



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

THE ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE IN COSMETICS INDUSTRY

Karina Adonjeva

Faculty of Economics and Management

University of Latvia

Aspazijas bulv 5, Riga, LV-1050, Latvia

E-mail: karina.adonjeva@gmail.com

Keywords: brand image, cosmetics industry, customer loyalty

Abstract

As the current economic environment becomes more competitive and introducing new brands becomes increasingly costly, companies must find new strategies to increase their capacity and competitiveness. In order to win the leader position in the marketplace marketing specialists work out different kind of strategies to achieve long lasting success. One of the most significant among these strategies is customer loyalty toward the brand. To achieve customer loyalty marketers should focus on brand image attributes and benefits in their efforts. By maintaining and strengthening the brand image and values, it will position the brand positively in the minds of consumers.

Brand image comprises a consumer's knowledge and beliefs about the brand's diverse products and its non-product attribute. Brand image represents the personal symbolism that consumers associate with the brand, which comprises of all the descriptive and evaluative brand-related information. When consumers have a favorable brand image, the brand's messages have a stronger influence in comparison to competitor brand messages. Therefore, brand image is an important determinant of a buyer's behavior. Based on the brand image and the principle that identity is the source of brand positioning that can be used to attack a market with a view to growing market share at the expense of the competition.

It is very important for any business organization to evaluate their consumer's perception towards the image of their brand or services offered. Measuring brand image based on consumer's perceptions helps a company to identify the strengths and/or diagnose the weaknesses of their company image, company's product or brand image and its position in the market. It is also important to understand that a brand has many images which are generally in the form of brand attributes and/or brand benefits.

The primary purpose of this article is to illustrate the role of brand image in cosmetics industry, to summarize information from different studies and to describe the role of brand image in cosmetics industry. To analyse consumer's perceptions of these image attributes and benefits as it's a strategic way to identify the strength of a brand's quality and the meaning that consumers associate with the brand.

Introduction

By looking at the reason why consumers are buying one or another product, it can be stated that they are looking for satisfaction of their (consumers) needs. It can be quality, content,



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

price, a practical or even just an attractive packaging that is satisfying their needs or wants. This is to point out that to create a perfect marketing programme is not that difficult. What is difficult is to know – those needs and wants of consumers.

It is asserted that brand image play an important role in everyday consumption practices, since they form a part of the interpretational frame that customers rely on when they are exposed to brand.

McEnally and Chernatony stated that brand concept was developed by the management while the consumer received the message from the management and form brand image in the memory. In this way it can be seen that brand is seen by consumer and management in two different ways, where one, in the management, it is a concept, but the other, of the consumers, is an image. As soon as there is a crucial difference between these two views, the marketing problem is accruing [24].

It doesn't matter if the enterprise is small or big, all of them should take into account brand image, if they want their product to be required on the market.

But to understand the “brand image” as a tool for successful management, it is important to make a study on this terminology, in order to see how it affects a consumer and what are the perceptions of consumer towards these image attributes and benefits.

Brand Image

Brand image is a quite young terminology, which was first introduced into the marketing discipline by a journal *The Product and the Brand*. “A brand name is more than the label employed to differentiate among manufacturers of a product. It is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes. It tells the consumers many things, but not only by the way it sounds (and its literal meaning if it has one), but, more importantly, via the body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over a period of time” [24].

Brand image has been a subject of great importance not only to the academic community but also to marketers and retailers due to its enormous implications for strategic management activities. In spite of the importance of the brand image concept in the marketing field, there are disagreements on how it should be defined [5].

Brand image research has long been recognized as one of the central area of the marketing research field not only because it serves as a foundation for tactical marketing-mix issues, but also because it plays an integral role in building long-term brand equity [10].

Like any other abstract concepts, brand image has multiple meanings and interpretations depending on the various viewpoints of research. In the literature, there are a number of conceptualizations of brand image applicable in consumer psychology, general psychology, as well as marketing. However a widely accepted view, introduced by Keller K. is that brand image represents customers' perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory [10]. Keller K. considered brand image as “a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by brand associations in consumer's memory” [10]. A similar definition to Keller's was proposed by Aaker D.A., whereby brand image is referred to as “a set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way” [1]. Biel A.L. however defined brand image as “a cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to the brand name” [3].



