
A Conceptual Outlook Concerning Brand Management

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Abstract: According to the American market association (2010), brand is a term, symbol, name, design, term or any other attribute that can be used to identify the products or services of the company. Globalization has increased the competition in market, education has increased the level of customer awareness about the products, increased level of income has made people brand users and social aspect has made people using branded goods a symbol of social image. Thus, it is very important to understand for a marketer that having a brand is not enough but the effective brand management is also important. Everyday new products, substitutes are coming in the market with innovative features, and attractive prices. In this situation, it is one of difficult issue or challenge to deal with brand management. It is important question before the managers to know that how to maintain the brand equity in the continuously changing environment, where the needs and expectations of the customers are changing continuously. The three important elements of brand equity are brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty. Brand awareness shows the level of customers to identify the product of the company, brand associations shows the associations between brand and the customer and brand loyalty shows the loyalty of the customers towards the brand. These three elements of the brand equity help in managing a brand by the company.

Keywords: Brand, Branding, Brand management, Brand Equity, Brand Awareness, and Brand Loyalty.

INTRODUCTION:

Today the life of a common people is crowded with various brands. The moment we wake up, we start using brands, toothpaste, bath soap, shampoo, shoes, clothes, perfumes, bread, biscuits, food items, bags, laptops, television, refrigerator, car, bike etc. We are so obsessed with the concept of brands that we cannot imagine our life without brand. From youngster to old age everyone is dependent on brands. Unlike the earlier times when people used to opt for the basic necessities, today's life style is restricted to brands.

According to the American market association (2010), brand is a term, symbol, name, design, term or any other attribute that can be used to identify the products or services of the company.

Globalization has increased the competition in market, education has increased the level of customer awareness about the products, increased level of income has made people brand users and social aspect made using branded goods a symbol of social image. Thus, it is very important to understand for a marketer that having a brand is not enough but the effective brand management is also important. Everyday new products, substitutes are coming in the market with innovative features, and attractive pricing. In this situation, it is one of difficult issue or challenge to deal with brand management. It is important question before the managers to know that how to maintain the brand equity in the continuously changing environment, where the needs and expectations of the customers are changing continuously. Brand is the best way to make your product differentiate from others. Value addition to the customers by the brand is another important issue. The task of brand management becomes more difficult to the companies having more than one or two brands. Researchers have discussed the concept of brands, and brand equity but the concept of brand management have been ignored. There is a lack of researches in the area of brand management. Customers of the company are highly influenced by the strength or value of a brand. Strong brand can be considered as valuable assets for a company (Melin, 2001).

Objectives of the study:

The main objective of the study is to make review of literature on the brand management practices and the related concepts in the companies.

Research Methodology:

Current study is descriptive in nature. The study is based on the secondary data purely. Researchers have collected the research papers, PhD thesis, master thesis, newspaper articles, websites, corporate blogs and various other online resources to get a deeper understanding of the concept of brand, brand equity, brand

identity and brand management. Researcher has presented the intensive literature in a summarized form to discuss the concept of brand management.

Discussion on Brand Management

Brand management is all about managing a brand. It is related to the brand equity, brand identity, brand dimensions, problems related to brand building and the guidelines for brand management. All these concepts have been discussed in detail in the following section:

1. Brand Equity

Brand equity can be defined as the value added to a product, trade, customers or to the company Farquhar (1989). Brand equity is used by the companies to make their products or services differentiated from other competitors in the market and making their products more powerful by equipping all the products with brand equity Keller (2002). Brand equity includes both the assets and liabilities attached to a particular brand (Aker, 2002). The brand assets can add value to the customers and the firm. Brand equity can be defined in many ways such as (Balachander, 2003):

- Brand equity helps the customers in accessing, interpreting and processing the information about the products of the company.
- Brand equity helps in retaining the existing customers and attracting the potential customers and helps in increasing the brand loyalty.
- Brand equity helps in building the confidence of the customers in the products of the company.
- Brand equity can also help in brand extensions.

One of the biggest advantages of brand equity is that it works as a barrier to the new entrants in the market (Bahadir et al., 2008). The goal of branding process is to achieve the high brand equity. The value of brand equity completely depends on the process of branding. Thus, it is very important to study the various factors and the elements of brand equity. Aaker (1991) has stated in his research that there are three main elements or factors that helps in creating brand equity namely; brand associations, brand awareness and brand loyalty. All these three factors have been discussed in the detail in the following section.

