

The Definition of Branding and Its Impact on Modern Society Research

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate the topic of branding from the personal and corporate level as well as to look at the role social media plays in each. Research was compiled in order to define personal and corporate branding and to investigate different strategies that have been implemented and possibly the challenges that pose different branding types. Social media has a large role in branding, so the author gathered research on social media as a specific topic and used the research to supplement the research on personal and corporate branding. The conclusion summarizes the findings and what steps are recommended to be taken in the future regarding the establishment of the connection between the organization's brand and the consumer.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Branding has been at the forefront of consumerism for over a century and has become one of the key components to a successful business. The definition of corporate branding according to Balmer and Gray (2003) states that corporate brands are marks denoting ownership; image-building devices; symbols associated with key values; means by which to construct individual identities; and a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed. Branding has become the cornerstone of corporate success. The idea of creating a brand and reputation that the consumer can relate to and want to be a part of is a necessity for every business or organization in today's society. Therefore, the biggest question related to branding is as follows; what strategy should an organization put in place in order to achieve success from a branding standpoint?

For an organization to create a successful brand, there are specific components that need to be explored and at the forefront of thought. Abratt and Kleyn (2012) suggested that a corporate identity or brand must hit on four points. The four points include the following. The brand must have value and be able to take advantage of business opportunities as well as neutralize threats to the business. It must be unique and rare in the firm's specific business sector. It also should not be able to be replicated or substituted for something that could potentially take its place. Every majorly successful company has created a brand that transcends the actual product and company themselves. For example, the Nike brand has become more than just a line of athletic gear. The Nike swoosh has come to represent the pinnacle athletic gear in the industry that is worn by the top athletes in their respective sports. However, companies such as Nike did not just draw up a Nike swoosh logo and become the best in the business. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the research that has been done on branding and analyze

the different aspects of each of these avenues that are utilized in various business fields to obtain a successful brand.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social media is one of the most prevalent sources of information in modern society and is also one of the most important marketing tools to businesses in regard to creating a brand.

According to Lyfe Marketing (2019), 70% of the U.S. population has a profile on at least one social networking site. Creating a brand that the consumer can relate to through social media in real time is an essential business practice to achieve and sustain success.

However, Social media is often underutilized or is not used properly to connect with the everyday consumer. Every organization knows that they need a social media platform of some sort, but that does not mean they know how to market themselves effectively through these outlets. For example, Lyfe Marketing found in a study (2019), only 15% of people watch Facebook videos with sound on. Companies must be aware of such trends and seek to cater their social media marketing in order to accommodate the customers.

In response to this problem, this paper seeks to investigate how proper social media practices will allow organizations to connect with their consumers in order to create a relatable brand that will lead to success in their respective fields. By establishing a connection with the consumer on readily available social media platforms, the consumers will be more willing to use that company's product or service.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance behind this study is to help educate businesses and organizations on how to create an impactful brand. Branding has become an essential part of growing an organization

and can be the difference between success and failure. With the correct knowledge of the necessary steps that go into creating a branding strategy as well as the proper application of that strategy, the percentage of achieving success increases drastically.

The essential part of branding is that it can be done for free and can be used by anybody. From small businesses and individual entrepreneurs to large corporations, anybody can utilize the advantages that a great brand can bring. This study aims to benefit the field by compiling existing research and attempting to create a basic branding strategy that can be used as a baseline at any level of business.

According to research conducted by Shaoolian (2018) at Forbes, presenting a brand consistently across all platforms can increase revenue by up to 23%. The researcher also stated that 64 percent of consumers say that shared values help them create a trusted relationship with a brand. These studies highlight the importance of creating a successful brand and what the dividends of accomplishing that task may look like.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the previous research that has been conducted within the last 10 years or so regarding branding and to link this information to more current research efforts to create a basic branding strategy. This goal for this strategy is to be simple as well as flexible so that organizations of various sizes and fields can use it as a baseline for their brand.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Corporate Branding*: Denotes ownership; is an image-building device; symbols associated with key values; means by which to construct individual identities; and a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed. (Balmer, Gray, 2003).

