



Branding: The Complete Story

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Abstract: To quote the marketing guru about his perceptions on brands, “Branding is expensive and time consuming and it can make or break a product.” But even though it is expensive and time consuming, it is a strong force that hardly anything today goes unbranded. Years back it was far away from imagination that commodities like sugar, salt, atta, maida, rice etc. would be sold in branded packets today. Today, one goes to a shop asking for Ganesh Maida, Tata Salt, Aashirvaad Atta and not unbranded maida, salt or atta. Brands and branding have become an integral part of our daily lives. Consumers also feel safe to buy a branded product of a company than anything unbranded as brand names develop a sense of confidence among the consumers. However, in the present competitive market, brands are identified as an intangible asset that can be revenue generating in the long run.

At the most basic level, a brand is a mark of ownership and identity. Branding is a major challenge for organizations today. It is a challenging task for managers today to manage brands and branding in the competitive market today because of the high demand for branded products. In the present paper an effort has been made to study the concept of branding, its meaning, functions of brand, classification of brands according to value offered, branding, brand management and approaches to selecting brand names. Also a little of brand positioning, repositioning have been covered.

Introduction

A person without a name is difficult to identify, call, recall. So are products. We might call a person using their family name or title or surname. Similarly, we may recall or identify a product using its generic name but this does not allow one to identify the person or the product/brand in particular. Hence, what is required is a name in particular to recognize the person or the product/brand by a company. “I want to speak to Mr. Ray”, can mean the willingness to talk to Mr. Ray. But Mr. Ray can be any male member from the family of Mr. Ray, which is difficult to understand since there is no mention of the first name of Mr. Ray. When said, “I want to talk to Mr. Edward Ray”, it becomes clear that the person with who I want to talk is Mr. Edward Ray. Similar is the case of products.

A consumer visits a shop, he says, “Give me a packet of salt”. The shopkeeper might give him a packet of any branded salt or even unpackaged, unbranded salt. “Give me a packet of Tata Salt”, makes the shopkeeper give the specified product and brand to the consumer. This is branding. At the most basic level, a brand is a mark of ownership or identity. In simple words, a product is what you sell, a brand is the perceived image of the product you sell and branding is the strategy to create that image.

Definition

In the book Principles of Management, Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong defined brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol (or a combination of these) that identifies the maker or seller of the product”.

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defined brand as, “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 competition.”

According to Jeff Bezos, “A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person. You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well.”

According to Jack Trout, “People want to express themselves through brands- brands express a person’s personality and the people they like to be with.”

History of Brands

Brands were not created in the time of industrialization or the emergence of the capitalist market economy; they were rooted and developed far back and deep in history than that. Historians have identified the first brands in ancient history in Rome. A popular occupation of Rome was to manufacture clay pots and sell them in the markets to gather wealth. Clay pots were simple to make and the supply was very high. However, different craftsmen had different style and quality in the manufacturing of these clay pots. This became an issue as the craftsmen needed to differentiate their product from each other. This was when they decided to carve their names/initials in the pots they made. People then began to recognize and differentiate the pottery of different craftsmen and started to seek out particular ones, made by a certain craftsmen.

It is in ancient Rome that brands and practice of differentiating a product from others in the market emerged. Brand loyalty also developed for the first time when people sought out the clay pots made by a particular craftsmen. They could find the difference in clay pots and the craftsmen because of the initials carved on them and could hence recognize the better quality. A brand is something people recognize and immediately associate certain values to. The concept of brand management and brands have gained importance and evolved in recent times, it is however, rooted in the early potteries of Rome.

Brands have become a recognizable competitive tool for companies today and also for future times. The official starting point of companies actually investing into their intangible assets, such as their brand began in the 1870’s, when laws on trade marketing were changed, so that companies could legally protect their brands. The word brand has become the asset of all organizations today. Brands emerged to differentiate one product from the other because of the difference in quality of products made by different makers and craftsmen. However, the purpose of brands still remains the same today. They exist for consumers to immediately know what they are going to buy. Brands represent much more than just the name of a company or product.

