

Purpose-Driven Branding: Power of Branding Social Mission

SUNOOK PARK

California State University, Long Beach, U.S.A.

Korea Suul Institute, Seoul Korea

- I. Introduction**
- II. Understanding Social Mission Branding**
- III. Problems and Challenges in Social Mission Branding**
- IV. Case Studies in Private and Non-profit/Government Sectors**
- V. Practical Guidelines**
- VI. Conclusions**

Abstract

This article explores the significance of branding in social mission campaigns by both private and government sectors. It highlights how a well-crafted brand strategy can enhance the impact and reach of social initiatives, driving societal change and fostering community engagement. By viewing a brand as a living entity with its own energy and potential, organizations can create dynamic interactions and meaningful connections. Through a discussion of notable examples and practical guidelines, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for organizations to leverage branding effectively in their social mission campaigns.

Key words: social mission, branding, private sector, government sector, community engagement, living brand

I. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of branding has evolved beyond commercial purposes to encompass social missions. Organizations, both in the private and public sectors, are recognizing the power of a strong brand in driving social change. This article examines the role of branding in social mission campaigns, providing insights into effective practices and successful examples from both sectors. By understanding the importance of branding and viewing the brand as a living entity, organizations can enhance their outreach, mobilize resources, and create lasting impacts on societal issues.

II. Understanding Social Mission Branding

1. Defining Social Mission Branding

Social mission branding refers to the strategic use of branding principles to promote social causes and initiatives. It involves creating a distinct brand identity that resonates with the target audience and communicates the mission's values and goals. A successful social mission brand encapsulates the essence of the cause it supports, providing a clear and compelling message that encourages public engagement and support. Viewing the brand as a living entity means recognizing that it grows, evolves, and interacts dynamically with its environment, creating an ongoing dialogue with its audience.

2. Importance of Branding in Social Missions

Branding helps to increase visibility, credibility, and emotional connection with the audience. It enables organizations to differentiate their initiatives from others, attract support, and mobilize resources more effectively. A strong brand can build trust and loyalty among stakeholders, including donors, volunteers, and beneficiaries. It also helps in creating a consistent and recognizable image that can be leveraged across various communication channels, amplifying the reach and impact of the social mission. When treated as a living being, the brand can adapt to changes, respond to feedback, and continuously engage with the community in meaningful ways.

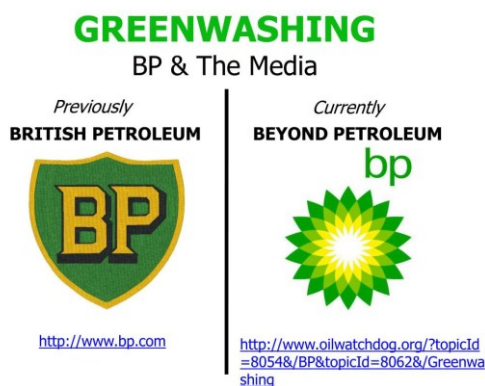
III. Problems and Challenges in Social Mission Branding

1. Problems in Social Mission Branding

1.1 Purpose-Washing

Organizations are often criticized for "purpose-washing" when their social mission appears insincere or merely a marketing tactic. This issue arises when there is a misalignment between the organization's actions and its stated mission and values, leading to skepticism and distrust among stakeholders. Transparency and genuine commitment are essential to avoid such criticisms.

Example: BP's "Beyond Petroleum" campaign claimed a commitment to renewable energy, but the Deepwater Horizon oil spill revealed a significant contradiction, resulting in severe public backlash.



1.2 Lack of Authenticity

Authenticity is crucial for successful social mission branding. Brands may face backlash if their efforts seem forced or disingenuous, or if there is a perceived disconnect between their message and actual practices. Building an authentic brand requires consistent and honest communication and actions that align with the brand's mission.

Example: H&M's "Conscious Collection" faced criticism for promoting sustainability while the brand's fast fashion business model remained unsustainable, leading to skepticism about its commitment.



1.3 Resource Constraints

Both private and non-profit sectors often struggle with limited resources. Effective branding demands significant investment in terms of time, money, and expertise. Smaller organizations may find it challenging to allocate sufficient resources for comprehensive branding efforts, which can impact the quality and reach of their campaigns.

Example: Livestrong Foundation struggled with resource constraints after the Lance Armstrong doping scandal, limiting its ability to maintain strong branding and continue its mission effectively.



1.4 Inconsistent Messaging

Consistency in messaging is key to maintaining a strong brand identity. Organizations may face difficulties if their messaging is inconsistent across different platforms and touchpoints, leading to confusion and weakening the brand's overall impact. A coherent and unified message is essential to reinforce the brand's mission and values.

