

Brand efficiency and fundamental principles behind a successful brand-building

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ABSTRACT

We could say that the brand is the emotional connection established by a company with the customers and the possible customers. This paper aims to clarify some fundamental principles about the brand building. It examines the origins and interpretations of the brand concept and draws a comparison between the points of view of companies and customers, allowing the reader to understand what a company must consider in order to meet customer need.

Keywords - Brand, Brand image, Brand identity, Brand management, Consumer behavior

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I. INTRODUCTION

The brand, in all its meanings, represents an element that a company is not always able to manage profitably, since it includes a word range of items that, being present in the customers' mind, could get away from enterprises' management.

This paper will carefully analyze all aspects regarding the brand management of and its value, focusing particularly on those elements that could influence the customer perception of the customer and that, when properly planned and used by the company therefore, could therefore increase brand equity.

II. THE BRAND VALUE

Philip Kotler defines the brand as a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a design, or a combination of all these, which aims to identify goods or services of on a seller or a group of sellers, distinguishing them from those of other competitors [1].

David A. Aaker underlines that a brand "is a set of assets (or liabilities) linked to a landmark (brand, name, logo) that could be added (or subtracted) to the value generated by a product or service [2].

As we can see in the mentioned definitions, the brand is always including a "distinctive element". Nowadays, the brand has reached a more complex value than a simple product differentiation; in fact, consumers do not use words, marks or drawings, describing a product does, but they use adjectives, describing directly the brand characteristics.

It is necessary to underline that in the minds of consumers, therefore, some feelings about a brand could make a sort of "pre-judgment" that

could appear unfair to those on the other side, namely the competitors.

Companies owning big brands can ground on strengths such as goodwill, loyalty or preference that allow them to generate revenues for years, riding the wave of reputation.

Thus, in other words we can state that a represents signs and symbols, tangible and intangible, identifying appearance and personality, as in the case of an individual.

The expressiveness of a brand could therefore be traced back to the following elements: the identity (brand identity); the image (brand image) and the positioning (brand positioning).

The brand identity represents the set of expressive elements, used by a company, to spread the essential aspects of a brand itself, is the brand identity, while what consumers perceive represents the brand image.

Instead, the brand positioning, identify the process of potential buyers to evaluate elements typical of the itself brand in the eyes of.

Building brand identity is, therefore, the first step towards the realization of the brand of an organization or an enterprise; it is fundamental, also, to develop a system of meanings reliable with the identity of the business and able to be translated into opportunity for the consumer.

Furthermore, the brand identity requires an analysis several focus points in order to structure the company identity itself.

In this regard, we have to consider a corporate identity planning model, proposed by Aaker and Joachimsthaler, that develops the brand identity in the following basic steps [3]:

The size of the brand identity:

1. The brand essence is the promise done by the company to the market and to the consumers and expresses what the brand wants to represent in a competitive environment, i.e. the company must define the essence on which the brand will focus on brand.
2. The core identity represents the main commitment of the values reflecting the mission of the company itself. Due to this proximity to the mission, the core identity should remain unchanged over time, regardless of the different approaches to the market that the brand will take over.
3. The extended identity includes the values that are not part of the core identity but still including a substantial component for the brand.

The brand identity related concepts:

1. the brand as a product (product scope, products attributes, quality, value, uses, user country of origin);
2. the brand as an organization (institutional characteristics);
3. the brand as a person (personality of the brand, customers/brand relationship);
4. the brand as a symbol (image, metaphor, iconography of the brand).

The proposal or statement of value:

Normally, when designing and manufacturing a certain product or service, the companies want to meet a specific customer's need, expressed or unconscious.

Through the statement of value, an organization will be able also to guarantee defined functional benefits (when they bring to solve problem or to satisfy practical needs), or experiential and symbolic benefits (connected to the needs of self-realization) related to the brand itself.

The relationship construct:

Through appropriate strategies to create a brand identity, the company wants to trigger a personal relationship between brand and customer (friendship, intimacy, trust, etc.)

Thus, creating a successful brand identity is a prerequisite to develop and to maintain and a profitable relationship between the customer and the brand.

Through the brand identity strategies, a company could try to get the so-called brand awareness; therefore it establishes its position in the market that can be defined as the part of the brand identity itself, since it interacts closely with the potential user/customer in order to create a differentials image (the brand image).

As well as the brand identity ,also the brand image represents a cognitive component of the brand. The image of a brand is, in fact, a psycho-social concept, i.e. the subjective perception of the brand that is defined in the consumer's mind.

In fact, what influences the perception of the brand image are not technical and functional aspects of the product or service itself but the communicative marketing campaign that is developed and based on the target to reach.