1.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness show the awareness, knowledge or the level of information of customers related to a brand. The ability of the customers to recognize a particular brand under different settings. In order to create brand awareness among the customers it is necessary to give some identity to their products. Brand awareness can be in two forms namely; brand recall and brand recognition (Ailawadi et al., 2003).

Brand recall can be defined as the ability of a customer to recall a product while thinking about for purchasing that product category. This is main goal of branding to make highest place in the mind of the customers about their product so that every time a customer recall about a particular product category, only their product should come in their mind.

Brand recognition can be defined as the ability of the customers to recognize or verify a brand before they comes in contact with the brand. Most of the customers select the same brand to which they have been exposed earlier instead of going for a new and unknown brand. Thus, the familiar brand may increase the brand equity to the company and creates brand loyalty among customers.

Brand recall shows the deeper level of brand awareness than the brand recognition (Keller, 1997). Brand equity will be high of the products that can be easily recognized and recall by the customers. If the customer is thinking about a particular brand before purchasing the product then it shows that the customer is aware about the brand and also shows the intention of the customer to buy that particular brand. Brand awareness shows that customer is associating your brand with the purchase intentions and a positive association between the brand and purchase intention of the customers can enhance the level of brand awareness among customers.

1.2 Brand Associations:

Brand associations is something linked to the brand of the company. Brands brings many kind of associations to the mind of the customers. Farquhar & Herr (1993) stated in their research that the associations that a brand can bring to the mind of the customer can be; product attributes, types of product, or the several usage of the product. Association show the level of strength, usually the association will be high and stronger if it is based on the previous experiences of the customers with the brand. Brand association can be very helpful for the companies and for the customers as well in the following ways:

- Process, interpret or access information: Brand association can be helpful in interpreting the information about a brand and to summarize the brand information also.
- Differentiating the product or brand: Brand association helps in differentiating the brand of the company from other competitors in the market.
- Creating reasons to buy the product: Brand association also helpful in creating various reasons before the customers to buy a particular product or brand. It gives the basis to buy a particular product and also creates

the brand loyalty among customers. Brand associations provides the information to the customers which they can use while taking decisions for purchase.

- Forming positive customer attitudes or feelings: Brand association can help in stimulating positive attitude among the customers that is directly related to the brand of the company. Celebrity endorsement is a method used to create positive attitude of the customer towards the products or brand.

Brand associations can be categorized in to three broad categories namely; attitude, benefits and attributes.

Brand attitude can be defined as the association of brand with the overall evaluation of the customers. Brand attitude shows the behavior of the customers towards a particular product or brand. Positive brand attitude shows the high level of brand association of customer with the brand and high level of brand loyalty along with brand awareness. While the negative brand attitude indicates the low level of brand loyalty and it can also show the high level of brand awareness along with negative experiences of the customers in past, towards the products or brand.

Second category of Brand associations is benefits. There can be three types of benefits to the customers from the product namely; experiment, symbolic or the functional benefits. Personal values that a customer connects to the product or brand is known as benefits. Customers believe that the product will provide functional benefits means the product will be a solution to their problem, product will help in meeting their social needs and last the experiment benefits which means that how they feel, sense, or smell, taste; while using the product (Keller, 1997).

Attributes can be defined as the characteristics, or features of a product or service. Attributes can be of two types namely; attributes of a product and non-product related attributes. Product attributes are the features of the products such as; physical attributes of a product viz. size, shape, weight etc (Aker et al., 2001). these are directly affect the performance of the product while non-product related attributes are those which are not directly related to the products which have no relation to the performance of the product such as; packing attributes of products. Brand loyalty is a result of high brand awareness and high brand association among the customers. Brand loyalty helps the company to earn huge sales turnover in long run due to repeated purchase and word of mouth marketing.

1.3 Brand Loyalty:

Ford (2005) stated that there can be an increase in sales due to the increase in the customers or increase in the quantity purchased by the same number of customers. Brand loyalty can be defined when there is an increase in the sales of the company when few people have started buying the product of the company in large quantity instead of a situation where the large number of people are buying the product of the company in small quantities. Brand loyalty is considered as the core factor required to create brand equity. Brand loyalty is the most important factor to be considered while measuring the value of a brand. Brand loyalty leads to the stability in the profits and sales of the company. Marketing cost is high when the company need to attract the new customers while the cost of retaining the existing customers will be less for the company. Thus, it can be said that the brand loyalty helps in decreasing the marketing cost of the company. Brand loyalty creates a hurdle to the new entrants to the market as it cost very huge to change the mindset of the customers towards an existing brand or to replace the old brand with a new brand. Melin (2001) has also argued in the favor of brand loyalty and stated that brand loyalty helps in widening the customer base of the company, the primary goal of branding is to increase the number of loyal customers in company. Brand loyalty helps in developing long term relationships with the customers, this can help in sustainable development of the companies. Brand loyalty can get affected by various factors such as; product quality, product price, product features, brand, brand awareness, brand association and the experience of the customers. Experience creates a bond between the customer and the brand. If the experience of the customer is positive while using the product then the association of the customer will be positive, attitude of the customers will be positive and the brand loyalty will be high among the customers towards the brand. In contrast to this, if the experience of the customers is negative while using the product then the association of the customer will be negative, attitude of the customers will be negative and the brand loyalty will be low among the customers towards the brand. In case of negative experience the brand awareness will be high among the customers.

