

BRAND IMAGE: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BRAND DEVELOPMENT.

¹Uchelor, J.C., ²Ijaiya M. A. (PhD.)

uchelorjudith@gmail.com, 08033543935, mkijaiya@gmail.com, 07030224131

^{1&2}*Department of Entrepreneurship and Business Studies, Federal University of Technology,
Minna, Niger State, Nigeria*

Abstract

Companies strives to develop and sustained their brand reputation in order to reposition their product in the market. Brand is that set of belief and feeling that served as mark on the minds and heart of consumers. However, brand is far more than a name, logo, trademark, symbol or label attached to a product. This study aim to review the dimensions of brand image drawn into the perspective of brand development. Brand image plays a very significant role in the development of a brand because the image associated with the credibility and reputation of the brand which later become a recipe for consumer perception to try and use a product or service that will determine whether the consumer will be brand loyalist or not. The dimensions of brand image in the current study include, brand identity, brand uniqueness, brand association, brand credibility and brand competence and benefit. This study contributes to the existing literatures of brand image dimensions.

Keywords: brand image, hierarchy of branding, dimensions of brand image.

Introduction

Rapid increase in competition, consumers' demands and wants, as well as their purchasing behaviors' in the business world, have made the concept of brand an important phenomenon. The perception of consumers on brands has been an important determinant for business survival and growth in a highly competitive market, therefore, creating strong brand perceptions is now a top priority for businesses (Ryu et al ., 2019; Chang, 2020; Jasmani, 2020). In recent years, consumers are been careful more about their choice of brands than products, hence, businesses continue to intensify more on the developments of technology and innovation so as to provide

their esteem consumers with different options of product range thereby providing consumers with varieties to choose the brand that provides the greatest benefit to them in order to meet their needs. In this context, businesses will offer the best alternatives to make consumers loyal (Bilgin 2018; Arbouw *et al*, 2019). According to Bilgin (2018), a brand is a means to promote business, to distinguish and differentiate businesses from their competitors, this means that a brand represents a specific product. The importance of brands cannot be overemphasized because they have a meaning rather than just a name. Branding is central to creating customer value, not just images and is also a key tool for creating and maintaining competitive advantage (Arbouw *et al*, 2019). A brand can be an umbrella for a variety of products (e.g., Nestle), the product can be the brand (e.g., Rolex) and the seller business can be the brand (e.g., Woolworths), (AMA, 2015). The brand image can be defined as the sum of what the consumers associate with the product or what they understand from the product. The perception of a brand that is being formed in the process of decoding brand identity facets, Ramesh *et al*, (2019).

Conceptual Review

BRAND IMAGE

The concept of brand image has been a long-time topic of discussion in marketing discipline (Seo and Park, 2018). In the words of Liu, Lee, and Klein *et al*, (2019), an image is the set of beliefs, ideas, and impression that a person holds regarding an object. In other words, it is an aggregate of beliefs, ideas, and perceptions that a consumer holds pertaining to a brand. Brand as a concept has received a considerable attention in the marketing domain and has enriched the knowledge of marketing science and brand management (Plumeyer *et al*, 2019). However, there are only a few definitions of brand image that the experts have agreed upon today (Camilleri, 2018). Therefore, Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpel and Lievens (2018), referred to brand image as a concept which defined the perception of a brand as reflected in the consumers' memories. Similarly, Lee, and Mohammed (2018), opined that brand image is concerned with the feelings or emotions of consumers that evaluate the quality of the products to explain the best and worst ideas. In view of, Switala *et al*, and Durmaz *et al*, (2018) brand image consists of customers' knowledge and convictions regarding various product and non-product attributes of a brand. Another view of brand image is also conveyed by Cheung *et al* (2019) defining the concept of brand image as a customer's perception of a brand, which is reflected in terms of the brand's associations in the customer's memory. Also, Ansary and Lee (2018) stated that brand image is

how a customer remembers a brand. In simple terms, the brand image is basically the first thing that came to the minds of customers when buying a product. Customers evaluate a brand considering the characteristics of that brand. Therefore, a strong brand image increases corporate reputation, financial performance, occupancy rate, average price, revenue and profitability. Similarly, Kaur *et al* (2019), defined Brand image as consumers' thoughts and feelings towards a certain brand (Metz and Davies, 2017; Mahandiy and Sanawiri, 2018).

