

# Building Brand Image: A Multi-Perspective Analysis

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**Abstract**: The power and the impact of a strong brand image have extended to several areas other than the marketplace and consumer choice. In a market, overcrowded with brands, models and multiple options, how could one create a difference – this is the challenge faced by many companies across the globe. In a crowded category, it is useful to identify a benefit unexploited by the competitions. Owing to these reasons, the focus on brands and the importance of brand image is a growing trend amongst business owners and business managers. This is hardly surprising because a strong brand image is an asset for any business generating income and creating business value. This paper is the end-result of a crosssectional research and their strategic thrusts on various dimensions of building brand image in the marketplace. The paper highlights research when an organization uses industry image, corporate image, event sponsorships, online product reviews, green advertisement, celebrity endorsement along with functional benefits and other strategies for building brand image. However, the rules of building a brand image are not as simple as they look. It needs a more scientific application of strategic ideas corresponding to the segment and categories that the brand manager target to make brand image building a great success.

## Keywords: Brand Image, Customer Value, Functional Benefits, Image Fit, Online Review

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Since the evolution of the concept brand image in the 1960s and early 1970s, it has been conceptualized on the basis of the social psychological concept "attitude". Birdwell, 1968 claimed that brand image is an attitude about a given brand. The concept gained importance and started playing a fundamental role in marketing management when empirical research supported the importance of this concept during purchase decisions. For example, Gentry (1978) contented a significant relationship between brand image and brand preference. In the 1980s, attitude-based image research created more excitement in linking the brand image with the consumer behavior and marketing management. Researchers working in the same direction in the 1990s concluded that brand image is the vital component of brand equity (Hsieh et al, 2004). Brand image is not fixed; it is always relative to brand images of their competing brand. Another significant landmark in the evolution of brand image was seen with the concept of positioning. Brand image is the consumer perceptions about the brand reflected by a set of brand associations held in consumer's memory. Saxena and Dhar (2017) studied that customers look for intangible associations with the products to distinguish them from their competitors resulting in brand image formation.

## II. BRAND IMAGE LITERATURE

The studies show that there is an increasing recognition of the significance of the brand image to the accomplishment of market offerings and organizations (Ogba IE and Zhenzhen, 2009). The study identifies that a good brand image has a positive impact on the customers' loyalty, which in turn influenced customer perceived quality, boost customer assurance, induces satisfaction, and also influenced customers' willingness to express commitment to such offering for sustainable profits. Successful branding of a product or service is a fact of creating an image that is relevant, positive and memorable. Organizations work forward to create an emotional association (such as fun, pleasure or happiness) with the product in two ways. The first way is the direct experience of a brand to the customer. The second approach to branding in this digital era is to create an indirect association. A study carried by Richard Chinomona (2014), claimed that brand communication has a strong effect on brand image than on brand trust, however, a brand image strongly influences brand trust.

# Industry Image and Corporate Image

Industry image also influences brand image formation. A study was carried out by Burmann et al (2008) on the influence of industry image on brand image formation identified three factors which influence brand image formation namely- industry factors, internal brand identity factors and customers buying motives coupled with past experience (personal factors). In a similar study in Tiwan, Hung Chia-Hung (2008) contended that public relation perception about an industry also has a positive influence on the brand image. Sjodin and Torn (2006) found that corporate communication should be in sync with the existing brand image and any inconsistency between the two may adversely influence brand image and may reduce trustworthiness. Hawabhay and Abratt (2009) concluded that a transparency in communication and interaction between employees and customers help in image formation. They also concluded that brand image formation is a complex process and involves a large number of factors. Brand image can be built around product offerings (customer value) or corporate identity (Company Vision).

