

Chapter 33

Branding as a Tool for CSR

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the field of responsible brands and branding and explores core elements of building a responsible brand in a company. Existing literature on responsible brands and branding is reviewed, and as a result of this review, six key components of responsible branding are depicted: (1) integrating CSR into the core of the brand, (2) engaging stakeholders, (3) engaging organisational members, (4) implementing, (5) communicating responsibility commitments, and (6) assessing the achievements of responsible branding both internally and externally. To illustrate how responsible branding can be used as a tool for companies to explicate their CSR activities, two case studies are presented in this chapter, which is concluded by the notion that both inside-out and outside-in approaches can be effective when using branding as a tool for CSR: nonetheless, this would be subject to the different actions taken by different companies, which become crucial.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has attracted the attention of both academics and business practitioners in recent years. Probably the two best-known models addressing issues relating to CSR are the corporate social performance model, also called the pyramid of CSR (Carroll, 1979, 1991) and the triple bottom line model (Elkington, 1998). The corporate social performance model consists of the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations presented to the company by its stakeholders (Carroll, 1991), whereas the triple bottom line model emphasises the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of a company's actions (Wheeler & Elkington, 2001). While these two models focus on the consequences of CSR, they do not offer much guidance for companies as to how these companies can achieve the increased requirements or what aspects of CSR are the most important in terms of responsible brands and branding.

The corporate responsibility movement has had considerable implications for the discipline of brand management. Maio (2003) and Kitchin (2003) argue that responsibility is primarily a function of relationships and, therefore, a function of a brand. Thus, creating responsible brands is one possible

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answer when companies are responding to consumers' and other stakeholders' increased expectations regarding CSR. Brands mediate the promises of organisations to consumers, and they contextualise the relationship between customers and the company (Ibid.). A brand is no longer just the interface between the company and its customers, but it is the face of the company in the marketplace (Fan, 2005). The values of the brand can serve as an effective touchstone for all corporate behaviour and all stakeholders (Maio, 2003), and if CSR is to have meaning, brands and branding must have significance not only for customers but for all other stakeholders as well.

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the field of responsible brands and branding and explore what are the core components of responsible branding in a company. Despite the increased interest in CSR, research on responsible brands and branding is still fairly new and requires further in-depth exploration (Lindgreen, Xu, Maon, & Wilcock, 2012). Several authors (Fan, 2005; Rindell, Svensson, Mysen, Billström, & Wilén, 2011) have argued that the questions of ethics and responsibility in relation to marketing in general and brands in particular are relatively understudied. Moreover, the field is far from reaching a mutual understanding in relation to the core concepts and frameworks. Concepts like 'ethical brand' (Maio, 2003; Fan, 2005; McEachern, Schröder, Willock, Whitelock, & Mason, 2007; Szmigin, Carrigan, & O'Loughlin, 2007; Brunk, 2010; Hoq, Ali, & Alwi, 2010), 'citizen brand' (Willmott, 2003), 'conscientious brand' (Rindell et al., 2011; Bogaards, Mpinganjira, Svensson, & Mysen, 2012), 'sustainable brand' (Stuart, 2011), 'fair trade brand' (Kim, Lee, & Park, 2010), 'CSR brand' (Lindgreen et al., 2012), and 'responsible brand' (Polonsky & Jevons, 2006; Kujala, Penttilä, & Tuominen, 2011) have been used to cover the idea that brands and branding should address not just customer expectations and economic returns but also the wider social and environmental effects of the company, its products and interactions.

The research reported in this chapter follows Polonsky and Jevons (2006) and Kujala et al. (2011), and the concepts of responsible brands and responsible branding are used as the key concepts of this study. These concepts expand the view from sustainability (i.e. engaging the needs of future generations) or ethics (i.e. what is perceived as right or wrong) to cover the brand's responsibilities towards a variety of stakeholder groups (cf. Maio, 2003; Brunk, 2010; Vallaster, Lindgreen, & Maon, 2012).

This chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, the chapter commences with a review and analyses of the existing literature in the fields of responsible brands and branding. Based on these analyses, a process of responsible branding is synthesised. Secondly, two case studies are provided to illustrate responsible branding, highlighting different components of the process:

1. The first case study introduces responsible branding in a small, family-owned liquor company, and
2. The second case study addresses a large, publicly listed manufacturing company.

These steps lead us to the conclusion of the chapter where we discuss the importance of brands and branding as a tool for CSR for companies.

BACKGROUND

An increasing pluralism of values is one of the characteristics of the current business environment (Calvano, 2008; Burchell & Cook, 2008; Hendry, 2005). Ethical, social, and environmental responsibilities are pressed upon corporations today more than ever before, and consequently, companies and their

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