Brand value is about the value and the satisfactions that make customers get attracted to use a particular brand. It contains emotions or attitude about the brand and quality (Chang, Godsey, Jasmani, 2020). According Mohammed and Kim *et al* (2018), brand is the identity that recognizes the product, service and company. Brand images deliver certain features or functions that explain the advantages of using a product or service (Ryu *et al.*, 2019). In addition, Barki *et al* (2020), claimed that a successful brand is innovative, focused, passionate, consistent, flexible, competitive, leadership and distinction. He added that great brands always focus on innovation which prevents becoming complacent and stagnant. They never break off pushing. For instance, Nike, Apple, Coca-Cola, McDonald, close up etc. got high success in the market. However, they do not stop innovation; they continue to focus on improvement and innovation. According to Bashir *et al* (2020), brand image could contribute to a company's success when customers are willing to purchase products or services at a higher price. In fact, brand image is important for companies' future benefits such as long-term cash flow, decisions making, stock cost, sustainable competitive advantage and achievement in market (Amron, Ansary, Lee, and Bilgin, 2018).

BRAND IMAGE DEVELOPMENT STAGES.

As stated by Isoraite (2018), Brand image development stage is alluded in two models: brand elicited from product development, communication centered on the functional benefits of the product, and emotional benefit that is intangible values, feelings and mission. However, the first model, brand development focused on product by developing its attributes, ingredients, features benefit as well as creates product/ brand personality shaped with brand values and mission so that intangible product values are added to consumer. Examples for the first model is commodity product that is packaged afterward with a certain brand and naturally communicated with the course of time and then becomes famous, until finally the brand is managed in a professional manner. Second model evolved from idea or concept. The examples for this model are brands

selling lifestyle (branded fashion, cigarettes, perfume, etc.) which were born from a deep reflection, especially on psychological perspective of consumers through consumer insights that tend to offer emotional benefits. As time goes by, these brands evolve their functional benefits and features so as to provide values added to consumers tangible products. More so, brand communication, branding process and its effect have certain levels that also indicate the extent to which brand development in relation to proximity to the consumer. This level indicates the hierarchical nature of branding.

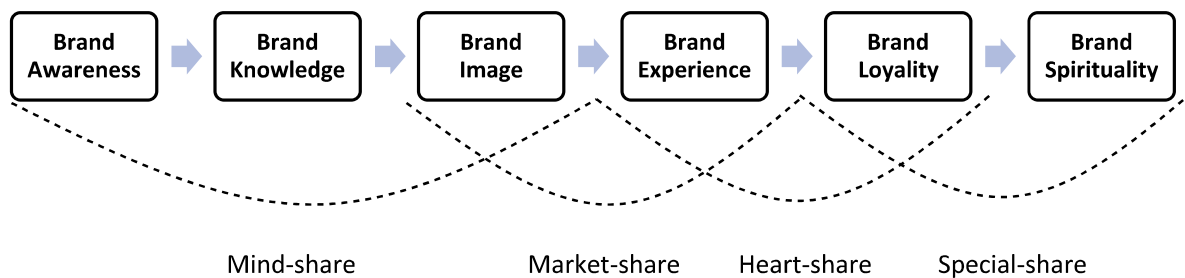


Figure 1:

Hierarchy of Branding (source: Isoraite, 2018)

In an early stage of brand development, the brand is still in the phase of knocking consumer awareness, making it more likely for consumers to know a little about the brand. This stage is called brand awareness. Surprisingly, the more the benefit and attribute of the brand are known by consumers, the more they recognized the brand as well as learn and know much about the product or brand. This phase is also called brand knowledge. As time goes by, communication enhanced, consumer then has a certain belief or perception associated to form a certain image about brand in the consumer's mind. This phase is called brand image. As time went on and intensively communication as well, the consumers would have tried the products or direct contact with the brand in order to have specific experience related to the brand that form new perception and belief associated with the product as well as strengthening the image of the brand. This phase is called brand experience. Another stage of brand development is brand loyalty. In this stage, a product with good equity tends to win the consumer's loyalty so that the consumer is not easy to switch to another brand. To this end, consumers are not only loyal to a brand, but also have a strong sense of belief of the brand, pervasive and be part of their life values as well as influence their perspective on life. At this phase, the spiritual happiness and the life values that