Thus, the three important elements of brand equity are brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty. Brand awareness shows the level of customers to identify the product of the company, brand associations shows the associations between brand and the customer and brand loyalty shows the loyalty of the customers towards the brand. These three elements of the brand equity helps in managing a brand by the company.

2. Brand Identity

Krake (2005), brand building process requires huge resources to be invested by the companies; in order to create brand equity there is a need to have brand identity among the customers. Organizations should consider the internal environment including culture, and strategic decision making, during brand building process (Bjerre,

Heding and Knudtzen (2009). Melin (2001) has defined brand identity as the value on which a brand can stand in the market.



Source: Brand Identity Model by Bjerre et al. (2009)

2.1 Brand Identity Model

Bjerre et al. (2009) have discussed a model for brand identity which considers both the internal and external aspects of an organization that plays an important role in brand building process. According to the brand identity model there are four components of brand identity two are internal namely; corporate identity and organizational identity and two are external namely; image and reputation.

Internal aspect of the organization is related to the strategic and visual perspective of the brand equity and brand itself. Strategic perspective in terms of corporate philosophy such as mission statement, and vision statement. Visual perspective is related to the attributes of the brand which are visible such as; logo, color, smell, touch or name of the brand. Thus, the brand identity model tries to connect the brand attributes, and corporate strategies to the brand identity. According to this model, image and reputation of the company depends on the corporate strategies. Corporate identity provides the strategic directions to the company and conveys the visual attributes of the brand.

Organizational identity is an important component of the brand identity. Organizational aspect includes the behavioral and cultural aspects, which is closely linked to the employees' commitment and employees' performance. According to the brand identity model employees of an organization are responsible for the services delivered by the company. Employees play an important role in the performance of a brand. Brand image and reputation get affected by the employees' performance and employees' behavior. Organizational culture can be improved by incorporating business ethics and values in the culture, which will ultimately affect the brand image and reputation of the company. Some researchers have found no significant relationship between employees and brand identity in long run.

The primary goal of branding is to set same image of the brand in the minds of all the stakeholders. Brand image is one of the important elements when a customer think about purchasing the product. Corporate image is the image of the company in the minds of the customers about the company. Through corporate image, it sends formal and informal signals to their customers or stakeholders. Continuous check on the corporate image will help the company in improving their brand identity.

There is a difference between image and reputation. Reputation is something you earn by your behavior in long term. The evaluation of the brand identity by the customers is measured using the reputation. Reputation of a corporate can be enhanced using the effective communication policies. If a third independent party, communicates about the reputation of the company then it will have a long term effect on the customers' brand evaluation process.

3. Brand Value Dimensions

(Gad, 2000) have discussed three different dimensions through which brand can add value to the customers beyond the value of the product. This extra value added can build a strong relationship between the customer

and the brand and can also help in increasing the value of brand equity. Researchers have discussed three dimensions namely; mental dimension, social dimension, and spiritual dimension, which can be used to increase the value to the customers (Dickinson and Barker, 2007).

3.1 Social Dimension

The social dimension is related to the social aspects of the customers. Purchasing decision of the customers gets influenced by the social dimension of the brand. Trademark, logo or the visual attributes of the brand make a customer feel associated with the other social groups, when they see other peoples from their social groups using same brand. Thus, using a brand gives a sense of belongingness to the customers with the social groups using same brand (Berger et al., 2006).

3.2 Mental Dimension

Social dimension is related to the connection between the customer and the society while the mental dimension is related to the thinking of a customer about themselves. A brand should be able to change the thinking of the customers about themselves. A good brand always enables customers to get new insights about themselves.

3.3 Spiritual Dimension

Spiritual dimension is related to the social responsibility of a brand both at the global level and towards the local community. A company using the spiritual dimension to add value to their customers, should be consistently align with their words or promises that they have declared about their brand to make it differentiated from others.

