

Chapter 13

The Emotional Branding Process

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to provide insights into the various facets of building brands with the use of emotions. Today, technology is playing an intrusive but imperative role in our lives and has made it fast paced. This leaves people with little time to decide on the products and services they want to buy. It is tending to a decision based more on learning about the attributes of the product from a utility perspective alone. The part where customers feel about products and services and then pay attention to attributes, irrespective of them being high-involvement or low-involvement products is slowly reducing. Purchase decisions are being taken more by the head than by the heart. The necessity to consider building strong brands as an essential strategy in order to succeed in an ever-growing highly competitive environment has taken significant proportions today. Customer experience management has been adopted as the process for establishing brands using emotions.

INTRODUCTION

Today, technology is playing an intrusive but imperative role in our lives and has made it fast paced. This leaves people with little time to decide on the products and services they want to buy. The decision to buy is based more on learning about the attributes of the product from a utility perspective alone. The part where customers feel about products and services and then pay attention to attributes, irrespective of their being high-involvement or low-involvement products is slowly reducing. Purchase decisions are being taken more by the head than by the heart. The necessity to consider building strong brands as an essential strategy in order to succeed in an ever-growing highly competitive environment has taken significant proportions today. As stated by an Indian Advertising agency professional (Business Standard, 2013), “We are in an era where product differentiation is reducing; so, the only way to create differentiation is by giving your brand a personality (emotions) that resonates with consumers”. It is well-known that a strong connect with a product or service comes from creating brand linkages through an emotional connect. The emotional connect has always proved to be stronger and more sustainable over time. In recent years, there is a growing emphasis on utilizing emotions as a mechanism to build brands.

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The American Marketing Association defines a brand as “a name, term, design, symbol, or other feature that distinguishes one seller’s product from those of others.” A brand can be defined as an intangible asset and it is often the most important asset on a corporation’s balance sheet. *Branding* is an exercise undertaken by an organization by using marketing communication techniques to create a difference from the competition and build a lasting relationship with the customers.

Creating and building enduring brands is not a simple task. While companies spend a significant quantum of resources to create brands, the biggest challenge is to be able to establish the basic foundation on which the brand is created, the fundamentals, the values that the brand will represent. A Brand, which is a combination of symbols, such as logos and colour schemes, represents the core values that make up the company’s ‘personality’. This could be in the form of reliability or creativity. The values are something that are lived through every aspect of the company activities, from the way a project is undertaken to the way a client or customer meeting is followed up to ensure business. The values of a company should resonate with the emotions and personal values of the target audience. For a successful brand, it is important to be able to generate a logo that will be the core of the brand for years. Whether one assigns an illustrative or a specially designed font for the company name, it needs to fit with the company’s brand values. There are various parameters that influence the process of creating and establishing a brand and it is a long drawn process that takes time. Research and practice, both have demonstrated time and again that of all the factors that influence brand building, the ability to generate an emotional connect between the brand and the audience has been found to play a significant role in building the brand and generating above-average returns. Recent research on brands has progressed into varied directions. Steenkamp (2017) presented justification for the fact that the digital space is reshaping how organizations go global with their brands. Lee, O’Cass and Sok (2017) found that firms are more likely to build brands with high levels of awareness and uniqueness in the market when their brand orientation is supported by formalisation as this impacts branding consistency. Urde (2016) assessed the core of a brand through a longitudinal study of the Volvo brand. He found that the Volvo brand has evolved by adding and shifting mindsets, which has kept its core surprisingly stable. In another research, Iyer, Paswan and Davari (2016) addressed the extent to which love cues are used by brands targeted at multiple decision-makers in a family. They found that functional cues dominate the ads for the brands in functional product categories, as well as hedonic product categories.

Earlier research on brands has addressed various aspects related to brands. A considerable number of reviews of extant literature on brands have been conducted. Keller (2002) has provided an elaborate review of the literature on brands and brand equity while Keller and Lehman (2006) have created a list of many prospective research questions on various dimensions of brands. These questions that they enumerated were related to brand positioning, brand personality, brand relationships, brand experience, corporate image and reputation, integration of brand elements, channels and communications for brands, organization managed and externally managed events, brand performance evaluation and issues related to brand strategies. Schmitt (2011) offered an integrated model of the consumer psychology of brands that helps understand all dimensions related to brands. The model defines five brand-related processes, namely, identifying, experiencing, integrating, signaling and connecting with the brand. Table 1 presents a brief description of each of these. Thereafter, elaborate descriptions of activities that go into each of them are explained in greater detail (Refer to Table 1).

In Table 1, experiencing would be the stage wherein emotional-connect would be established. While the next three stages would further contribute to finally reinforcing the connect with the brand by means of repeated communications that the company would endeavor in order to build the brand. Once the

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