We can state that a key element for a brand, is to be identifiable, recognizable and detectable, and this can be done through the following elements: the name (or brand name); the symbol-logo (or brand mark) and the pay-off (or tagline). In fact, what distinguishes a branded product from a non-branded product and assures value, is the perception developed by consumers on its features, on its name and on its significance, as well as the company associated with that brand.

It becomes important to analyze also how the brand can carry out diverse functions, taking into account the subject, which can be either the customer or the producer.

Regarding the customer, the brand shall carry out the following functions: identification; warranty; guidance; customization; symbolism; playfulness; convenience and relationship.

For the seller, instead, the brand has the following functions: protection against imitations; competitive positioning; enrichment of the product; strengthening of the market power; capitalization; influence in internal relations (employees); influence in external relations (stakeholders).

The role of the brand, however, cannot be summarized in a simple list of functions, although they are referred to the customer or the producer, since the relational nature possessed by the brand is exerted toward different directions: towards the company and its products; towards the consumers; between consumers and consumers, i.e. relationships established among individuals; towards other brands operating on the market; towards the social imaginary.

Companies that do not have a strong brand are aware that, nowadays, it is not enough to offer

Figure 1.



the right product at the right time and at the right price to get the consumer.

The process that leads to consumer loyalty is long, complex and full of pitfalls, therefore it requires that the product is connected to a brand that is perceived by customers as a synonym of quality, assurance and excellence.

III. THE BRAND BUILDING STRATEGIES

The creation of an appropriate branding strategy can only depend on the basic principles of marketing: namely the process of responsible management useful to create and to provide customer satisfaction and consequently useful to lead the customer itself achieving happiness and satisfaction and, also, helpful to make the customer to reiterate the purchase.

In order to help the decision-making process returning practical and effective decisions, it is necessary to have a clear vision of the benefits required by customers and which are those provided by the product and therefore by its brand.

With regard to this statement, we have to consider four key elements:

1. The clients never see a product/a service like the selling company does. The company is aware of the various elements making the product but the customer, on the other hand, has a more superficial vision of the product itself. So, it is necessary to focus on the customer's vision in order to be a market-oriented.

2. Customers fell a product with their own point of view; due to their limited knowledge of the product, the customers pick up a key feature, normally the most evident, on which to base their perceptions. Tom Peters, an expert on business management practices, reporting a statement of the President of the People's Express, an American airline: "Coffee stains on folding tables suggest (passengers) that is not made an accurate engine maintenance".

This statement comes from the fact that the passengers have the little table under their eyes from the moment they board plane until to arrive at destination [4].

This represents a fundamental element in the overall evaluation of the service offered by the company. The result is that a salient feature for the customer and represents a marginal aspect for the company.

In this example, in fact, the airline has presumably more care about the condition of the engines than the coffee tables, but the engines are away from the view of the passengers, so they are not essential to the creation of passenger service value.

Similar process occurs when you judge a wine bottle label rather than the taste. In addition, it

important to state that there is not a unique perception of a product or a service because each subject has its own feeling, that in the case of the customer often does not affect the fundamental characteristic of the product.

3. Customer perception will focus on the benefits, which are often intangible. One of the most complicated assessments that the company could face concerns the irrationality used by the client to build his perceptions. The fact that the advantage is irrational does not preclude that this is still an advantage concrete and real.

For example, consumers want to purchase only products manufactured in their own country, are looking for an intangible advantage.

4. Customer perception is not always on a conscious level. The customer is not always able to motivate in a rational manner the purchase of a product: in fact the purchase is an emotional complex condition. That is why systems of investigation of the customer subconscious become important to understand which factors affect the purchase decision.

The brand, therefore, can be considered as a communication tool that a company has at its disposal to "make contact" and "interact" with the customer: it represents the meeting point between supply and demand. Through the brand, when this is strong, a company can communicate the product or the service, its distinctive character, its innovations without the information activities by intermediaries (distributors); so we can say that the brand "pre-sells" its products [6].

IV. CONCLUSION

We can state, in conclusion, that in order to consider the brand as an effective and efficient tool of connection and interaction with the consumer, two fundamental conditions must be present: 1. the brand should be able to feed the company and to feed itself through a continuous innovation; 2. the brand has to become a development platform for the company.

Companies, shifting to a strategy of relationship marketing, invest in all those elements able to communicate the values of competence, quality, excellence and confidence of which the brand is just the outward appearance. The brand, as already stated, represents also the main instrument of trust connecting the company with the consumer and helps to make this relationship durable and with loyalty.

The loyalty, the trust and therefore the purchase repeat obviously depend on the value that the brand has and how these values affect the customers.

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