



Successful brands or key to any company's success

*Brandurile de succes sau cheia
reușitei unei companii*

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Abstract

“Some consumers would walk a mile just to find Camel cigarettes and would wait in line for hours to buy a Swatch. Others are attached to their cars or motorcycles, while teenagers spend hours and hours talking about hip clothing brands” (Schroeder & Salzer-Morling, 2006). The subsequent question is: are these people victims of manipulation, publicity or are they simply people who love symbols? Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2004) claim that a brand does not represent manipulation, that consumers choose certain brands as they see them as the best on the market.

Keywords: brand, marketing, global brands' value, consumers

Rezumat

„Unii consumatori ar merge o milă doar ca să găsească țigări Camel și ar sta la coadă ore în șir pentru a-și cumpăra un ceas Swach. Alții sunt atașați de mașinile sau de motocicletele lor, iar adolescenții petrec ore întregi vorbind despre brandurile de îmbrăcăminte care sunt la modă” (Schroeder & Salzer-Morling, 2006). Se pune întrebarea dacă acești oameni sunt victime ale manipulării, ale publicității sau sunt oameni care iubesc simbolurile. Chevalier și Mazzalovo (2004) consideră că brandul nu înseamnă manipulare, ci pur și simplu consumatorii aleg anumite branduri deoarece consideră că acestea sunt cele mai bune de pe piață.

Cuvinte-cheie: brand, marketing, valoarea brandurilor globale, consumatori

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Introduction

When a company creates a good brand, consumers will buy it and thus, it will become a value for the company. According to experts, the value of a brand does not stand just in its capacity to attract buyers: “Consumers perceive the brand as a set of values that they appreciate and consequently they tend to

reject any similar products that do not express these values” (Murphy & Hart, 2000). Thus, brands are durable values as long as they are well kept and continue to offer consumers what they desire.

Brand owners must always be sure that their brands maintain their quality and value. They must preserve communication with the client and must continuously adapt to a permanently changing society. The brand may serve as a shield and protect the managers if they fail when it comes to quality or if they are incompetent. It can be said that brands are capable to survive in even harder conditions. However, we must acknowledge that people are not naïve, not so easily manipulated and they will not support a brand which makes no effort to uphold itself.

Branding: marketing’s key instrument

Since time immemorial, goods manufacturers have used the brand to differentiate their products. Through brand, products are rapidly identified by consumers and when they wish to purchase something, they can recognize more easily the coveted products. Recently, manufacturers’ practice of using brands has widely developed. Nevertheless, a brand’s function has remained unchanged: to facilitate product identification and to offer consumers freedom of choice.

Brand has expanded in various directions:

- Firstly, intellectual property has been legally recognized: labels, design, duplicating rights. These have become the owner’s acknowledged rights.
- Secondly, the “brand” term was expanded to the services realm. Thus, financial services, insurance services, chain stores, hotel suppliers refer to services offered in terms of brand in order to distinguish themselves from the competition.
- Thirdly, insubstantial factors have been more and more used to distinguish products; these can be: size, design, presentation form and price. For example, cigarettes A can be identical with cigarettes B, while sales for type A can be 10 times higher.

Powerful brands are those adapted to the environment; therefore, they survive and develop. They can exist in the goods and services realm, they can refer to company or goods names, they can be specific products or larger product ranges. These brands share a very good quality-price balance.

A brand may be seen as a guarantee for products and services and allows consumers to easily choose, to quickly identify those products that offer value.

When a manufacturer decides to launch a new item on the market, he seeks a series of characteristics and combines them to create a unique result. Hence, a brand is a blend of elements such as aesthetics, rational and emotional. The result must be of good quality, the product must be different from the competition so that the buyer will have a reason to choose it.