Customer loyalty is made possible by brands. If all products would fall under generic goods then consumers would not have been able to differentiate it from other products. Brand loyalty would have failed. All those companies who made excellent quality products would not have ways to establish customer loyalty and increase their repeat sales. It is often argued that the dominating multinational corporations and brands are responsible for the unequal distribution of wealth and many other problems that lie behind globalization. But it is also argued on the other side that brands increase the motivation to become socially responsible, developed working conditions of third world countries and feed countries that lack resources.

Nike had a scandal to supposedly use child labour to manufacture their products in the third world countries once upon a time. However, it has moved forward today to become one of the main advocates for developing working conditions in factories located in the third world countries. Global brands have intervened to keep its own processes and operations in close control with their tight quality and ethical standards. Global brands are at the forefront of

developing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the pioneers are very much involved in corporate social leadership.

Brands have come up today to address the needs for products and companies to have recognizable identity. Brand management is about the identity that instills all the values, quality, functional and emotional benefits and aspirations into the product name. Creating and delivering the promise that match consumer's expectations with the companies brand/product/service is the key to brand success. Brands are not all similar. They can be divided into categories as to what they represent. For example, Proctor and Gamble is a corporate brand, Colgate being a consumer brand. One company may have ownership of several consumer brands that represent products and it can still have its own corporate brand identity that is reflected in employment, investor relations and corporate communications.

Concept of Brand and Branding

Brands are intangible reputational assets for an organization. They are the most valuable asset of many organizations. Intangible assets are those assets that cannot be touched; they have no physical form but are valuable for the company. It is an intangible marketing concept that helps people identify a company, product or individual. The term brand is often confused with things like logos, slogans or other recognizable marks which are marketing tools that help to promote goods or services. Brands act as an income and profit generator for a firm. Consumers buy brands that do not only exist on the packages of products but exist in the minds of the consumers. And these exist only as long as the consumer wants them and finds them useful.

Brands differentiates product from similar other products. It is how a company differentiates itself from peer brands. Brands are used in marketing, advertising, businesses which act as recognition to create and store value as brand equity for the object identified, to the benefit of the brand's customers, its owners and shareholders. Brands are the recognition, the identification that distinguishes a particular product of a company with that of others. The price of 1 kilogram packet of Tata salt is Rs. 19. A consumer who visits a grocery shop takes out Rs. 50 from his pocket and gives it to the shopkeeper and asks a packet of salt. Now the shopkeeper can give him 1 kilogram salt packet of Tata Salt, Annapurna Salt or any other brand of salt because he is not paying the exact amount for the product. But, when he asks for a packet of Tata Salt and gives Rs. 50, the shopkeeper returns him the balance amount and gives his Tata Salt. Thus, the product, price, and packaging- all serve as an assistant to the main recognizer, identifier- the brand/brand name.

Based on the type of value offered, brands are classified into three types:

- 1) **Image Brands-** These brands offer image value to the user. By owning or using this brand, one becomes catapulted to a certain league which he/she aspires to belong to. For example, Parker fountain pen offer a certain image: it shows Amitabh Bachhan using and recommending the pen, hence one who uses or intends to use the pen fall under the same group of people like Amitabh Bachhan. Parker does not talk about its features as smoothness or durability although it possesses all these features. What it highlights is the image it will confer on the user. Similar is the case of Coca-Cola and Pepsi that tries to convey certain image to the users. These brands are projected as the favourite drinks of famous, young sports stars and movie stars; so users of these brands can feel elated that they share certain commonalities with their favourite stars. In building image brands, advertising and other marketing communications tools play a very significant role. So is the case of Manyavar, using Ranveer Singh to highlight and project it range of male clothes for wedding and other occasions. This shall create a feeling of using the same brand of clothes for a wedding party as one's favourite hero.
- 2) **Functional Brands-** These brands highlight the functional value of their offers. The efficiency of the product features is basically highlighted for these brands. For example, Maruti Suzuki that presents its family affordable car, Alto 800 is conceived as a functional brand as it is made affordable to people- four wheeler transportation for a lower middle class family. Sunlight detergent powder is a functional brand that offers good washing and no other claim is made, nothing else is offered to the buyer. As the case of Nestle Maggi 2-minutes noodles that

highlight the purpose, function of using the product- a fast and easy to cook recipe that can be used to meet urgent hunger. The 2-minutes tag and instant noodles are the main highlights of the product that are projected in the product advertisements and also product packets. Thus, highlighting the main function of Maggi- meeting urgent hunger in just 2-minutes.

