



A study of linkages of branding with other components of marketing mix: A critical analysis

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Abstract

As a strategy, branding cannot be disassociated from other components of marketing mix. It is an imperative concept in modern marketing and academically it is referred to as the set of controllable tools that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market. So it consists of everything the firm can do to influence the demand for its product. This paper analyses linkages of branding with other components of marketing mix. The study advocates that strong positioning plan must include market segmentation, target segment, expectation of the target consumer and its value, developing a product or service which caters to its needs, evaluation of customer perception and selecting image for the product which matches aspirations of the targeted customers.

Keywords: market segmentation, brand positioning & brand equity

Introduction

The various studies under this segment quantify customer based brand equity from consumer's perception. The strategies to be adopted should focus on brand management approach based on consumer decision making and not for just informing market. The concept of store branding is competitive towards customer's recall than brand of the product due to absence of policies and strategies aimed at developing high image for proprietary brand. The studies also view the recent trend of introduction of call centres which is ultimately helping to humanized brand promoting recall value of the brand. Analysis of the various research papers also discussed the concept of corporate branding which is considered as value resource that provides entity with sustainable competitive advantages. Research and development departments are needed to be geared up to make product differentiation which will ultimately make the brand fit for the global competition. Brand affects, segment difference and product's features affect price structure of the product. Such as prestige brand earns brand name premia which will tend to push the product towards high margin market segment. Satisfaction in cross product group setting based on suitable expectation affecting feeling state can be distinct constructs for purchase behaviour of the customers. Age factor such as children's insistence affects buying behaviour of the family. Customer relation management promotes marketing of brand focusing organization's customer-centric approach. So buying behaviour and satisfaction level of the customer find quality of the product as major driver of the brand.

Objective of study

The object of this paper is to study of linkages of branding with other components of marketing mix.

Analysis and Interpretations

Various empirical studies have been included as part of

discussion to study the linkages between branding and other components of marketing mix.

Dibb and Simkin (1992) have studied brand and brand positioning in service sector. According to the study, the importance of strong branding is not surprising when high risk-level is associated with service purchase. They identified four possible dimensions for strong branding (a) Prioritizing quality (b) Offering superior service (c) Getting the first (d) Being different. The degree of development of service marketing does vary across the service industries. Due to heterogeneity of service, distinction is made between business to business activities. The study has summed up that brand positioning is widely employed in the service sector. Such positions are described by attribute/value which is important to particular customer groups. So branding and its positioning is well entrenched in the mind of consumer in the service industry. The study advocates that strong positioning plan must include (a) Market segmentation (b) Target segment (c) Expectation of the target consumer and its value (d) Developing a product or service which caters to its needs. (e) Evaluation of Customer perception (f) Selecting image for the product which matches aspirations of the targeted customers.

Lassar and Mittal (1995) have suggested measurement of customer based brand equity on five dimensions viz performance, social image, value, trust-worthiness and attachment. This model of measuring of brand equity enables even small companies to evaluate their marketing programmes. Companies have to manage all the elements to enhance brand equity.

Calderon and Molla (1997) have produced a valuable review that helps to demonstrate consumer oriented measurement of brand value which plays a significant part in corporate strategy. According to the study, this approach suffers from a serious limitation as this analysis has left out brand assessment in international context where consumer attitude is influenced by different environments and buying process depends on

various external and internal factors.

Douglas and Wilson (2001) have examined managerial perceptions of competition in the knitwear producers. The study reveals as to how perception of competition is enacted through social interaction among knitwear producers. It sums up that the manager, planning groups or trade association must develop the strategic awareness, capability and planning skills of these members.

Kish and Risky (2001) have highlighted the role of branding in establishing the firm's identity and building its position in the global market place. The study has identified that key element of success is framing of a harmonious and consistent brand architecture across countries and product lines which define the number of levels and brands at each level. Relative emphasis is placed on the corporate brands as opposed to product-level-brands. The study has further stated that escalating media cost, increasing communication, linkages across market and internationalization of retailing create pressures for parsimony in the number of the firm's brands and consolidation of architecture across country market.

Douglas and Nijssen (2001) have examined that conceptualization and measurement of brand equity, including its sources and outcomes are a challenging task, particularly in the global market places. It represents a blend of theory and practice in marketing. The description of pepsico experience amplifies this literature by demonstrating its practical use in the global setting.

Janina Gomes (2001) has highlighted the clustering of small and medium enterprises which form the backbone of India's industrial and export production. The study advocated that organisation can learn from and adopt the Italian model where such clusters have evolved into globally renowned manufacturing bases for a variety of products. The key to this success has been the ability of the Italian industrial clusters to innovate and modernize the attitude towards changing market conditions.

Kumar (2002) has argued that creating a global brand needed vision which requires gathering of intellectual inputs. The study suggests to keep a close tab on trends, analyzing and understanding their meaning and setting a strategic direction based on the global trends to establish a global brand. The research has pointed out that economic transformation entails painful change which all organizations should get acquainted with if they want to become a global player. The study further pointed out that sometime in old organization some hard decision has to be taken on technology front, economic front but it should be based on local conditions.

Sutherland (2002) has compared the commercial organization with armed forces having two types of forces i.e. one attack force and other occupation force. The research describes that attack forces are used to capture the mental territory and occupation forces are used to hold it. Similarly organization should deploy advertisement with maximum efficiency so as to minimize weaknesses and maximize strengths.