*Megaproject*: A megaproject is a project that costs more than US \$1 billion and attracts a large amount of public attention because of substantial impacts on communities, environment, and budgets (Ninan, Clegg, Mahalingam, 2019).

### **Delimitations of Research**

The research conducted for this seminar paper will have been done within the time period of the start of June 2019, until November of 2019. Most of the research will have been taken from the past 10 years with no information coming from before the year 2000. Branding has gone through a lot of changes with the advancements in technology in the past 15 years so no significant data will be pulled from before that time period. The main search terms used in the conducting of research were branding, social media, marketing, corporate branding, branding strategies, corporate branding, personal branding, and branding statistics. The search tool that was used to find research on the previous terms was the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Library Online Search Tool. Most resources used for research were limited to peer-reviewed articles published in the last 10 years. The remainder of resources would be statistics from various studies from a time frame limited to the last five years.

### **Method of Approach**

A brief review of research that has been conducted on branding in the last 10 years was conducted. A review of literature relating to the research, studies, and evidence of multiple sections of branding, its impact on various levels of business and the importance that branding

has on the success or failure of the specific business. A review of literature on the relationship between social media and branding was also conducted in conjunction with personal and corporate branding. The search terms used to locate the research done in this field were branding, social media, marketing, corporate branding, branding strategies, corporate branding, personal branding and branding statistics. The database that was used was provided by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Library and their search tool was used as well. Google was also used to locate multiple statistics in regard to branding and its impact on businesses. The findings were summarized and synthesized in Chapter 2 of this paper. Conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter 3.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Branding is an essential part of any organization in modern society and when used effectively, can be a huge asset for growth and awareness. With so many free outlets to market from, the potential to create and grow a brand is limitless. However, with so many available options to supplement an organization's branding efforts, it can be difficult to zero in on the correct strategy that is effective as well as efficient for the organization. A few options include free social media outlets such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook: to more traditional marketing outlets such as commercials, billboards, or newspaper ads. The difficulty lies in which of these outlets is the best for your specific brand, and how can they be utilized to the fullest potential (Razvan, Catalin, 2018). In response to this predicament, this study will investigate different branding strategies that have been used across various fields. This chapter analyzes each of these strategies to see what type of media outlets were utilized as well as the overall strengths and weaknesses of the strategies. This chapter also investigates which of the strategies are efficient from a business standpoint, but also succeed in establishing and growing a brand in order to propose a generalized branding strategy that can be used in a variety of areas.

This literature review synthesizes research pertaining to branding and the impact of social media to gather a better understanding of this area and how to best utilize its strengths over a broad spectrum of fields. This research will determine the strengths and weaknesses of known branding strategies to form a generalized strategy that can be used as a baseline. The research will be generalized and applicable for other researchers because it will be based on several cases that have already been documented and can be referred to. Also, the research is being drawn from several different fields with the aim to find results that can translate to a wide range of situations.

The researcher hypothesized that it is possible to find general branding strategies that can translate to a wide range of environments by using the successful components of previously existing strategies. The null hypothesis would state that there is no single strategy that can be used uniformly in different environments. According to Ninan, Clegg and Mahalingan (2019) a megaproject is a project that costs more than US \$1 billion and attracts a large amount of public attention because of substantial impacts on communities, environment, and budgets.

Additionally, governmentality is an expression that combines the terms government and rationality. This term refers to conduct, or an activity meant to shape, guide or affect the conduct of people.

Lastly, the researcher will discuss several different perspectives and strategies that have been used recently by various organizations. Each strategy and perspective will be broken down into sections and analyzed to determine if that section contributed to either the success or failure of said strategy or perspective. I will then look to create a strategy that implements the successful sections to create a more generalized strategy that has a high level of autonomy.