A brand is a mixture of elements and values that the consumer associates with the product. The brand is created when marketing adds value to a product and sets it apart from other similar goods. When we say value we refer to perceptions, beliefs concerning a certain product which determine the buyer to purchase it. The brand’s value is frequently expressed through advertising. For example, the Volkswagen brand is associated with security and reliability. Their campaign’s slogan is: “If only in life we could rely on all things like we rely on Volkswagen”. This message has generated 30 million pounds in

profit in the United Kingdom in just 3 years. British Airways “The world’s favorite airline” promises to make flights comfortable and to always get on time. The fact that British Airways focused on the consumer and made his desires its center of attention determined the campaign’s success

Also, it must be said that the diversity of choice puts genuine pressure on those that produce and distribute products or services in terms of offering high quality, exceptional value as well as large purchase possibilities. Moreover, finding possible ways to differentiate and secure competitive advantage is becoming more and more important. “Brands allow the buyer to confidently purchase in a world marked by a variety of choices” (Aaker, 2006). The buyer must not be an expert in the complexity of mobile telecommunications in order to choose between a mobile services supplier and another. He only needs to know the brand’s name, tariff and payment method to make an informal choice. As tariffs and payment methods are approximately the same between services suppliers, the brand and the appreciation shown by clients for that brand guide the purchase decision.

Branding is a creation process. It involves a great number of talented experts that must create something unique. Unfortunately, most brands are alike, they do not distinguish themselves from the rest of items on the market. In order to be unique, to attract people’s attention, brands must be “bold and courageous” (Chernatony, 2003). It can be claimed that “the true power of successful brands comes from their capacity to rise to buyers’ expectations. Or, differently said, they represent a kept promise, a “contract” between buyer and vendor: if the vendor respects the product’s quality requirements, the buyer will be satisfied; otherwise, the last will choose other vendor in the future” (Murphy, 1987).

Global brands

An important brand characteristic is that most trademarks are international (for example, McDonald’s attracts consumers from both Brazil and Hong Kong). In developed countries there are numerous brand consumers, and in these last years they have showed similar tastes and preferences. Of course, traditions and local tastes must be taken into consideration, but it has been proven that brands can be successful on international markets. The reasons why brands can count on consumers all around the globe are development of communications, travelling, teaching foreign languages in schools (especially English). However the most important reason why brands are international is that, no matter age or color, we are all people. A Coca-Cola has the same taste for an Indian teenager as it has for a Cuban boy. Brazilian or American couples will be equally pleased to go through Nikon photos.

Wherever we live and whatever our level of education may be, we are all attracted by brands. Still, brands must be adapted to the place’s specificity in order to be successful. With the creation of global brands, local ones survive harder and harder.

Principles guiding global brands

Interbrand, (Lessons Learned from Global Brands, 2006), after studying successful world brands, has elaborated a set of principles:

- *Recognition*: powerful brands enjoy recognition among consumers. These brands lead the industry they are part of (for example, BMW is associated with

performance in engineering and design and its owner with a person that has reached a certain financial and professional status).

- *Consistency*: the strongest brands reach a high level of consistency. McDonald's is a very good example of a brand which has promoted a global common message. However, this company has known how to adapt to each region's specificity. Thus, in France, McDonald's restaurants are designed like cafes (the chairs are not made of plastic and are not attached to the floor), while the menu is adapted to the local culture.

- *Emotion*: a brand that does not trigger emotions is not a real brand. A brand must be a symbol, a promise in which people can believe and desire to connect with. In this way, companies are winning loyal clients. In order to reach this goal, brands are using different customers' culture, values and aspirations. For example, Nike addressed the athletes in people without taking into account people's capacity to become sportsmen. Therefore, it has enriched the target market for its products.

- *Uniqueness*: powerful brands stand for great ideas. Through uniqueness, a brand may become both an internal and international leader. Brands use all means of communication to make themselves known on international markets. Apple used creative marketing to address customers, yet, at the same time, was careful that its employees assimilate the “innovation” concept. The company became one of the most recognized in the technology field we all use on a daily basis. It has occupied this position due to its knowledge of clients' emotions and habits.

