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The Review of Contemporary Branding Techniques that can Influence Current Consumer Buying Behavior

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The Review of Contemporary Branding Techniques that can Influence Current Consumer Buying Behavior

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Abstract- This paper intends to discuss and understand contemporary branding techniques in marketing that can influence current consumer buying behavior. By thoroughly examining and understanding the way consumers feel about and perceive brands that influence their buying decisions, companies can adapt to the particular markets they are trying to serve, and promote their brand products using the most suitable branding techniques for their brand that would serve the customers' interests.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The ways brands are marketed to the public are expanding throughout time. In mid-1960s, about 80% of the American adult population can be reached through three national television advertisement broadcasts, of which, now requires at least 117 primetime spots just to reach that same amount of population today. Television channels have exploded in numbers ever since the mid-1990s (Clifton, 2009). Nevertheless, in this day and age, more than three-quarters of Americans go online for their communication and technology needs (Clifton, 2009). Mass media holds a crucial part in influencing the general public in their perception of brand products. The consumer response would depend on the brand awareness, also how consumers associate themselves with the brand (Ladha, 2007) of which, may be heavily influenced by the media.

The meaning of 'brand' can be different according to context or perspective. From the perspective of service oriented marketing, Rod Brodie of the University of Auckland looks at brand as having a crucial role in the marketing process; a service brand that facilitates and mediates the process used in realizing the experiences involved in creating value and meaning in the marketing world. According to Burmann, Hegner, and Riley, as cited in Brodie and De Chernatony (2009), a brand is not just a communication vehicle, but is also how actual and potential buyers perceive it, and how it is created and managed by its owner or manager based on the identity of the brand. A

brand gives meaning to the product's attributes whether it is good or bad and defines the personality of the product, which thus says something about the person (consumer) who purchases the product (Altstiel & Grow, 2006, as cited in Carter, 2010). Branding is often associated with the world of marketing, which is primarily concerned with selling, promoting, and advertising a particular product. Although selling is its central component, it is important to acknowledge its other key components such as needs assessment, marketing research, and product development (Kotler, 1980, as cited in Rehse, 2012). Considering that brands define a certain personality to what it represents, there is therefore, an emotional dimension to a brand and organizations that develops and communicates those unique personalities of that particular brand (Sargeant et al., 2008, as cited in Rehse, 2012).

By examining branding techniques currently used in marketing, companies can determine the pros and cons of using those techniques, and apply it to their own strategies in marketing their products as brands to fit contemporary consumer behavior.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is considered to fall under the interpretive class with the undertaken research approach being explanatory and the research strategy being done through literature survey. Extensive secondary sourced data were used for this study. International journals and papers are searched through available international and well-recognized data bases such as Emerald, Proquest and Ebscohost. The literature review is arranged in a manner, that it begin with how brand is defined and used in organizations and the marketing world with its relations to consumer behavior. The paper will proceed to the discussion, which talks about whether current branding techniques are effective in reaching its purpose and how this may influence future research.

III. RECALL RATE AT THE TOP OF THE CONSUMER'S MIND

Perception is a psychological process in which the consumers put certain meanings to what they sense through their different sensory organs, and is an

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important aspect in consumer behavior (Majumdar, 2010). Consumer behavior focuses on simplicity and finding the “one thing” that suits them; and this is also focused on in terms of branding. Considering consumers do not intend to spend their time to find what they want, but they usually rely on branding to do the recommendations – of a product – for them (Sullivan, 2008, as cited in Carter, 2010). The consumers’ psyche is conditioned through their perception about products or brand ideas over a period of time that leads to the storage of information in the memory of the individual, which later influences how the individual perceives that information. The brand that the individual sees in a popular commercial repeatedly will probably be registered with a high recall rate in the individual’s cognition. The individual consumer will be able to recall the certain positive visual images seen in relation to the popular commercial, which will then influence the buying decisions associated with that brand (Majumdar, 2010).

IV. WORD OF MOUTH (WOM)

Marketing of brands through word-of-mouth is one of the common branding techniques that could enhance the brand’s characteristics. There are consumers who do not prefer to shop online and would choose to do the physical shopping and checking out the products of interest themselves. This is something to consider when it comes to marketing, as there are different types of shoppers or consumers in the market. The old ways of physical shopping is still here to stay, although Internet or online shopping is becoming increasingly popular these days. Consumers may pass around brand images through word-of-mouth that relates to a number of factors, such as social, emotional, and functional aspects of the product; with the emotional aspect being a main factor for most offline promotion of a brand (Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). This knowledge on word-of-mouth marketing can be useful for brand management and investment in WOM campaigns. Changes in the way people communicate nowadays however should also be considered, especially in these days of social media communication. Even word of mouth through social media should be considered important as it still influences consumers in how they select products and services based on what is promoted and discussed online. It is the consumers who dictate the value of brand equity by what the consumers perceive of the brand itself, not according to the sum of invested money that the company has spent on (Severi, Choon Ling & Nasermodeli, 2014). This shows how important it is for companies to project the right image of the brand they want to portray to their customers.

V. ADVERTISEMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet now puts consumers in the context of luxury, whereby the consumers expect to be looked

up to within the virtual environment and that luxury can be positioned online rather more successfully due to several factors. Those factors include, lack of physical contact, global reach of the Internet, clicking on websites all in the comfort of one’s home, the product variety, availability, and variability, and the fast and convenient method of going online (Okonkwo, 2009).

Branding is becoming more personalized on social media as its users see brand advertising that are more prevalent on those sites over the years. This is not a relatively new development, as it has been run since the 1990s with the advent of the Internet and more particularly, the social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Burmam, 2010). The appeal that these websites hold to Internet users has a bigger influence that anyone ever imagined as these media sites make use of certain key issues such as economics and culture as part of the content that they try to promote to their users. These social media websites have managed to convince many on how utilizing their use to build up the image of the brands is the way to go in these modern times to market their products (Gehl, 2011; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Novak, 2012). They are interactive and enable social connection on a radically different level than the old media types, enabling the sharing of content across digital networks with greater access to information and instant ability to communicate (Clifton, 2009).

VI. BRAND EXTENSION

Companies are now beginning to launch new products under an existing brand name but of a different product category. This can happen due to the value that people put on the brand name, like how Quakers created granola bars made of oatmeal under the existing brand that it holds as a popular oatmeal producer (Investopedia, 2010). Being innovative with their brands can help companies or marketers be different from their competitors (Wong & Merrilees¹, 2007), and this is probably one reason why companies do brand extension. Brand extensions, however, may have a negative impact on product brand image, although the negative effect may be lowered if there is clear fit between the parent product and its extension product. Having a higher image of the product may result in further dilution occurring with the extension product (Müge Arslan & Korkut Altuna, 2010). Thus, companies would do well to take account of the risks when extending products to different categories.

VII. BRAND EXCLUSIVITY

Branding techniques are diverse enough to be able to promote exclusivity of certain products, such as luxury goods – being significant in its market value of about US\$130 billion in 2007, and its rapid rate of growth in the past decade compared to other consumer

growth in the past decade compared to other consumer goods categories (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Marketing luxury goods can be quite complicated nowadays as there is a need to promote the product having an image that has quality, performance, authenticity, as well as the ability to sell the experience that best relate to the consumers' lifestyle constructs. The luxury goods industry involves a way of marketing that differs from most of other industries, making use of experiential economy in attracting its customers (Atwal & Williams, 2009). For instance, think of the experience of having coffee at the Starbucks, with the personal greeting by the staff, the easy-listening music in the background, and the wooden floors and lighting that all together define the Starbucks brand. Experiential marketing makes use of the essence of the product that emphasizes on a combination of tangible and deep, physical experiences that would influence the consumers' purchasing decision.

VIII. DISCUSSION

Branding of product image occurs in a multidimensional world with its complexities that cannot escape the necessity for change. Brand managers cannot guard their brand image with the ability to control every factor especially how development and communication of brands are controlled by the consumers – not by the companies or themselves. The companies and managers have to adapt to the consumers' power of perception of the brand image itself, and therefore have to look at appropriate branding techniques from how customers see the situation (Christodoulides, 2008). From looking at how people view brands, it is interesting to note how consumers make their buying decisions based on symbolic attributes instead of the features of the product itself (Neumeier, 2003, as cited in Carter, 2010). Trends that have surfaced since the past years should take note to see how branding techniques are used to promote certain products that make consumers become interested in the particular product as consumers do not necessarily buy a product due to what it really offers but what it is perceived to offer in terms of value or meaning. People would value brands that give them a personal feeling and they value how they feel towards brands (Brodie, 2009), and how they feel compelled towards purchasing the product, thus brands are marketed more successfully by appealing aesthetics, which require minimal information processing (Carter, 2010).

This perception aspect should also be taken into context of what country the company is in, since there will be inevitable cultural differences in different countries that influence the perception of the consumers of that country; there will be different images in the consumers' minds (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006, as cited in Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008). What people feel about the product will depend on their perception, and

that will be influenced by how the company chooses the brand techniques to market their products or services. Consumers perceive brand values from various sources and personal experiences. Advertising definitely influences the consumers' perception from these different sources as they continue to re-evaluate and define what they think and feel about the brands they see and hear of – with the emotion being a significant part of the process (Zambardino & Goodfellow, 2007). Companies should consider every possible factor that might influence this perception that they seek to control, whichever way they can try to control it, as perception is what matters when it comes to branding control. For the small businesses too, they can consider some practical solutions for developing solid brands which involve emphasizing just one or two strong brands, focusing on a couple of major associations, keeping coherent to the branding program, and advertising the brands in a creative manner, to build the image of these brands (Barbu, Ogarca, & Barbu, 2010). Be it big or small, businesses can tap on the image of the brand products they want to promote as long as they emphasize on the main interest within the consumers they are targeting.

