

Course Title : Marketing Concepts for Managers

Assignment : Week 2 Key Concept Exercise - Building the brand

Name : Chrysa Kirmitsaki

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A Strong Brand for Competitive Advantage

Reviews of other Consumers, previous positive experience with a specific brand, the feeling that we get when interacting with a product, the Company's social media presence, and many other factors influence our everyday purchasing decisions.

However, one of the most crucial determinants when buying something is the Company's Brand (Chovanová, Korshunov and Babčanová, 2015). A strong and well-managed brand has a significant effect on consumer behaviour and adds more value to the product for the customers. As a result, the Company gains an important competitive advantage that helps it stand out from competition, increase the loyalty of its current customers and also reach out to new ones (Abimbola, 2010).

To understand exactly how a Brand drives our decision-making we can look at one of the most famous and recognized brands: Apple Inc. A global leader in its field the Company managed to create a brand that is the synonym for innovative, top quality tech experiences. Even with a couple of failures in their portfolio, it is very rare - even unthinkable - for the average Apple user to shift to another tech Company (Cbc-group.net, n.d.). What does this mean for Apple? Simply that they reached a point where with only mentioning their Brand they can inspire their users to have certain expectations and even experience feelings of pride when buying their products (Cbc-group.net, n.d.).

Managing to create a recognized brand and even more to maintain it is very difficult and expensive. But, as we realized in the small Startup that I'm currently employed, avoiding to invest on the branding can hinder the Company from grasping future opportunities that are critical for its growth and sustainability. Now that we've spent a couple of months working and supporting our Brand we saw a change in the way that our customers feel and talk about us, with many expressing their preference to stay with us even without getting at the moment all the benefits they would from using a similar service.

In conclusion, branding shouldn't be confused with the "brand's name" since it is much more than picking a catchy logo and running a couple of marketing campaigns in the Company's name. On the contrary, the brand can become the Company's most powerful tool to define how the Customers, the Market and the Stakeholders perceive it and what they will feel when hearing about it (Abimbola, 2010).

So what does it take to build a successful brand?

Building a Brand Identity

Understanding who are the end customers and the competitors (existing or potential), where the Company stands in the Market and what is the main goal consist the first step towards creating a brand identity. This can be done with a detailed user/market analysis followed by a SWOT to highlight those points that the Company must improve or protect its operations from. Studying the collected data can draw a clear picture of the true market reality and then the managers can proceed with deciding what is the appropriate message that the Company should communicate to its Customers. At this point, the Unique Selling Proposition can also be developed.

Once we had the message, my team was responsible for creating the Company's online presence in alignment with the brand - this means designing emails, ads, and campaigns following the brand guidelines. Everything we say and everything we show should be kindling specific emotions to our focus group. Lastly, the Marketing Manager is now asked to develop a PR strategy so that the right message is delivered in time to the right audience (Meranus, n.d.).

From a designer point of view, I consider Disney's approach to its brand as an excellent example of how to create consumer loyalty (Driving Retention, n.d.). Is not by chance that Walt Disney is considered one of the first experience designers (Dickerson, 2013). He understood how important is what the customers feel when interacting with one product or service that has the Company's brand name on it and how those emotions become the base of a strong bond between them and the Company (Dickerson, 2013). As a result, Disney today is a global leader with a wide variety of operations that span from movies to theme parks and from toys to family vacations.

In the end, the Brand acts as a reminder of how the user felt when using the product and moreover represents how the Company feels towards its Customers.

References

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