### **The Importance of Branding**

According to Pulizzi (2015) of the Content Marketing Institute, 77% of marketing leaders say a strong brand is critical to their growth plans. Also, a survey conducted by Louis Foong, the founder and CEO of The ALEA Group Inc., found that 69% of marketers prefer branded online content over direct mail which would include internet content and social media. Shaoolian (2018) at Forbes, found that presenting a brand consistently across all platforms can increase revenue by up to 23%. Most of the research from a marketing standpoint has supported the idea that establishing a strong, consistent brand using internet and social media outlets have been found to result in growth and increased success. The next section of the literature review will

focus on the analysis of the use of social media in establishing and growing an organization's brand.

### **Social Media and Branding**

Every organization has several social media outlets and has become a necessity to achieve success. According to Allton (2016), by 2016, Facebook alone has more than 1.55 billion users followed by YouTube, which has 1 billion users, and the total spending on social media has increased 33.5% to \$23.68 million, from 2014 to 2015. However, if social media is not used properly, it can often do more harm than good. Diving into multiple cases that used social media as a main component in their branding strategy and analyzing which uses were successful and which uses were not successful allowed the researcher the ability to highlight all the successful components in order to refer to them and propose a new generalized strategy.

Social media is unique in the fact that it is free and is accessible to anyone and everyone (eMarketer, 2015). The average person is able to actively communicate directly with the company or organization in question (Muller, 2017). Social media blurs the line between 'them', the organization, and 'us', the consumer. Yan (2011) proposes that there are nine goals of social media in branding 2011. The idea that Yan (2011) was putting forward was that social media branding should provide the consumer with a sense of membership with the organization. The brand should also provide the consumer with values that they can connect with and engage with to further promote the brand. With these goals in mind, a brand can continually evolve and maintain an advantage over the competition because the consumers have developed a deep connection with their brand. Yan (2011) stated that social media has the unique ability to be all inclusive and companies need to take advantage of this fact to create a sense of membership. Once that has been established, a dialogue can be created between the consumer and

organization that can be built into trust in the brand that is being projected. A specific sector that has identified the importance of having effective branding through social media is Higher Education. Peruta, Ryan, and Engelsman (2013) stated that social media platforms are one more brand touch point that higher education institutions must begin to include in their branding initiatives. Peruta et al. (2013), also stated that while being “present” in social media costs practically nothing, being “good” at social media costs time and training. The best campaigns are not borne out of an internet-exclusive idea but tie real-life experiences to the social media realm.

### **Personal Branding**

Personal Branding has become a viable strategy and has allowed individuals to become extremely successful. The goal is to look at a few cases of personal branding and see if there are any consistencies in these cases to highlight the successful components that should be used in other branding strategies. Also, personal branding is often correlated with free social media outlets due to its accessibility to everyone and can be used at no cost. However, according to Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2011), professionals have also started to use personal branding to increase exposure, but their strategies must differ from other personal branding strategies due to certain ethical circumstances.

Gorbatov, Khapova, and Lysova (2018), asked whether having multiple personal brands is possible, how to adapt one's personal brand when changing employers, and how to avoid the spillover from private social media activities into the professional sphere. Mukhlisiana (2019) touched on some of these concerns in her journal titled “Urban Youngster Personal Branding through Instagram. Mukhlisiana (2019) made references to personal branding using Instagram and how users can frame their content in a way to create a personal brand that may be distinguished from their everyday situation. Mukhlisiana (2019) suggested that there are the

eight laws of Personal Branding such as Specializations, Leadership, Personality, Distinctiveness, Visibility, Unity, Persistence, and Goodwill. Mukhlisiana (2019) used these eight laws to frame how a person can successfully manage their content to create a successful brand for themselves. From the professional standpoint, Cederberg and Brown (2017) stated that the personal brand has emerged as a viable strategy for individual professionals to accentuate their own distinctiveness, and to engage with professional networks and clients in an efficient, inexpensive, and expedient way. Professionals are now able to use social media to better connect with their consumer base and create a link that was otherwise difficult to have. This link allows for the consumer experience to feel much more personal because they can deal directly with the professional on more level ground.