Da Silva et al (2008) on similar lines concluded that an appropriate corporate brand image and values result in customer satisfaction and loyalty. Another advantage of the corporate brand image is an easy brand extension and trust development among the customers. Lin et al (2013) claimed that the diverse brand images (symbolic, functional, and experiential images) have a substantial effect on the assessment of extension brands and the respondents with the high information involvement would make an informed evaluation of the extension brand than the respondents with low information involvement. Pina et al (2010) studied how the attitude towards brand extension affects the image of the parent brand. The same is largely resolute by the degree of perceived fit between the parent brand image and the extension. This study also analyzed the moderating role of two dimensions of consumer innovativeness: hedonist innovativeness (tied to need for stimulation) and social innovativeness (tied to need for uniqueness) along with the cultural orientation of the origin country as a moderating factor.

# Country of Origin and Country of Design

A study on country of origin, brand image perception and brand image structure revealed that the country of origin has a multi-dimensional impact on the brand image (Koubaa 2007). The effect of a developed ethnocentric sense on consumers' perception of foreign-made brands can be activated by media and oriented by the context. Only extreme ethnocentric attitudes are found to drive consumer behavior. Respondents exposed to the media campaign evaluate badly the country with which their own country owns a conflict and therefore express a negative perception for the brands made in that country. Highly reputed and less reputed brand perceptions are affected differently when consumers' ethnocentrism is activated.

Essoussi and Merunka (2007) studied that how brand image, the Country of Design (COD) and the Country of Manufacturing (COM) jointly influence consumers' evaluations of bi-national products in an emerging country. Brand and Country of Manufacturing congruity is also important since product evaluations decrease when consumers perceive incoherence in a manufacturing location. The study also supports Country of Design image is a significant predictor of brand image and the intensity of the relationships varies across product categories. The congruity between the brand image and Country of Manufacturing has a positive impact on branded product evaluation. Consumers in emerging markets seem to consider the overall image of the country in which the product is manufactured (Country of Manufacturing) as more important than where it is conceived; overall Country of Manufacturing image (vs overall Country of Design image) is the more influential on perceived product quality. Guzman and Paswan (2009) studied that when cultural brand cross national boundaries the cultural roots are often deepened. Expatriate customers residing in another country show a deeper affinity towards these cultural brands. This study provides meaningful contribution to brand personality literature and adds a vital insight into the brand image framework of cultural brands from the emerging markets

# Celebrity Endorsement and Event Sponsorship

Celebrity endorsement is yet another method for brand image building through electronic or print media. Frequent and repetitive celebrity endorsements help in creating an association between celebrity image and brand image and also act as a successful co-branding strategy. A careful celebrity endorsement with an image

similar to brand image became a prerequisite for effective image transfer (Jaiprakash, 2008). Dong-Jenn Yang and Jyue-Yu Lo (2011) contended that there is a significant positive transfer effect of celebrity image on brand Image. Sulkunen (2012) has found that brand image formation happens through familiarity, attitude, and knowledge of the consumer. Lin et al (2012) studied that brand image has a significant positive impact on the advertising effect and that product involvement play no role as moderating variable between brand image and advertising effect.

Brand image formation is also affected by the event sponsorship. Addis et al (2008) concluded that events create an experience for the consumers as they employ a large number of operational methods. A deep involvement in these experiences builds a relation which when coupled with social consumption situation help in generating a brand image. Events not only promote a brand image but also sometimes convey a message of carrying out Corporate Social Responsibility and as an additional benefit; the organization occupies a place of the preferred employer in consumers' mind (Faganel and Danijel, 2009). An active participation in events generates a holistic feeling in customers, increases communication and has a positive impact on the brand image (Drenger et al, 2008). Papadimitriou et al (2016) revealed five core dimensions of the brand image of an international sports event namely emotional, cultural, competition, social, and organizational.

Brand stereotyping and image transfer in concurrent sponsorships was studied by Francois et al (2015). The study presented that the transfer of image takes place among the sponsoring brands in this situation. The results show that the stereotype is ad hoc, rather than based on some prior developed mental schema, and therefore it is interpreted from the images associated with the concurrent sponsoring brands. Secondly, the brand stereotyping serves a cognitive rather than an evaluative function. Drengner et al (2008) contended that customers participate actively during the marketing event, which provides consumers with a holistic sensation coupled with increased involvement and results in the flow of emotions and a positive word of mouth communication. The study also claimed that particular advantages of event marketing can also be used successfully to influence the brand image. Smith (2004) studied the effect of sponsorship on the brand image of the sponsor, and developed a theoretical framework of factors that positively influence the effect of sponsorship on brand image transfer. Brand knowledge, power, fit and quality are considered as influences on the brand image transfer process.