Example: Dove's Real Beauty campaign promoted body positivity, but inconsistent messaging from its parent company Unilever, which marketed products through other brands(i.e.Lynx) that perpetuated traditional beauty standards, undermined its authenticity.



1.5 Overemphasis on Branding Over Action

There can be a tendency to focus more on branding and less on actual impactful actions. Stakeholders may criticize organizations that invest heavily in branding without demonstrating tangible results and outcomes from their social mission efforts. It is crucial to balance branding efforts with genuine actions that drive social change.

Example: Starbucks' "Race Together" campaign was criticized for being superficial and poorly executed, seen as a marketing stunt rather than a genuine effort to address racial issues.



1.6 Cultural Sensitivity

Social mission campaigns must be culturally sensitive and aware. Brands may face backlash if their campaigns are perceived as culturally insensitive or if they fail to consider the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their audience. Understanding and respecting cultural differences is vital to creating inclusive and effective social mission campaigns.

Example: Dolce & Gabbana's "DG Loves China" campaign was perceived as culturally insensitive and stereotypical, leading to significant reputational damage and a boycott in China.



2. Challenges in Social Mission Branding

2.1 Balancing Purpose and Perception

Organizations must carefully balance their social mission with public perception to avoid skepticism or accusations of "purpose-washing," where the mission is perceived as insincere or merely a marketing ploy. Transparency and authenticity are critical in maintaining the integrity of the social mission brand. Organizations should ensure that their actions align with their stated values and mission, and they must communicate their impact and efforts honestly to build and maintain trust with their audience. Viewing the brand as a living entity underscores the need for genuine interactions and truthful representations.

2.2 Resource Allocation

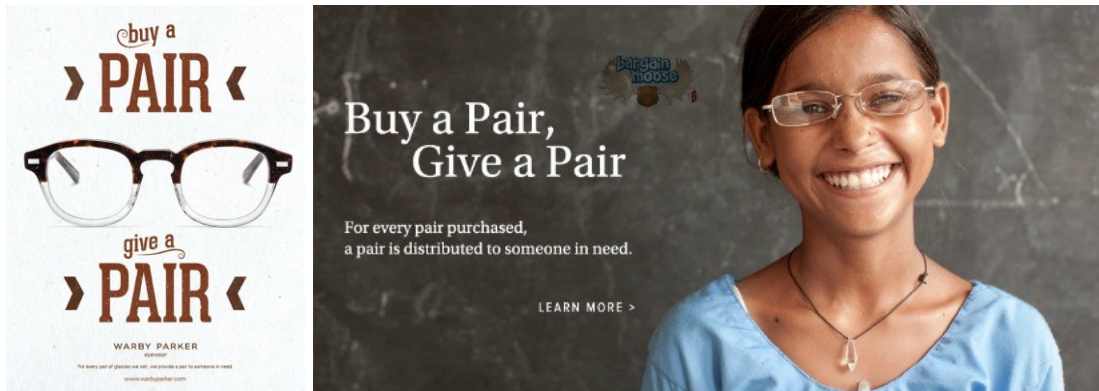
Effective branding requires significant resources, including time, money, and expertise. Smaller organizations or government agencies may struggle with these constraints, impacting their ability to create and maintain a strong brand. To overcome this, organizations can prioritize strategic partnerships, leverage digital tools, and adopt cost-effective branding strategies that maximize their limited resources. Ensuring a focused and consistent branding effort can help in achieving significant impact even with constrained budgets. A living brand approach emphasizes the importance of adaptability and resourcefulness in sustaining the brand's vitality.

