

Introduction to Brand Management

Meaning of Brand

Brand can be considered as the idea or image people have in mind when thinking about specific products, services, and activities of a company, both in a practical (e.g. “the shoe is light-weight”) and emotional way (e.g. “the shoe makes me feel powerful”). It is therefore not just the physical features that create a brand but also the feelings that consumers develop towards the company or its product. This combination of physical and emotional clues is triggered when exposed to the name, the logo, the visual identity, or even the message communicated.

Brands are different from products in a way that brands are “what the consumers buy”, while products are “what concern/companies make”. Brand is an accumulation of emotional and functional associations. Brand is a promise that the product will perform as per customer’s expectations. It shapes customer’s expectations about the product. Brands usually have a trademark which protects them from use by others. A brand gives particular information about the organization, good or service, differentiating it from others in marketplace. Brand carries an assurance about the characteristics that make the product or service unique. A strong brand is a means of making people aware of what the company represents and what are its offerings.

A product can be easily copied by other players in a market, but a brand will always be unique. For example, Pepsi and Coca-Cola taste very similar, however for some reason, some people feel more connected to Coca-Cola, others to Pepsi.

Let’s illustrate this again with water example. The product sold is water, but in order to convince people to purchase a particular water, companies developed different water brands, such as Evian, Perrier, Fiji or Volvic. And each one of these brands provides a different meaning to the product water:

- Evian makes you feel young
- Perrier is refreshing and bubbling
- Fiji Water is pure, healthy and natural
- ...and so on.

To a consumer, brand means and signifies:

- Source of product
- Delegating responsibility to the manufacturer of product
- Lower risk
- Less search cost
- Quality symbol
- Deal or pact with the product manufacturer
- Symbolic device

Brands simplify consumers purchase decision. Over a period of time, consumers discover the brands which satisfy their need. If the consumers recognize a particular brand and have knowledge about it, they make quick purchase decision and save lot of time. Also, they save search costs for product. Consumers remain committed and loyal to a brand as long as they believe and have an implicit understanding that the brand will continue meeting their expectations and perform in the desired manner consistently. As long as the consumers get benefits and satisfaction from consumption of the product, they will more likely continue to buy that brand. Brands also play a crucial role in signifying certain product features to consumers.

To a seller, brand means and signifies:

- Basis of competitive advantage
- Way of bestowing products with unique associations
- Way of identification to easy handling
- Way of legal protection of products' unique traits/features
- Sign of quality to satisfied customer
- Means of financial returns

A brand, in short, can be defined as a seller's promise to provide consistently a unique set of characteristics, advantages, and services to the buyers/consumers. It is a name, term, sign, symbol or a combination of all these planned to differentiate the goods/services of one seller or group of sellers from those of competitors.

Some examples of well known brands are Mc Donald's', Mercedes-Benz, Sony, Coca Cola, Kingfisher, etc.

Definition of Brand

According to American Marketing Association

“Brand is a name term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.”

According to Mellerowicz,

“Brand is defined as branded product as an ubiquitous finished product of consistent or increasing quality for private consumption with an identification mark, standardised amount, and appearance, acceptance in the market and existing consumer advertising.”

Brand management begins with having a thorough knowledge of the term “brand”.

It includes developing a promise, making that promise and maintaining it. It means defining the brand, positioning the brand, and delivering the brand. Brand management is nothing but an art of creating and sustaining the brand. Branding makes customers committed to your business. A strong brand differentiates your products from the competitors. It gives a quality image to your business.

Brand management includes managing the tangible and intangible characteristics of brand. In case of product brands, the tangibles include the product itself, price, packaging, etc. While in case of service brands, the tangibles include the customers’ experience. The intangibles include emotional connections with the product / service.

Branding

Branding is assembling of various marketing mix medium into a whole so as to give you an identity. It is nothing but capturing your customers mind with your brand name. It gives an image of an experienced, huge and reliable business.

It is all about capturing the niche market for your product / service and about creating a confidence in the current and prospective customers’ minds that you are the unique

solution to their problem.

The aim of branding is to convey brand message vividly, create customer loyalty, persuade the buyer for the product, and establish an emotional connectivity with the customers. Branding forms customer perceptions about the product. It should raise customer expectations about the product. The primary aim of branding is to create differentiation.

Branding is the process of giving a meaning to specific organization, company, products or services by creating and shaping a brand in consumers' minds. It is a strategy designed by organizations to help people to quickly identify and experience their brand, and give them a reason to choose their products over the competition's, by clarifying what this particular brand is and is not.

The objective is to attract and retain loyal customers and other stakeholders by delivering a product that is always aligned with what the brand promises.

Strong brands reduce customers' perceived monetary, social and safety risks in buying goods/services. The customers can better imagine the intangible goods with the help of brand name. Strong brand organizations have a high market share. The brand should be given good support so that it can sustain itself in long run. It is essential to manage all brands and build brand equity over a period of time. Here comes importance and usefulness of brand management. Brand management helps in building a corporate image. A brand manager has to oversee overall brand performance. A successful brand can only be created if the brand management system is competent.