- 3) **Experience Brands**- This emphasizes the unique experience the user gets by interacting with the brand. The crucial marketing mix components for the success of experience brands are the people, the place and the process involved in the delivery of the experience. For example, Vistara Airlines promises not for frequent flights but for providing experience to its flyers. The airline excellent service in the flight, food, television and much more and highlights itself with a tagline- Fly the new feeling.

Functions of a Brand

Brands benefit both the organization and the customers. It helps consumers distinguish company, product and information about the brand and it acts as recognition for the organization. It acts as a communicator and identifier. They offer guidance, convey an expectation of quality and so offer help and support to those making purchasing decisions. Brands make it easy for consumers to get detailed information about products.

- **Brand informs**- It informs the consumer about the characteristics of the product, its attributes, and its image. It is the brand name that highlights the qualities of the brand and associates it to the consumer- his needs, want and demands.
- **Brand attracts**- It draws the customer's attention to the product and enables it to exist in a competitive world. The brand name itself attracts the consumer to the product and brand. Further, celebrities used in projecting the brand also attract the consumers.
- **Brand endorses**- The consumer gets reassured about the promise made by a product he/she is willing to buy about which he/she is not familiar with. Brand endorses the product. Many times brand names also act as product names as for the case of Xerox or Maggi. Many a times, people do not use the generic names of products to buy the product but uses the most recognized and popular brand name for the product category. People do not generally say they want to copy, they say Xerox.
- **Brand positions**- Brands deliver information about its positioning and the positioning of the product it belongs to.
- **Brand distinguishes**- Brand is increasingly becoming the factor of differentiation between two products with similar characteristics. The name of the brand often acts as a distinguisher. The brand name Manyavar signifies a product for men's wedding/party wear. The name Mohey signifies a product for women's wedding/party wear.
- **Brand simplifies**- Brand establishes a relationship between the company and the consumer through simplifying the loyalty, confidence between both the parties.
- **Brand communicates**- It communicates all information about the product, brand, organization to the consumers which benefits them in their purchase and usage.
- **Brand defines**- It creates an impression of belongingness to a defined group.
- **Brand adds value**- Transfer of image and status towards the buyer is promoted. This makes the buyer feel enriched as a result.
- **Brand satisfies**- It satisfies the consumers by meeting his/her expectations and sharing his/her values in turn winning the customer. Often the brand name satisfies the consumer before, during and after his/her purchase.

Branding

Branding is the process of giving a meaning to specific organization, company, products or services by creating and shaping a brand in consumer's mind. It is a means for people to identify and experience their brand and also present

them with a reason to select their brand over competitor's brands. The basic objective lies in attracting and retaining loyal customers and other stakeholders by delivering a product that is always aligned with what the brand promises. "Branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand". (Kotler and Keller, 2015)

A brand provides a decision-making shortcut to its consumers when feeling indecisive about the same the same product from different companies. Successful branding strategies help consumers to distinguish similar products and also add to a company's reputation. Brand is a valuable asset to the organization. If a consumer does not feel connected to the brand, he/she may not buy the brand. However, if a brand understands the consumer, offers the consumer with products that inspire the consumers, he/she may consume the brand.

Branding at its most basic level is made up of company's logo, visual design, mission, tone of voice and so on. Branding should be taken seriously by organizations. Branding highlights the product, the organization, the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of the product, the product positioning in the minds of the consumers. Without branding it would have been difficult for an organization to market or sell their products to the consumers, consumers would not have been able to differentiate the brand from competing brands. Hence, branding acts as oxygen to organizations. Branding is a combination of:

- Logo- A symbol adopted by a business or organization to identify its brand
- Name- The term which we use to identify the product
- Colour- A colour is used by an organization to describe or complement the brand
- Vision- The set of goals and objectives behind a brand that help guide its activities.
- Message- Value proposition of the brand which it conveys through the brand personality to set brand positioning
- Shape- The distinct shape of the product offered or the shape of packaging is focused
- Aroma- The distinct smell that the user experiences before, during, after he uses the offerings
- Graphics- The aesthetics which are different and uniform used in marketing messages.
- Sound- The sound used in marketing messages to reinforce the brand identity. Jingles, music are sounds that act as recognition and recollection to the brand.