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

Keller K. argued that these associations could originate from customers direct experience or from information obtained on a market offering or due to the impact a pre-existing associations with an organization had on consumer. Brand image is, therefore, the mental picture or perception of a brand or a branded product or service and includes symbolic meanings that consumers associate with the specific attributes of a product or service [5]. Brand image represents “the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to specific brands” a set of beliefs held by customers about a particular brand, based upon some intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of a market offering resulting to perceived quality, and customer satisfaction [13]. Brand image has been measured based on attributes [11]; brand benefits/values [9]; or using Malhotra’s brand image scale [14]. Measuring image based on the above definition would help marketers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their brand as well as consumers’ perceptions toward their product or services.

Looking into Keller’s conceptualization of brand image, it is considered a perception about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers’ memory. He suggested that “brand associations” comprise of brand attributes, brand benefits, and overall brand attitudes [22]. To Keller attributes are „descriptive features that characterized a product or service – what a consumer thought the product or service is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption” [10]. Attributes can be classified into product-related attributes and non product-related attributes (i.e. price, packaging or product appearance information, user and usage imagery). Product-related attributes refer to the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers while non product-related attributes refer to the external aspects of the product or services that relate to its purchase or consumption [22]. As for benefits, these are considered “the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes – that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them” [10]. Keller K. described that this image benefits can be classified into functional, experiential and symbolic benefits, which was originally derived from the work of Park C.W. Here, the functional benefits are related to the intrinsic advantages of product or services consumption and usually correspond to the product related attributes [18]. For example, experiential benefits refer to “what it felt like to use the product or services and usually correspond to the product related attributes”, while symbolic benefits were associated with the underlying needs for social approval or personal expression and outer-directed self-esteem and basically corresponded to non-product related attributes [22]. For brand attitude, Keller K. referred to Wilkie’s W. definition of brand attitudes which was “consumers’ overall evaluations of a brand” [10]. Overall, image can generate value in terms of helping customer to process information, differentiating the brand, generating reasons to buy, give positive feelings, and providing a basis for extensions [1]. Creating and maintaining image of the brand is an important part of a firm’s marketing program and branding strategy [14].

Brand image which usually includes the product’s name, its main physical features and appearance (including the packaging and logo), and its main function(s), is the key to answer the question of how the consumer chooses among alternative brands after information-gathering processes of buyer behaviour. Alternative evaluation is how the consumer uses this information to evaluate the options and arrive at a brand choice. The perspective focusing on psychological attributes of a product of consumer behaviour states that consumers often choose products,



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

services and activities over others because they associate these attributes with a certain life-style, a self-image by buying products that are an ascribed status. They attempt to preserve or enhance their self-image by buying products that they believe are congruent with that self-image and by avoiding products that are not [23]. For that reason, marketing academicians and practitioners see the symbolic image of product or services as more important in their success than their physical characteristics and attributes [1].

Brand image is important because it contributes to the consumer's deciding whether or not the brand is the one for him/her [27] and it influences consumers' subsequent buying behaviour [28].

Brand Image and the Country of Origin

The emergence of global brands gives rise to the issue of whether brand-image appeals affect consumer responses differently in different countries [9]. Before an enterprise that operates in markets of different countries decide to export its product to the other country, many points should be taken into account, like to identify the national characteristics that could affect the success of its brand-image strategies. It can be stated that brand images held in consumer mind are likely to be affected differently across countries of production.

Consumers tend to recall the stored information about the brand and the country in question and then they relate the brand name with the country of origin to form a brand image and infer the product evaluation [26]. The effect of country image on brand image is moderated by both brand and country reputation [29]. In different words, the brand image of a well-known brand of a given product produced in a famous country for that product is likely to be affected differently from the brand image of a well-known brand produced in an unknown country and vice-versa.

Hsieh [9] argued that brand image structure differs across countries. He also found that brand image is a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumers' memory. A study he made across 20 countries supports a multidimensional brand image structure. Revealed dimensions transfer consumers' sensory, utilitarian and symbolic and economic needs about a brand. Low and Lamb [13] found – consistent with the idea that consumers have more developed memory structures for more familiar brands – that well-known brands tend to exhibit multidimensional brand associations.

This is one of the important issues in the context of cosmetic industries.

Conclusions

One of the most complex factors is brand image. A widely accepted view is that brand image represents customers' perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory [10]. Brand image can positively influence customers' perceived quality on a market offering and also boost customer satisfaction, loyalty and commitment towards a market offering. It is also evident that these variables have strong association to and with brand image [17]. This implies that a good brand image is that which impacts positively on this entire customer variable: customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality and commitment to a market offering and not necessarily on one or few of the variables [17]. Creating and maintaining image



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

of the brand is an important part of a firm's marketing program and branding strategy (Keller, 1993).

