
Editorial

Branding: A constantly developing concept

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A number of years ago, when I was seeking a topic for my PhD, I did have several discussions with academics in my home country, Greece. I was really confused, as are many people who want to start a PhD. After many discussions and meetings I decided to research the brand management organisational structure. I knew very little on brand management at the time, but it appeared to be a topic that was of interest, because it had not attracted a lot of attention and needed further investigation.

I do have a nostalgic feeling every time I think of this period of time. I completed my research in 1999 and have pursued an academic career in the UK for the last ten years. I have continued researching brand management, my primary research area, and I am still interested in the topic. Presently, I am working with PhD students who are focusing on brand management, reviewing papers in the area for various journals, and I was recently honoured to be asked to join the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Brand Management*. I have published in this journal, and I really appreciate the manner in which it bridges the thinking of academics with practicing managers. I really believe that when academic thought manages to reach the desks of people who are practising the discipline, it is always beneficial for both parties.

During all this time, from my initial meetings with academics back home and today, I have seen many changes in the field and in the way it is treated. When I started my research, there were a number of views related to brands that were dominant in the literature and in the way that

brands were approached. They were seen by the majority of those working in the area as symbols, and that was reflected even in the definition of brands expressed by the American Marketing Association. Brands were primarily seen as transaction facilitators, far away from the relationship marketing approach, which was introduced at that time. Brands were also considered as the producer's property. It was implied that the producer is mostly responsible for the communication and the activities developed in the long run of the brand reputation.

Today, it is recognised that brands are complex entities and their expression includes the perception of their product characteristics, personality and values. It is acknowledged that they could be perceived differently by various internal and external parties, and clear terms differentiating the intended perception brand developers would like the brand to have (brand identity) and how it is perceived by the audiences (brand image/brand reputation) have been developed. It is appreciated that brands can be relationship builders. Actually relationship marketing for fast moving consumer goods relies to a great extent on brands to help in the development of the consumer–firm relationship. It is also documented that brand reputation is formed not only from the provider's actions but also from the actions of other parties, such as competitors, the press and even customer groups. In this post-modern era in which we live, individuals often exhibit tribal behaviour and are now discussing the co-creation of brand reputation, from the actions of brand communities. It has



become even more crucial for companies to be able to understand what they gain from their diverse activities, and therefore there is an increasing interest in the evaluation of the brand value, through the understanding of the brand equity concept. The activities that companies should undertake in order to support their brands is another focus of the existing research, and human resources management has started to appreciate the importance of brands, since a number of academics in this area are dealing with employer branding.

In this changing environment, we are experiencing rapid transformations in the approach we adopt and the paradigms that are appropriate for analysing the various phenomena. It is really important to keep researching the management practices that support brands and the manner in which consumers form their attitudes towards brands. In this issue, five very interesting papers are included. They discuss both companies' practices and the customers' reactions and they provide some valuable information on the key trends of brand management research.

In the first paper, Sednik and Strebinger provide a critical overview of Brand Management Models, identify some of their shortcomings and give valuable ideas to

advertising and branding consultants on the tools they could use when providing services to their customers. The second paper by Banerjee appreciates that country culture and brand culture are factors that influence the way in which a brand is perceived and suggests a verbal framework of 'Brand-Culture' fit. The third paper by Yeung and Ramasamy focuses on the actual benefits the company is hoping to achieve by selling branded products and examines whether brand value has an impact on various measures of brand performance. In the fourth paper Kaynak, Salman and Tatoglu focus on professional sports and suggest a conceptual framework that will predict brand loyalty in professional sport. The last paper in this issue is authored by King and Grace, who discuss the employees' perspective in branding.

I enjoyed reading these papers, and I hope that you will too. In my new capacity as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Brand Management*, I will certainly try to help the editors keep producing very interesting issues for both academics and practitioners.

Cleopatra Veloutsou
Editorial Board