Identity approach of brand management: why invest in the brand identity

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Globalization combined with the economic crisis, force brands to search for effective tools to ensure their popularity and competitiveness. In search of stability and certainty, consumers rely on brand's recognizability, symbolism, and significance. Practitioners, market consultants, and scientists have researched and developed many detailed brand concepts.

The brand is and has been defined in many different ways over the years, depending on the perspective from which the brand is perceived. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines the brand as 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 [2]. Such marketers as Jean-Noel Kapferer, Steve Yastrow, John Bennett and Sandra Moriarty, Kevin Lane Keller, Brian Sternthal and Alice Tybout studied brand.

There are many different perceptions of what the brand identity consists of. However, the more common definition of brand identity is that it is a set of associations the brand strategist seek to create or maintain [1, p. 43]. The brand identity must express the particular vision and uniqueness of the brand – what the brand stands for basically, and the brand identity must be of a long-lasting or permanent nature.

The analysis of brand management that has provided the seven approaches framework or categorization of brand management is based on the philosophy of science by Thomas Kuhn, who is one of the most influential contributors to knowledge about paradigms.

According to J.-N. Kapferer, brand identity is the key notion of the brand management. It is a powerful and complex concept with the potential of strengthening competitive power significantly. Most companies today build and manage identity to ensure that the brand identity expresses an exact set of values, capabilities and unique sales propositions.

Unlike several of the other brand management approaches, the conceptualization and evolution of the identity approach in brand management is primarily practitioner-led. Brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, watch it, and move it. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meaning accessible. Brand identity takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole systems [7, p. 4].

Developing and encouraging a positive brand identity can help a company distinguish itself from competitors and create strong associations with its products. Everybody communicates on two levels, namely verbally and non-verbally. Thus, there are verbal and non-verbal identities. Verbal identity's "basic elements" aim to make a

brand's language distinctive [6, p. 3]. They comprise the following: name, tagline, slogan, tone of voice, descriptors, and storytelling.

The basic elements of a brand's visual identity are as follows: logos, symbols, colors and typefaces [6, p. 2]. Visual brand identity is the branding terminology for a unique "alphabet" of design elements, which directly and subconsciously communicate a company's values and personality through compelling imagery and design style.

One more important element is audial or sound identity, also known as sound branding, sonic branding and acoustic branding. Audial identity can be described as the unique, proprietary music or sound that emotionally conveys a brand's essence and values [3, p. 7]. Its basic elements are jingle and sound logo.

The brand uses all the means of perception to convey its idea and essence. These may include odor, taste, and texture as the elements of brand language. These three elements are more commonly used in product design [5, p. 120].

The identity approach brings into focus the creation of a unified, verbal, visual, audial, sense perceptional and behavioral identity. It is assumed that consumers attribute identity characteristics to companies and that people form images of companies based on the total experience of the company. This places the corporation and its employees at the center of brand equity creation. The identity approach hence adds the importance of the identity of the corporate branding to the theoretical domain of brand management [4, p. 49].

As far as brand is a socio-cultural phenomenon, we can interpret it as a specific semantic object, which expressive means are built around a semantic core and pose the basic values as a subject of communication. The content and meaning of individual attributes are revealed and get their certainty in the context of a symbolic space of the brand. Brand acts as a marketing modification of the image, concentrating in its communicative and creative possibilities and socio-cultural meanings [5, p.116].

In the identity approach, culture is defined at micro-level (while the cultural approach highlights branding in the context of macro-level culture). In the micro-level culture definition of the identity approach, organizational culture is to be understood as a concept that provides a local context or frame for the organizational identity. The organizational culture furthermore contributes with symbolic material to the construction of corporate identity.

In a brand management context, the key assumption of the identity approach is that all marketing and communication activities should be integrated, aligned and elevated from a product-focused and tactical level to a strategic, corporate level. Only in that way will it be possible to create a coherent company experience for the consumer. It is from that assumption that the idea of corporate branding and integrated market communication stems. The notion of identity is applicable to the individual brand level, but corporate branding plays a vital role in the identity approach because alignment of all communication in one unified identity requires strategic-level brand management. Identity is something that is initiated from inside the company.

Compelling brand identity presents any company, any size, anywhere with an immediately recognizable, distinctive professional image that positions it for success. An identity helps manage the perception of a company and differentiates it from its competitors. A smart system conveys respect for the customer and makes it easy to

understand features and benefits. A new product design or a better environment can delight a customer and create loyalty. An effective identity encompasses such elements as a name that is easy to remember or a distinctive package design for a product [7, p.11].

Strategic brand identity works across diverse audiences and cultures to build an awareness and understanding of a company and its strengths. By making intelligence visible, effective identity seeks to communicate a company's unique value proposition clearly and durably. The coherence of communications across various media sends a strong signal to the customer about the focus of a company.

Managers who seize every opportunity to communicate their company's brand value through the brand identity Electronic resource are building a precious asset.

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