IV. Case Studies in Private and Non-profit/Government Sectors

1. Private Sector Cases

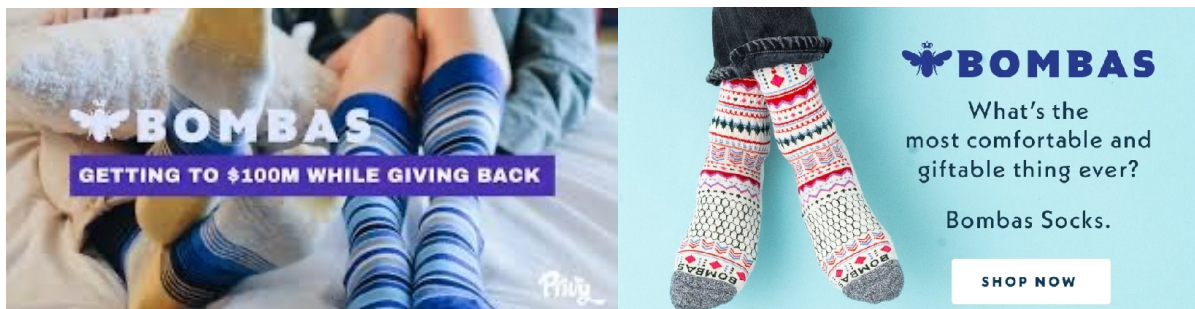
1.1 Example: Warby Parker

Warby Parker, an eyewear company, has built a brand around the social mission of providing glasses to those in need. For every pair of glasses sold, a pair is distributed to someone in need through their non-profit partners. This initiative, known as "Buy a Pair, Give a Pair," has helped Warby Parker establish a strong brand identity rooted in social responsibility. As a living brand, Warby Parker continuously engages with its community and adapts its mission to address emerging global eye care needs.



1.2 Example: Bombas

Bombas, a sock and apparel company, has integrated social good into its business model by donating a pair of socks for every pair sold. Recognizing that socks are the most requested clothing item in homeless shelters, Bombas has focused its mission on addressing this need. Their branding emphasizes quality and social impact, fostering a loyal customer base. As a living brand, Bombas evolves its product offerings and donation strategies based on community feedback and needs.



1.3 Example: Who Gives A Crap

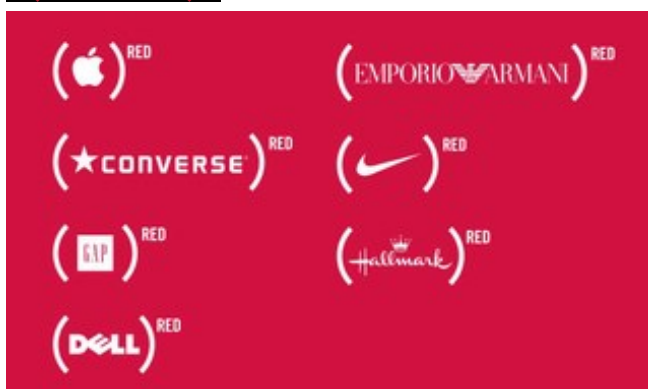
“Who Gives a Crap” is a toilet paper company that donates 50% of its profits to build toilets and improve sanitation in developing countries. Their brand is playful yet committed to serious social change, combining humor with a strong mission. This approach has resonated with customers who appreciate both the product and its purpose. As a living brand, Who Gives A Crap continuously engages with its audience, using feedback to enhance its impact and ensure the relevance of its mission.



2. Non-Profit and Government Sector Examples

2.1 Example: The Red Campaign

The Red Campaign, initiated by Bono and Bobby Shriver, partners with major brands to raise funds for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in Africa. By creating (RED)-branded products and partnering with companies like Apple, Starbucks, and Nike, the campaign has successfully raised awareness and funds. The (RED) brand engages dynamically with its partners and supporters, evolving its strategies to maximize impact and reach.



2.2 Example: UK's Change4Life Campaign

The UK's Change4Life campaign is a public health initiative aimed at encouraging healthier lifestyles to combat obesity. The campaign uses vibrant and engaging branding to promote physical activity, healthy eating, and overall well-being. By creating a lively and interactive brand, Change4Life has effectively engaged the public and encouraged positive health changes. As a living brand, Change4Life continuously updates its messaging and activities to address current health trends and challenges.



2.3 Example: New Zealand's "Love Food Hate Waste" Campaign

New Zealand's "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign aims to reduce food waste by educating the public on better food management practices. The campaign uses relatable and engaging branding to connect with consumers, providing practical tips and resources to minimize food waste. By promoting a sustainable and responsible approach to food consumption, the campaign has successfully raised awareness and changed behaviors. As a living brand, "Love Food Hate Waste" continually adapts its strategies to reflect new insights and trends, ensuring ongoing relevance and impact.



V. Practical Guidelines

1. Developing a Strong Brand Identity

1.1 Identify Core Values

The first phase of branding involves uncovering the meaning and reason for the brand's existence. This requires conducting both quantitative and qualitative research, along with focus group interviews with individuals who understand the problem and/or are directly affected by it. By the end of this phase, the brand should have a well-defined purpose and objective. The brand narrative will articulate these objectives and rationale, outlining the brand's core assets, positioning, and direction.