- *Adaptability*: a global brand must respect the needs, tastes and desires of people all around the globe. HSBC has known how to do it and succeeded in selling its financial services as it was aware of patterns and practices in each country. In this way, it has managed to win a competitive advantage both locally and globally.

- *Management*: Strong brands' success depends on the importance given to the brand by the company's top management. The leader must always articulate the brand and make public the company's strategy. This represents a step ahead and assures us that the brand will constitute a significant aspect for the organizational culture. There are several characteristics of management applied by global brands. Some of them are:

- *Intuition*: top brands infer consumer's desires. After we discover what clients want, we must make sure that they correctly perceive the brand created. It is important to set the brand's general lines. However, they might obstruct innovation and diminish the brand's relevance. Brands are dynamic, they change and those who manage them must always adapt to the new. In the case of global brands, the messages transmitted are differently felt by the public.
- *Team work*: global brands demand a global management team. This regional and international organization is meant to maintain the brand's leadership. Companies that have a greatly diversified brand portfolio prefer having a separate brand manager for each brand. International managers carry out performance analysis and have the authority to use resources in order to implement decisions to improve it. The management team at international level presents reports concerning the activity of the company's executive director, and ideally, the director gets involved in decisions connected to the brand. The management team at international level takes care of improving the brand's image. This team is often a council that may include company representatives and business partners.

- *Investments*: intangible assets include most of the company's value. These assets require investments and a proactive management. Successful companies, as well as managers, support the idea that important amounts of money must be spent for communication.
- *Measuring systems*: in order to support a brand for a long time, a measuring of that brand must be made. Measuring does not only help to develop the brand and to emphasize the best ways of creating it, but also assists the management team in monitoring brand consistency at global scale. This measuring entails general opinions (preferences, loyalty, recommendations), brand image characteristics, perception of services/products and brand value. Through measuring we become aware of the brand's value. These informations can accelerate the decision process and protect against competition.

This list of elements that must be taken into account when building a brand is not finite. There are still many factors such as: superior products and people, client orientation as well as continuous focus on creativity and innovation.

Relevant aspects for building a brand

For the customer, the brand means value. We live in a world where we do not know what is real and what is not. If we succeed in making our customers become aware of the brand's quality and consequently back up that brand, then we will make it in the business world.

Experts consider that building a strong brand involves keeping in mind the following aspects:

- *Relevance for the market*: the brand must focus on aspects important for the target customers.
- *Consistency in behavior*: consumers must count on the fact that every time they use a company's products/services they will have the same feeling. This is the only way to win customers' loyalty: through dedication and consistency.
- *Building relationships*: a brand does not represent a logo or an advertising strategy. The brand's power comes from the relationship the organization establishes with the clients. The tighter this relationship will be, the better the business will be, while clients will recommend the product to their friends or to other business partners.
- *Consumers must be rewarded for their loyalty*: consumer's loyalty represents the brand's foundation. If the organization has a stable and close relationship with the target public, then it has both a powerful brand and business.
- *Reputation does not have a price*: the only way for a company to succeed in business is to build a good reputation and a brand to support it. Reputation is the business card of a firm's connections, of the people it works with and of the public in general.

Conclusions

“A brand represents the promise of value that customers will receive” (Pearson, 1996). In an extremely complex and competitive world – where it is harder and harder to separate reality from fiction – consumers' support in creating a brand is the key to a successful business.

A brand can be tested to see the power of the loyalty it generates. The only way for an organization, a nation or a city to be successful is through a good reputation, and a brand can help them attain it. Success brands are capable to pass the test of time. In order to develop a brand that will last forever, it is necessary to leave behind short term ways of thinking and action. As an example, it is not very relevant how much brands like Coca-Cola, Ford or General Electric have changed over time. What is truly significant is that they can rely on the brand's capital that they have created by convincing customers to trust it. The more the people who believe in an organization's brand, the more they will contribute to disseminating the entity's positive reputation. If a brand's image is clear, distinct, easily understood and expresses a unique benefit which people believe in, then this will certainly lead to reaching the goals set by the brand strategy.

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