are obtain related to the beloved brand are then share and broadcast to other consumers to feel and experience the brand as part of their life in the wider environment, and together get the mutual happiness within a strong community. The growing achievement of a brand in the hearts of consumers, where a brand becomes the answer for the spiritual needs or become part of the consumer's life values and culture. This stage is called brand spirituality. Brand Awareness to Brand Image are the stage to attain mind-share, while Brand Experience is the phase to attain market-share, Brand Loyalty is the phase for heart-share, and Brand Spirituality is to gain social-share. As for Agmeka *et al.*, (2019), to develop a successfully company's brand image, the process is divided into three stages namely:

- Get the product brand strategy right and align with business goals.
- Develop all the tools you need to communicate the brand, such as logo, slogan etc.
- Finally, it is to strengthen its newly created or updated brand stage.

Importance of brand image

According to Barreda *et al.*, (2020), every organization strives to build a strong image as it helps in fulfilling their business motives. A strong brand image has the following advantages:

- i. Brand image attracts more profits as new customers are attracted to the brand
- ii. It is easy to introduce new products under the same brand
- iii. A good brand image boosts the confidence of existing customers and helps in retaining them
- iv. A good brand image improves better business-customer relationship. However, a company with a bad image may struggle to operate and might not be able to launch a new product under the same brand.

Dimensions of Brand Image

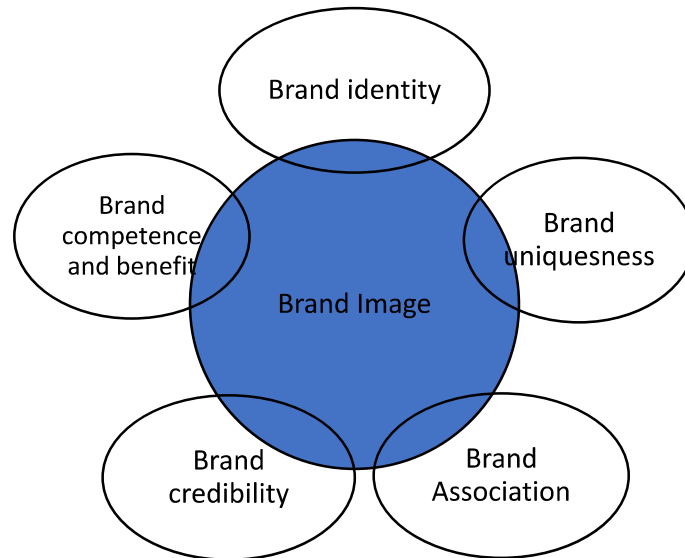


Figure 2: Dimensions of Brand Image (source: Davies *et al.*, 2018)

Brand Identity: refers to physical or tangible identities related to the brand or product that makes consumers easily identify and differentiate with other brands or products, such as logo, colors, sounds, smells, packaging, location, corporate identities, slogan, and others. A unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers and includes a core and extended identity, Mitra (2020). According to (Kem, 2019), brand identity is part of company's strategy of communicating her brand identity to their targeted customers and stakeholders.

Brand uniqueness: Uniqueness came as an abstract means from consumption in order to avoid identities that match the same behavior by individuals (Amron, 2018). This is defined as the degree to which consumers distinguish a brand differently from competing brands and how different it is relative to other brands (Mete and Davies, 2017; Mahandy and Sanawiri, 2018).

Brand association: This referred to specific things that deserve or always associated with a brand and which arise from a unique offering of a product, recurring and consistent activities, issues that are very strong related to a brand, or, person, owner, and the certain symbols and meanings that are very strong attached to a brand, such as, Nike = Tiger Woods, Coca Cola =

Cheerfulness, art technology = Apple, etc. Kim (2019), explained that brand association is connected with everything in consumer memory that relates to the brands.