Types of Branding

Branding is an important task of organizations today. It is not only about products, but also about services, organizations, places and even people. Some important types of branding are:

Product Branding

Product branding is where the offering is given an identity. The offering is given a personality to make it identifiable and differentiable in the market for its consumers. Product branding does not only mean the branding of products but both products and services. An example of product branding can be Coca-Cola that has its own colour, name, and tagline, personality through which one can recognize the brand and product even when the generic product is not present. Similar is the case of intangible products. For example, the Indian singing reality show of Indian Idol has its own logo, colour, style of writing, identity, characteristics and properties which differentiates it from others.

Personal Branding

All those personalities who have niche followership like politicians, celebrities, athletes and such other people have personal branding. This type of branding helps these people to create an image for themselves in front of their followers. This brand image is very useful as it not only helps them in creating new business opportunities for

themselves but also benefits the brand associated with them. An example is Shahrukh Khan who is himself a brand. He has niche followership which does not only help the brand he endorses to survive in the market but also flourish. For example brands like Byju's, Lux, and Big Basket and so on.

Corporate Branding

Branding an organization is as important as branding its product or service it sells. Corporate branding acts as an identity to the offering provider and opens new opportunities for him/her to extend his/her offerings portfolio easily. Corporate branding is very important and acts as a source to develop the reputation of an organization. It is important when it comes to hiring employees for the organization as employees always desire to work with a known company or a known brand. Some good examples are companies like Hindustan Unilever, ITC (Indian Tobacco Company), Dabur. PepsiCo also has several product lines in its product mix like Frito-Lay, Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Mountain Dew, Lay's, Tropicana and so on, all of which are owned and operated by the parent brand-PepsiCo.

Geographical Branding

Geographical or regional branding is used by the tourism industry that creates a brand out of geographical location by assigning it certain characteristics and experience to attract more visitors. For example, Gujarat tourism marketed its brand and place Gujarat using the well known face of Amitabh Bacchan as brand ambassador. It was a series of advertising and promotional campaign with the tagline Khushboo Gujarat Ki hosting Amitabh Bacchan in their advertisements, who have been seen visiting different places of Gujarat and endorsing the place in Gujarat tourism commercials.

Online Branding

This type of branding is also referred to as internet branding. It is how an organization holds its image and position in the market online. This could be building website, establishing a social media presence, publishing a blog etc.

Offline Branding

This type of branding happens off the web. From making business cards to marketing products and services offline are all types of offline branding. Examples of offline branding can be the food companies and how all the offline branding that they do, including the boxed, labels and everything else, is entirely and fully aligned to their colours, logos, and brand values to make sure that the customers remember what the brand looks like and can recognize it anywhere.

Service Branding

Service is all that a company or individual provides to its consumers. In simple words, you develop a trustworthy relationship with your customers using your service. Service branding plays an important role in economic growth and the value creation at the company level. Service branding puts more emphasis on the customers. The wide range of services provided by the brand Urban Clap in the various sectors like beauticians, mechanics and so on is an excellent example of service branding.

Approaches to selecting a Brand Name

There are different approaches in selecting a brand name:

1. Individual product branding- Under this branding approach, new names are given to new products, which has no connection to the existing brands offered by the company. The main advantage of this type of branding is it allows the organization offering the product to stand on its own, lessening the threat that can arise from or to other brands marketed by the company. The positivity in this approach is that it provides brands the capability to stand on their own and lessen the threats that can occur to the company. Like, if a company brand receives a negative publicity, this news shall less likely rub off the company's other brands that carry their own unique names.
2. Family branding- New products are placed under the umbrella of an existing brand in this type of branding. It immediately helps an organization to build market awareness and acceptance since the brand is an already established and known one in the market. However, a certain disadvantage of this type of branding is that the market has already established certain perceptions of the brand. Moreover, any negative publicity about one brand or product may create an effect on the other brands or products that share the same name. For example, Hindustan Unilever uses the name Kissan for its jam, squash, and ketchup.
3. Cobranding- When a marketer seeks to partner with another firm, that already has an established brand name, the mixture of the two on products are even more powerful than a single brand. The partnership has both firms sharing the costs and also the gains. For example, the cobranding of Visa and MasterCard offer cobranding options to organizations and companies. The cobranding strategy is designed to appeal to a larger target market. It allows both firms to tap to market segments where they did not have a strong position previously.
4. Private or Store branding- There are suppliers who produce products for other companies including placing another company's brand name on the product. This is generally seen in the retail industry where stores or online sellers contract with the suppliers to manufacture the retailer's own branded products. In some cases the retailers also markets their own brand so that the store shelves contain both brands.
5. No name or generic branding- Some suppliers produce products with no name or which may be called 'Brand less'. These are generally basic products and low priced which consumers may purchase as an alternative for branded high priced products. For example, dog food or certain over-the-counter medicines are available in generic form.
6. Brand Licensing- Under this, a contractual agreement is created by the company owning the brand name which allows others to produce and supply products carrying their brand name. This happens when a brand is not directly connected with a product category. For example, many famous children's characters have been licensed to manufacturing toys and foods under the branded character's name and image.
7. Name of founders- When companies introduce their brands/products with the name of founders or inventors like for example Colgate or McDonalds.
8. Corporate names combined with individual product names- Some companies combine their corporate name and the individual product name to give distinct brand name identity to their brands. For example, Cadbury using Cadbury Five Star, Cadbury Bournvita, Cadbury Mini Brownie and so on.

Brand Positioning

To build a strong brand, a logo and tagline will not do the job alone. It is important to know how the organization's brands will be seen by customers and how will it be different from that of the competitors offering similar products/services. Brand Positioning is an art. An art of placing the correct image and picture of a company's brand in the minds of the customers is brand positioning. Successful companies have positioned their brands in a way that whenever a problem is identified-the solution is the brand name or product of an organization that comes in to the

minds of the customers. For example, when it comes to preparing an instant food- it is Maggi by Nestle, when it is a morning breakfast cereal it is Corn Flakes, when it comes to discussing on costliest brands- names of Apple, Audi, Mercedes comes.

According to Philip Kotler, brand positioning is, “the act of designing the company’s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market.” In simple words, brand positioning describes how a brand is different from its competitors and how it fits into the minds of its customers. A positioning strategy, therefore involves creating brand associations in customer’s minds to make them perceive the brand in a specific way. Brand positioning strategies are directly linked to customer loyalty, consumer-based brand equity and the willingness to purchase a brand. Effective brand positioning can be hence referred to as the extent to which a brand is perceived as favorable, different and credible in customers’ minds.

Brand Repositioning

When a business alters a brand’s position in the market while keeping its identity the same, this is known as repositioning the brand. Changes in marketing strategy such as product, price, location, promotion are done in the process of repositioning. Repositioning is done at any time of the business. Generally done when there is a drop in sales and the organization realizes that some adjustments need to be made for further growth and development. This is essential to keep a brand alive and remain on top of customer requirements and desires. Thus, when the organization sees a drastic decrease in sales, they plan to reposition their products/brands so to come back in the competition and recover its business.

Thus, brand and branding are important functions of any organization for the establishment of a proper name in the market. Brands and branding are age old concepts that are gaining importance every passing day. When a child is born, he or she is introduced as a baby boy or baby girl in the hospital or often identified with the name of the mother or father. He or she does not have an identity of his/her own. He/she gets his/her identity when he/she gets a name from the family members. He/she now starts being called by his/her name accompanied by his/her family name.

Similar is the case of products. Products do not have any name of its own. Products are generic in nature. Hence, a customer asking for salt in a shop can get any brand of shop. When companies name their product and give them an identity, customers come to know the names of the product and now he/she visits a shop asking for Tata Salt. Thus, brands provide an identity to products and brand names are the terms used to recognize these products forever and create impact on the minds of the customers buying it, prospects seeking for it and every individual coming across it.

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