Fashion brands are one of the most prevalent examples of brands that exist to give meaning to the products, which were mere garments when they left the factories; but become fashion when they are marketed as brands. Fashion in the luxury goods market is a vast industry that run due to the fact that people put high importance on fashion in society, like how clothes express the way people feel or see themselves and how they wish to be treated by other people (Tungate, 2008). A luxury image is associated with having to maintain a premium, aspirational image, with pleasurable experiences of purchase and consumption and quality of the products and services. The brand elements such as logo, symbol, and packaging would drive for brand equity other than the brand names, carrying with them the prestigious image of the brand (Keller, 2009). This, as mentioned previously, relates to how consumers mostly would be more attracted to products with appealing aesthetics that compete for the short attention span of the consumers, which is very much related to the design of the products as a source of differentiation between the products (Berkowitz, 1987, as cited in Montaña, Guzmán, & Moll, 2007). It is through design that consumers can better understand the identity of the brand, what the brand can provide to satisfy their needs, and which elements of the brand are consistent; in which the consistency can be reached through the design as the defining factor for the brand (Montaña, Guzmán, & Moll, 2007). A more humanized approach is more suitable for companies to take up, to look at the view that everyone will be interested in something that looks good on them and can give them the satisfaction, which continues to be explored in the fashion brands industry.

Additionally, it would be desirable to have word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, considering the fact that a desirable product would be spoken more of – due to increased interests in the appealing characteristics of that product. However, it is difficult to research and quantify WOM marketing on how it would work better for companies to utilize as their method of brand marketing technique. It is also rather difficult to understand how it actually works on an individual or broad scope (Witzig, Ideen, & Spencer, n.d.). Word-of-mouth has become more modernized in today's world from just being spoken in everyday conversations, to the now evolved interactive social media or the media used to communicate online.

Internet has changed the way branding works in recent times into a more complex and dynamic manner. Modern marketing utilizing new digital media have also evolved to become a more global conversation involving millions of people from all over the world in social networks, online forums, discussion groups, review websites, and blogs, which allow people to leave their own comments regarding a particular brand (Clifton, 2009). For example, Tripadvisor.com provides travel recommendation reviews with an increase of about 115,000 reviews a week since 2007. Although this can be generally considered good development, the negative sides of online marketing also cannot be ignored, such as lack of sensory interaction and fears regarding personal security when people go online for their shopping purposes, as that would influence how consumers view their shopping experiences (Simmons, 2007). Online brand marketing can give positive and negative results for the average user; a certain brand sometimes becomes something that is not what the company initially says it is. Companies can try to manage the information that spreads regarding its brand but they cannot control what people are saying about their brand, which can change drastically. These are the modern days of transparency when companies can hardly try to control, censor, or cancel the things or information they do not want people to hear about their brands. The information that people read online can alter how they feel about some brands and thus their decisions on purchasing the product.

IX. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, brands are marketed more successfully with techniques that relate more to people's feelings. People value brands that give them a personal feeling and how they feel towards the brands. Brands are perceived differently according to the context or perspective, thus it depends on how they are marketed by the companies to give the brands the personal touch they are supposed to convey to the customers. The emotional dimension to a brand is what makes the brand unique; it is up to the company to decide how it wants to communicate its brand as having its own

unique personality and eliciting the certain emotions in the consumer. Therefore knowing the branding techniques that work would be beneficial in order to give this influence to the consumer. People want the branding to do the recommendation of products for them, as they do not want to spend the time to find what suits them due to the need of simplicity. Branding ideas would lead to the information of a product to be stored in the person seeing the brand and developing a certain perception of the brand over time.

Branding techniques have evolved significantly over the past few decades with much appreciation to technology development, which are now simplified to the use of advertising on Internet and social media. The use of mass media in marketing brands has a crucial role in influencing people in how they perceive certain brands. Social media is now the new hype in marketing a brand due to the influence it can create among Internet users and the ease of its use to market and build the image of a product or brand. Luxury goods are one example of products with its own market, promoting itself with an image of quality, performance, authenticity, and also the experience of lifestyle for the consumers. The way luxury goods are promoted as brands influences the consumers' purchasing decision due to the experience it promotes. Branding techniques indeed relate to how a consumer would feel regarding a product, and companies would do well to research on how they can make people feel a certain way when they market their product to influence their purchasing decision.

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