Brand credibility: A multi-characteristic term showing the integrity of the brand in the eyes of customers. Song *et al.*, (2019), define brand credibility as the brand having believability and reliability of product position information contained in a brand, in terms of reliability, claim-justification, and trust dispersion and delivering which entails consistently delivering what is promised. It is important to note that market place is filled with erroneous and non-identifying information. Hence, consumers always resort to attributes (credibility) and trade activities to guide purchase decision. In this line of thought, Mitra (2020), agreed on the fact that brand credibility affects consumers' choice of a brand and effectiveness can be measured through credibility.

Brand competence and benefit: These are the values, advantages and distinctive competencies offered by a brand in solving consumer problems, which enable consumers to get benefit because their needs, desires, dreams and obsessions manifested by what it has to offer. Values and benefits here can be functional (Godsey, 2020), emotional, symbolic or social (Davies *et al.*, 2018), such as product brand of a clothes detergent with benefits and competences are being able to clean clothes to be cleaner (functional benefit/ value), make the wearer is more confident and feel comfortable (emotional benefit/ value), be a symbol of a clean lifestyle of modern society (symbolic benefit/ value), and inspire greater community to care about a healthy lifestyle and environmental preservation (social benefit/ value). Benefits, advantages and distinctive competencies of a brand will affect the brand image of the product, individual or institution and company.

Conclusions

Brand image plays an important role in the development of a brand because the brand image influences brand reputation and credibility which later becomes 'guideline' for consumer audience to use a product or service based on a particular experience (brand experience) that will determine whether the consumer will be loyal to the brand or just becoming an opportunist (easy to switch to another brand). Brand image, both product brand, institution, personal brand or corporate brand, formed by a number of factors that come from the audience or self-consumer and environmental factors that are outside of the audience or consumer. These factors are

reflection of the main dimensions that represent brand image, among the dimensions are: personality brand, brand identity, brand attitude and behavior, brand association, and brand benefit and competence. With the clarity of these dimensions, the researchers and decision-makers can measure and see how strong the brand image of a product and assessing the dimensions mentioned above. The more powerful and positive these dimensions in the minds of the consumer audience, the more powerful and positive the brand image of a product.

For further development of this concept, the author recommends more researches related to brand image based on the dimensions described in this paper, for example, by exploring more indicators regarding each dimension that have not been explored to the fullest in this article. The exploration of indicator from the consumer audiences' perspective will enrich this concept so that it can be a useful reference for subsequent researches. In addition, the author also suggests to develop a brand development strategy by referring to the brand image dimensions described in this study. This is because the study in this paper has shown clearly various dimensions as factors that form or reinforce brand image, making it easier for brand manager or brand planner in determining the strategic steps for brand image development. Future researchers can also look forward to studying the statistical relationship by applying empirical study, and by using this conceptual framework

Reference

- Bilgin, Y. (2018). The effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, 6(1), 128-148.
- Arbouw, P., Ballantine, P. W., & Ozanne, L. K. (2019). Sustainable brand image: An examination of ad–brand incongruence. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*.
- Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., Singh, J. J., & Sierra, V. (2019). Do customer perceptions of corporate services brand ethicality improve brand equity? Considering the roles of brand heritage, brand image, and recognition benefits. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 154(2), 441-459.
- Ramesh, K., Saha, R., Goswami, S., & Dahiya, R. (2019). Consumer's response to CSR activities: Mediating role of brand image and brand attitude. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(2), 377-387.
- Świtłała, M., Gamrot, W., Reformat, B., & Bilińska-Reformat, K. (2018). The influence of brand awareness and brand image on brand equity—an empirical study of logistics service providers. *Journal of Economics & Management*, 33, 96-119.
- Lee, J., & Lee, Y. (2018). Effects of multi-brand company's CSR activities on purchase intention through a mediating role of corporate image and brand image. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*.
- Klein, K., Völckner, F., Bruno, H. A., Sattler, H., & Bruno, P. (2019). Brand positioning based on brand image–country image fit. *Marketing Science*, 38(3), 516-538.
- Plumeyer, A., Kottemann, P., Böger, D., & Decker, R. (2019). Measuring brand image: a systematic review, practical guidance, and future research directions. *Review of Managerial Science*, 13(2), 227-265.