1.2 Naming and Visual Creation

Once the objectives and direction are established, the next step is to create the brand name and visuals. A memorable and emotionally resonant brand name can greatly enhance the branding campaign. Following the creation of the name, the brand identity can be visualized. This involves developing visual elements centered around the brand's symbol and/or logotype, supported by a cohesive color and typography palette. The visual language system, unique to the brand, functions like a language, offering endless possibilities to communicate the brand effectively and consistently.

1.3 Practical Implementation

The final phase of brand identity building is the practical and pragmatic implementation. This includes developing a website, creating campaign posters, advertisements, signs, branded merchandise, and launching social media campaigns. This stage ensures that the brand identity is consistently applied across all platforms and touchpoints, allowing the brand to interact dynamically with its audience and environment.

2. Engaging the Community

2.1 Foster Participation

Encouraging community involvement in social mission campaigns enhances authenticity and support. This can be achieved through events, volunteer opportunities, and interactive platforms. Active participation not only builds a sense of ownership among stakeholders but also amplifies the campaign's reach and impact. Creating opportunities for community members to contribute ideas, share experiences, and take part in initiatives can strengthen the brand's connection with its audience. A living brand thrives on active community participation, constantly evolving through these interactions.

2.2 Leverage Social Media

Social media platforms provide an effective way to reach a broad audience and promote the social mission. Consistent and strategic use of social media can amplify the campaign's message and drive engagement. Organizations should utilize various social media channels to share updates, stories, and calls to action, ensuring that

the content is engaging and visually appealing. Social media also offers valuable opportunities for direct interaction with the audience, fostering a sense of community and immediacy. A living brand uses social media to maintain an ongoing conversation with its audience, adapting to feedback and trends.

3. Measuring Impact

3.1 Set Clear Objectives

Define specific, measurable goals for the social mission campaign to track progress and assess impact. These objectives should align with the overall mission and branding strategy. Clear objectives provide direction and benchmarks for success, helping organizations to stay focused and accountable. For a living brand, these objectives may evolve over time as new insights and challenges emerge.

3.2 Collect and Analyze Data

Regularly collect data on key performance indicators and analyze the results to understand the campaign's effectiveness. This can help in making informed adjustments and improvements. Data collection can include metrics such as engagement rates, donation amounts, volunteer participation, and overall reach. Analyzing this data helps organizations to refine their strategies, optimize their resources, and demonstrate the impact of their efforts to stakeholders. A living brand uses data to continuously adapt and improve, ensuring sustained relevance and effectiveness.

VI. Conclusions

Branding with a purpose is a powerful strategy for amplifying the impact of social mission campaigns. By drawing on successful examples from both private and government sectors and following best practices, organizations can create meaningful and lasting change. As the landscape of social issues continues to evolve, the role of branding in driving social missions will only become more crucial. A well-defined brand that authentically represents the mission can engage and mobilize a broad audience, fostering a collaborative effort towards positive societal change. Viewing the brand as a living entity allows it to grow, adapt, and continuously interact with its environment, creating dynamic and lasting connections.

References

- Balcik, B. and B. M. Beamon. 2008. Facility Location in Humanitarian Relief. *International Journal of Logistics: Research and Applications*. 11(2): 101-121.
- Coppola, Damon P. 2015. *Introduction to International Disaster Management*. 3rd. ed. New York: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Garrido, Rodrigo A. 2020. Emergency Logistics for Disaster Management under Spatio-Temporal Demand Correlation: The Earthquakes Case. *Journal of Industrial and Management Optimization*. 16(5): 2369-2387.
- Heo, Jun Young and Ju Ho Lee. 2014. Study on Building a Disaster Management System Responding to Future Disaster-using Expert Survey Method. *Crisisonomy*. 10(10): 173-195.
- Jiang, Yiping and Yufei Yuan. 2019. Emergency Logistics in a Large-Scale Disaster Context: Achievements and Challenges. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 16: 1-23.
- Kapucu, Naim, Wendell C. Lawther, and Sommer Pattison. 2007. Logistics and Staging Areas in Managing

- Disasters and Emergencies. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*. 4(2): 1-17.
- Perry, Marcia. 2007. *Natural Disaster Management Planning: A Study of Logistics Managers Responding to the Tsunami*. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*. 37(5): 409-433.
- Phillips, Brenda D., David M. Neal, and Gary R. Webb. 2017. *Introduction to Emergency Management*. 2nd. ed. New York: CRC Press.
- Roberts, Kevin. 2004. *Lovemarks: The Future Beyond Brands*. New York: PowerHouse Books.
- Al Ries and Laura Ries. 2002. *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding: How to Build a Product or Service into a World-Class Brand*. New York: HarperBusiness.
- Marc Gobé. 2001. *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People*. New York: Allworth Press.