Desai (2003) has pointed out that traditional marketing theory is failing as it tries to understand customer rather than human beings. The study shows that marketing now-a-days is treated like a reductionist science, seeking always to grasp a complex reality by breaking it in the little boxes proceeding to manage them. He has analyzed that branding works on the opposite

principle as it seeks a systematic understanding of the brand and draws individual actions out of its core rather than other way round. The study has summed up that brands are nothing but the expression of natural working of an organization because customers today are more interested in the inner working of the company.

Adamson (2003) has commented on the future of branding based on the current trends and the study has revealed that for evaluating overall approach to branding, company needs to look beyond individual brand equities and must examine relationship between their corporate and product or service brands. Promise of that experience must be reinforced with every communication and image. The study has suggested considering forming alliance with non-traditional partner cautiously. It further lays stress on knowing audience as well as potential partner and to find out common element between brand and potential partner that benefit brand, partner's brand and potential customers. True branding requires clarity and stewardship with authority across divisions and departments. The study has argued that companies have to be creative and visionary about the direction of their brands and should look beyond immediate quarterly returns or annual plans to a long term strategy. Corporate mission must drive the brand building process in future.

Balmer and Gray (2003) have outlined natural importance, typology and management of corporate brands. The study argues that in making a distinction between corporate brands, corporate identities and product brands, the underlying feature of corporate brands could be uncovered. The study defines corporate brand as valuable resource that provides an entity with sustainable competitive advantage. So corporate brands are symptomatic of increased importance accorded to corporate level concerns and concepts.

Roll (2004) has investigated competition in the global business environment and finds that to achieve a unique position and to make competitive advantage is becoming difficult and expensive. He has suggested a road map to have successful corporate branding strategy by asking the CEO to be fully focused and lead the strategic work, building own business model, involving stakeholders, to have advanced corporate vision, exploit new technology, empowering people to become brand ambassadors and creating right delivery system. The study has suggested reviewing branding strategy measurement and brand performance at regular intervals. The study sums up that a strong CEO and dedicated team should always raise their own bars and should become change agent for corporation. A well drafted and professionally managed corporate branding strategy can be powerful component of the boardroom work.

Pappu and Cooksey (2005) have investigated the consumer based brand equity with the aim to provide improved measurement of brand equity. According to the research, current measurement of consumer based brand equity suffers from limitations such as lack of distinction between the dimensions of brand awareness and brand association, the use of non-discriminant indicators in the measuring scales and of students' samples etc. The researchers confirm the existing evidence supporting the multi-dimensional nature of brand equity and important conclusion drawn is the shift from student to 'real' consumer sampling. The study relies on

market share data and scanner data as the basis of loyalty assessment. The research has also enriched consumer based brand equity measurement by incorporating the brand personality measure as recommended by the previous researchers.

Anandan and Madhu (2007) have gauged the buying behaviour and satisfaction level of customer in the rural market and found that big manufacturers are fighting to capture the rural customers. The study has found that quality is a major driver to prefer a particular brand in rural market. It has further suggested that no significant relationship exists between type of income and factor influencing the customer's brand preference.

Gofman and Moskowitz (2009) have explored the concept of developing new corporate understanding of an existing product. The study has suggested that innovation cannot come without in-depth understanding of the product and consumer perception. Statistics and have turned attention to model the relation between physical variable and subjective consumer responses and the resulting products are optimized to meet sensory preferences of the consumers including varied segmentation of the market.

Reddy and Muniraju (2009) have explored the concept of building brand by helping others win. The study says that good brand helps a company to charge premium price for their products or services. Through this, company can promote loyalty among the customers as they prefer to buy good branded products. The study advocates that approach to win by helping others win is extensively workable. The research has quoted that the introduction of NANO car by Tata Group is on the ideology of helping Indian families by giving them a safe, affordable and all weather friendly means of transport.

Vernekar and Wadhwa (2009) have advocated the concept of marketing India as a brand whose time has come as there has been a sea change in the world's perception about India's future as it is fastest-growing free market democracy. This could be possible only if it strikes an emotional chord among citizen in all parts of the world. The study has summed up that future of brand is inextricably linked with future business and national ideology.

Ramesh (2011) examined consumer loyalty programmes and marketing strategies. Research focused on history of consumer loyalty, its impact on marketing and also the influence of various other factors on consumer's loyalty. Study revealed that the customers satisfaction, customer value and customer loyalty are the main drivers to identify the market segments based up on loyalty.

Conclusions and Findings

Going through the review based on linking brand with other component of marketing mix, it is clear that success of brand is determined by watching closely as to how the image of selling organization and product meet the expectation of the consumer. Branding in some of the cases is being attached due to emerging counter cultural movement. Therefore, care should be taken to accommodate personal sovereignty of the consumer. Brand should create a world that strikes consumer imagination that inspires, promotes and stimulates consumer to interpret the world that surrounds them. It should be witty, catchy, elegant and must be legally free to be used. The use of

celebrity image as brand ambassador, is also contributing to enhance the brand value of the product. Brand value also depends on various other factors such as global consistency, global expansion, sustainable business mode and leadership's wisdom and passion. The brand should not allow a product to under or over deliver promise. Consumer perception of product's performance control its success. The papers laid stress on showing the approach for consumer-centric re-development strategy from the design of experiment to execution, analysis, modeling and strategies for implementation. The studies also suggested to market India as brand as it is fast growing free market and it has all human and material resources that are required for the purpose.

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