4. Problems in Brand Building

Aaker (1996) have described a model to discuss the obstacles or the problems faced by the marketers during brand building process.

1. **Competition for Price:** there is a huge competition in the retail market due to the price offered by private brands. Earlier these private brands were limited to low price and low quality products but now these brands have improved their image which has led to fierce competition in the market. So, the price is the factor which is mainly an obstacle while building a brand.
2. **Propagation of competitors:** Increasing customer data base is again an obstacle in building brand by the marketer. If a company wants to increase the customer base then it will be difficult to maintain a unique brand identity among large number of customers. Thus, the brand identity is easy to maintain in the focused target group and to position the brand narrowly.
3. **Disintegrating Media and Markets:** Different types of media and market create a problem in brand building process. Marketer should try to make coordination between various types of media channels and should convey the same message in different markets, in order to win the trust of the customers.
4. **Complexity in brand relations and brand strategies:** Brand building process can be a success if the relationships between brands are simple not complex and the strategies related to the brands is simple and easy to understand and communicate.
5. **Internal pressure:** Internal pressure to change the strategies related to a brand also creates a problem while building a brand. The internal pressure is sometimes so high and effective that it stops the brand to achieve its full and real potential.
6. **Lack of innovation:** lack of innovation or creativeness also creates a problem while building a brand. Companies who got satisfied with the past performance of the brand do not take interest in making it more innovative as per the need of the market or according to the strategies of the competitors.
7. **Lack of investment:** Companies, who enjoy successful brand positions in the market, try to invest more funds in the business diversification instead of making investment in the same brand to make it more valuable and competitive. Thus, lack of investment in the successful brands is another problem in brand building.
8. **Short term results:** the biggest problem in brand building process is that there is always a pressure to get the results from a brand in short term while the fact is that, branding is a process that will give results in long term. Due to this, the program for brand building gets affected adversely.

5. Guidelines for Brand Management

(Lassen, Kunde, & Gioia, 2008), stated in their research that small and medium enterprises take branding as an expense instead of an investment. This is the fact that new products cannot attract customers without branding and in long run organizations need to establish their brand no matter what is the size of the company. Strong brands can be built only when the managers look at the long term perspective of the branding (Czellar, 2003). Researchers have given guidelines for managing brand in the larger, small and medium enterprises.

1. Brand essence need to be identified

The first step of brand management is to identify the brand and its attributes. Unique features, personality, values and culture associated to the brand. Until and unless, managers identify the essence of their brand they will not be able to manage it in a proper manner.

2. Focusing on the target group

Researchers have argued that brand management is affected by the practices of the companies to attract the customers. Companies should focus on the target group. It is always better and convenient to attract few people with strong influence over the sales than large number of people with less influence on the sales of the company. In case of limited marketing resources, company can adopt the approach to focus only on target group.

3. Selecting the right media

Researchers have further added to the discussion that focusing on target group by choosing right media is a key combination to manage the brand by an organization. The choice of media is again depends on the size of the resources with an organization. By focusing on target group with right choice of media can help in value enhancement of an organization.

4. Consistency in concept

It is very important to formulate a statement related to the branding concept and there should be consistency in the statement. The goal of the brand management is to set that brand statement into the minds of the customers by consistently focusing and practicing it in their business.

5. Consistency in communication

There should be a consistency in the communication of the values and brand statement by the organization to all the stakeholders associated with the brand. Consistency should aim for long term because branding is something done for gains in long term periods.

6. Renewal brand

Along with the consistency, there should be flexibility as well. The brand should be renewed from time to time to make it more alive, by using innovative and creative ideas. Renewal of brand creates a positive image of brand in the mind of the customers.

CONCLUSION

There are three main elements or factors that helps in creating brand equity namely; brand associations, brand awareness and brand loyalty. Brand recall shows the deeper level of brand awareness than the brand recognition. Brand equity will be high of the products that can be easily recognized and recall by the customers. If the customer is thinking about a particular brand before purchasing the product then it shows that the customer is aware about the brand and also shows the intention of the customer to buy that particular brand. Brand awareness shows that customer is associating your brand with the purchase intentions and a positive association between the brand and purchase intention of the customers can enhance the level of brand awareness among customers. Thus, the three important elements of brand equity are brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty. Brand awareness shows the level of customers to identify the product of the company, brand associations shows the associations between brand and the customer and brand loyalty shows the loyalty of the customers towards the brand. These three elements of the brand equity help in managing a brand by the company.

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