Brand-origin will have a significant effect on brand image perception. Consumers tend to recall the stored information about the brand and the country in question and then they relate the brand name with the country of origin to form a brand image and infer the product evaluation [26]. The effect of country image on brand image is moderated by both brand and country reputation [29].

References

1. Aaker, D. A. Managing brand equity. Capitalizing on the value of a brand name, *New York: The Free Press*, 1991, 109 p.
2. Anderson, E.W., Fornell, C. Foundations of the American Customer Satisfaction Index, *Total Quality Management*, 2000, Vol. 11, No. 7, pp. 869-882.
3. Biel, A. L. How brand image drives brand equity, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32(6), 1992, 8 p.
4. Carpenter, J. M., & Fairhurst, A. Consumer shopping value, satisfaction, and loyalty for retail apparel brands, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 9(3), 2005, pp. 256-269.
5. Dobni, D. and Zinkhan, G.M. In search of brand image: a foundation analysis, 1990, *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 110-119.
6. Fornell, C., Mithas, S., Morgeson, F.V. III and Krishnan, M.S. Customer satisfaction and stock prices: high returns, low risk, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70, 2006, pp. 3-14.
7. Hallowell, R. The Relationships of Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, and Profitability: Empirical Study, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 1996, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 27-28.
8. Heskett, J.L., Jones, T.O., Lovemann, G.W., Sasser, W.E. jr., Schlesinger, L.A. Putting the Service-Profit Chain to Work, *Harvard Business Review*, 1994, Vol. 72, Issue 2, pp. 164-174.
9. Hsieh, M. H., Pan, S. L., & Setiono, R. Product-, corporate-, and country-image dimensions and purchase behavior: A multicountry analysis, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(3), 2004, pp. 251-270.
10. Keller, K. Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based equity, *Journal of Marketing*, 1993, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 1-22.
11. Koo, D. M. Inter-relationships among store images, store satisfaction, and store loyalty among Korea discount retail patrons, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 15(4), 2003, pp. 42-47.
12. Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunder, J., Wong, V. Principles of Marketing. 2nd Russian Ed. Moscow: *Williams Publishing House*, 944 p.
13. Low, G.S. and Lamb, C.W. The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 9, No. 6, 2000, pp. 350-368.
14. Malhotra, N. K. A scale to measure self-concepts, person concepts, and product concepts. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(4), 1981, pp. 456-464.
15. Na, W. B., Marshall, R., & Keller, K. L. Measuring brand power: Validating a model for optimizing brand equity, *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 8(3), 1999, pp. 171-184.
16. Nelson, E., Rust, R.T., Zahorik, A.J., Rose, R., Batalden, P. and Siemanski, B.A. Do patient perceptions of quality relate to hospital financial performance, *Journal of Health Care Marketing*, 1992, pp. 42-49.
17. Ogba I.E., Tan Z. Exploring the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment in China, *UK Journal of Technology Management*, 2009, pp. 132-144.
18. Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J., & MacInnis, D. J. (1986). Strategic brand concept-image management, *Journal of Marketing*, 50(4), pp. 135-145.



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

19. Reichheld, F.F., Markey, R.G., Hopton, C. The loyalty effect-the relationship between loyalty and profits, *European Business Journal*, 2000, pp. 134-139.
20. Reynolds, K. E., & Beatty, S. E. Customer benefits and company consequences of customer salesperson relationships in retailing. *Journal of Retailing*, 75(1), 1999, pp. 11-32.
21. Rose, S. The coming revolution in credit cards, *Journal of Retail Banking*, 1990, Vol. 12, pp. 17-19.
22. Sandoh S.L. jr., Omar M.W., Wahid N.A, Ismail I., Harun A. The effect of brand image on overall satisfaction and loyalty intention in the context of color cosmetics, *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2007, pp. 83-107.
23. Sirgy, M.J. Self-concept in consumer behavior: a critical review, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1982, Vol. 9, December, pp. 287-300.
24. Chernatony, L. and McEnally, M. The evolving nature of branding, *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 1999, Vol. 1999, No. 02.
25. Gardner, B.B. and Levy, S.J. The product and the brand, *Harvard business review*, 33, 1955, pp. 33-39.
26. Scott, S.L. and Keith, F.J. The automatic country of origin effects on brand judgment. *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 34, pp. 87-98.
27. Dolich, I.J. Congruence relationships between self-images and product brands. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1969, Vol. 6, No. 1, February, pp. 80-84.
28. Fishbein, M. Attitude and the prediction of behavior, in Fishbein, M. (Ed), *Attitude Theory and Measurement*, 1967, pp. 477-492.