### **Corporate Branding**

Corporate branding is on a much larger scale than personal branding due to the demand of appealing to a larger number of consumers. Corporate branding tends to use aspects from all types of branding because they must cater to many different audiences. I will analyze the different depths of the corporate branding outlook while referring to previous sections to compare.

First, Corporate Branding must be defined. Pratihari and Uzma (2018) stated that Corporate Branding (CB) is a holistic brand management approach adopted by firms to construct a unique corporate identity. Next, the idea of corporate identity must be defined. Pratihari and Uzma (2018) stated that corporate identity refers to the organizational characteristics that anchor an organization in a given period. Pratihari and Uzma (2018) also stated that a corporate brand involves the conscious decision by the senior management to distill and make the known attributes of the organization's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition.

Similarly, Aaker (2004) stated that corporate branding takes place when a company creates organizational associations with the company's identity, reinforcing in a broad range of stakeholders' minds that the company will stand behind its products and services. What they are all stating is that Corporate Branding is an attempt at transparency from within in order to allow consumers to identify with their organization. In addition to transparency, Davies and Chun (2010) stated that the leadership at the top is a symbol for managing a company's reputation, and the leader's actions have more impact symbolically than operationally. The goal of corporate branding is to create a persona that encapsulates the company and its goals.

Pratihari and Uzma (2018) refers to two different approaches to corporate branding that are the normative approach and the social constructionist approach. The normative approach is defined by Pratihari and Uzma (2018) as corporate brands are created and managed by senior managers (Balmer & PGray, 2003). The social constructionist approach would be, corporate brand through the social interaction between the company and its environment (Leitch and Richardson, 2003; Melewar *et al.*, 2012).

A different perspective is described by Jonathan Schroeder being the four Cs of branding. According to Schroeder (2017), the four Cs include corporate perspective, consumer perspective, cultural perspective, and critical perspective. All four of these perspectives contribute to a quality corporate brand. The corporate perspective focuses on the brand from a strategic point of view. An example that Schroeder (2017) refers to is, corporate films that are used as strategic initiatives that involve the making of branding and advertising campaigns. Each of the other perspectives deal with their specific emphasis being how the consumers, culture and critical image of the company impact each other as well as the overarching brand.

As described throughout this paper, branding is a fluid entity that can take on many shapes and appearances. There are many ways to approach branding, each with their unique advantages and strong suits. What is important about creating a brand is to understand how you want to promote your product and match that ideology with a branding strategy that can take your product and give it a life of its own. Whether it's on a large-scale platform like corporate branding, or you are trying to grow your personal brand on a smaller scale, there are plenty of branding options and strategies that can be catered to any situation.

### **Chapter Three: Conclusion and Recommendation**

In summary, the topics covered by the author included the importance of branding with regards to social media, corporations, and personal use. The research that was focused on was about how each of these entities utilize branding and which techniques they used to cultivate a successful impact for their entity. A recurring theme that covered all sections with regards to branding was an attempt at transparency and connectivity between the brand and those consuming it. The goal of a brand is to create an entity that the consumers can relate to on a personal level. If that connection is not able to be made, the brand would be considered a failure and should be re-evaluated and reconstructed. Social media is an essential outlet for both the personal brand users as well as the corporate brand users. Additionally, social media allows the consumer to connect with both the personal and corporate entities in a way that cannot be done through other outlets of information. Lastly, social media brings all parties to equal ground which allows the larger entities to connect with the consumer on an intimate level.

There has been a lot of research done in the areas of how brands have been created, and why it is important for organizations to develop a brand to succeed. On the other side, plenty of research has been done on consumer tendencies as well as what makes the consumer tick, but the research is lacking in the area of how the connection between the brand and the consumer is created and what details go into making this relationship happen. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that further studies are conducted on the actual process of creating the connection between the brand and the consumer. This paper focused on the research behind the importance of this link and ways organizations and individuals have approached the dilemma of branding. More research must be done to ensure that the branding practices that are being used

currently are creating the connection between the brand and the consumer that is needed to achieve success.

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