have to be a name on a product in order for you to sell yourself or the services that you undertake. A person, and implicitly, all that person can offer is similar to a product and, therefore, needs marketing in order for it to be known. This means brand strategies can be adjusted for the development of a strong personal brand (Schawbel D., 2010).

Table 1 presents a series of similar aspects of personal brands and product brands.

Generally, given that branding focuses on creating and sustaining trust, it means respecting promises. The best and most successful brands are perfectly coherent. All the aspects of what they are and of what they do sustain one another. Each time you interact with a coherent brand – as a client, supplier, share holder or employee – you perceive it in the same way. The best brands have a consistence that is built and sustained by the people from within the organization, who are completely familiarized with what the brand stands for.

Besides these classifications, Philip Kotler and Waldemar Pfoertsch also mention the *premium brands*. The main traits of premium brands generally refer to high quality materials, exclusivist design and first class processing, being sold at a high price (obtaining a premium price). The implementation of such a high profile and first class positioning entails rather high costs, since all the communication and distribution channels need to satisfy the requirements mentioned above. The use of premium brands in the B2B context is rather restrictive, given that the goods and services are acquired for the use in the

production of other products and services. The premium brands are to be generally found at the level of the business-to-consumer segment (Kotler, P.; Pfoertsch, W., 2011).

Brand traits

Matt Haig displays a slightly different perspective, as he compares brand to religion. According to him, brand can be considered more than 'art', it can be understood as a religion (Haig, M., 2010). It is true that we can easily conclude that many marks are mini-religions. Thus, if we take into account the 100 most appreciated brands, we can actually see 100 different religious cultures. The following traits need to be taken into consideration:

- *Faith.* Like in the case of religions, brands try to determine people to trust what they have to offer. This faith leads to long-term loyalty, not doubting the authenticity of the brand. Let's think, for instance, of the individualization attempts of brands such as 'the real thing' (Cola-Cola) or 'truth' (the Budweiser slogan).
- *Omnipresence.* The successful brands intend to become omnipresent and many of them reached this objective. For instance, in the whole world, the golden arches of McDonald's managed to get themselves recognized more easily than the crucifix.
- *Spiritual leaders.* The successful brand-managers no longer have the name 'captains of industry'. They are the spiritual leaders that need to be listened and loyally venerated by both the customers and the employees. It is well-known that, in most of the cases, religions were established by men with beard and mysterious smiles, who initiated a cult of purity. Nowadays we have Richard Branson in this position.
- *Kindness.* Religion teaches people to be kind and to share the wish for something better. Thus, the brands 'of the conscience', such as The Body Shop, Cafedirect sau

Seeds of Change appeals to our philanthropic instincts.

- *Purity.* Brands, just like religion, gravitate towards the need for purity. At times, just like in the case of Evian Company and of the malt whisky, it is all about the purity of the product. However, in most of the cases, it is the purity of the message that counts, the whole identity of a mark resumming to an eloquent one-sentence slogan or to a single image.
- *Altars of worship.* It no longer suffices that brands be commercialized in a store; they dispose of their own 'churches'. Disneyland was the first example, in this sense, when it was created in the 1950s, but in the 21st century, such temples can be found everywhere. We can also consider the example of the numerous Nike cities, where trainers are presented as tall pillars, thrust in the ground, or the artistic structures of the car showrooms of Champs-Élysées, Paris, that are equipped with interactive games, bars and restaurants.
- *Icons.* The classical sports or entertainment personalities create a devotion that in the past was only dedicated to saints and prophets. Celebrities such as Tiger Woods, David Beckham or P. Diddy do not only sustain brands, but are brands themselves, with a market value that certain companies can only dream about.
- *Miracles.* Religions promise miracles. Even if this word starting with 'M' is not mentioned, it is always there, in a religion. From the multicultural Nirvana offered by Benetton and up to promising a superb body on the cover of a DVD with fitness lessons, the consumers are suggested to choose not only products, but miracles as well, which compete, in their turn.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper is at the crossroads of a whole array of scientific domains, the approach it suggests being multidisciplinary. Of these scientific fields, the ones that had a considerable

impact were: marketing, human resources, personal development, statistics, organizational management.

As regards the investigations undertaken up until this moment, we should emphasize the fact that this concept is a neologic one, set up recently, compared to the first signs of the establishing of general marketing, which is why specialty literature provides few possibilities of comparing the materials. This is a consequence of the fact that each scholar approached a certain segment of interest, according to the place and reason of developing a study on the subject of brand.

The main difficulty that we encountered in researching the specialty

literature was the reduced level of researches undertaken in this field, at the international level, and, even more important, at the national level.

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Appendices

Table 1 Similar aspects product / services / personal brand

Similar aspects of types of brands		
Personal Brand	Corporate Brand / Product Brand	Aroused Feelings / Emotions
Jay-Z	Roc-a-Fella Records, 40/40 Club, New Jersey Nets, Rocawear Clothing	Pride, aggressiveness and provocative
Sarah Jessica Parker	<i>Sex and the City</i> TV Show, Sarah Jessica Parker Fragrances perfume, Bitten clothing line	Sexy, theatrical, encouraging
Emeril Lagasse	Cooking books, Cooking TV Shows, Emeril's Gourmet Produce (groceries products), Emeril's Restaurants	Colourful, passion, noisy
Paris Hilton	Hilton Hotels, the Recording House Products, <i>The Simple Life</i> TV show, Just Me perfumes line, Club Paris Clubs, Rich Prosecco champagne	Arrogance, dramatism, superficiality
Paul Newman	Newman's Own Food Company, Newman/Haas/Lanigan Races, Races team	Charitable, honest, trained
Hugh Hefner	<i>Playboy</i> magazine and <i>The Girls Next Door</i> TV show	Confident, romantic, compassionate

*Source : Schawbel, Dan, (2010), *4 steps to building your future*, Ed. Kaplan Publishing, New York