# Benefits, Preferences and Image fit

Salciuviene et al (2007) assessed the relationship between functional, experiential and symbolic brand image benefits and brand preferences. The study concluded that functional, experiential and symbolic benefits are associated with brands which result in brand preference and all the three types of benefits should be viewed in totality. Luxury brands like wine brands require a timeless effort in building an image. The craftsmanship, quality associations with a place or personality, a strong set of values, tacit understanding of marketing, a focus on detail and strategic emergence, association with an event are often used to create a premium brand (Beverland, 2004). Bruwer John (2010) studied that building wine brands depends on quality and region of production. He concluded that consumers used regional branding cues, information, and images in their assessment and valuation of comparative wine labels. Almost without exception, the addition of regional information on a wine label increased consumer confidence in the quality of the product.

Biavinien (2007) in his study observed that brand image formation is a complex phenomenon and involves multiple factors. This study revealed many factors like product's physical attributes, aesthetic, symbolic and emotional benefits. Further, it was also observed that a fit between brand image and customer's self-image actually helps a customer in expressing himself in the society. Customers' needs can be considered as the starting point for brand image formation. A need for products and services drives a customer towards brands. Bauer et al (2008) claimed that the product attributes, perceived or actual benefits, and the attributes of the customer collectively influence image formation. Brand image formation is also an outcome of participation and understanding from a communication perspective (Srivastava and Kamdar, 2009). Results of the study emphasized the consistency of communication inadequate image formation. Many researchers observed that a distinctive offer is useful in image building and in the creation of differentiation. However, Mandiae (2009) studied and found that it may create a negative impact in some cases.

Chavanat et al (2009), observed that the image fit necessary for brand image building are use imagery fit, product attribute fit, functional benefit fit, personality fit, experience fit, and symbolic fit. Batra and Pamela (2004) studied the situational influences on the formation of the brand image and personality beliefs. They founded that non-verbalized personality association of celebrity endorsers does reinforce equivalent consumer's beliefs about a brand's fun and classiness benefits.

# Digital and Eco-Friendly Elements

Muller and Chandon (2004) studied that worldwide website as a new technology tool in building brand image. The study concluded that positive brand associations increase significantly after the visit and that attitude towards the www site has an impact on attitude towards the brand resulting in building brand image. Beneke et al (2014) study on social network marketing claimed that brand involvement has a moderating effect on the impact of interactivity and media richness on brand attitude and brand image. The results emphasized that interactivity had a positive effect on brand attitude. Similarly, the brand attitude was found to be strongly linked to the brand image. To build a strong brand image, it is important to engage with customers on fan pages in routinely responding to their comments and allowing them to upload suitable content.

Online reviews, texts, and blogs on brand usage experiences are more effective than oral communication to build a strong and powerful brand image. Moreover, credible online reviews have more impact on hedonic brand image rather than a functional brand image in the context of consumer electronics product in India (Chakraborty and Bhat, 2018). The E-commerce brand managers now can continuously monitor brand image not only for their own brands but also for competitive brands through online product reviews and network analysis (Gensler et al 2015). Applying the human associative memory model as the theoretical framework, Volckner Fanziska et al (2015) presented an approach to transform online product reviews into meaningful insights about brand images using a unique combination of network analysis methodologies and text mining. The data include consumers' thoughts, opinion, and feelings about brands, giving an opportunity to "listen to" consumers to get a better understanding of the perceptions about their brands, allowing the managers to effectively monitor the brand image and detect its strengths and weaknesses.

A new facet was added to the brand image when consumer awareness for environment increased and the concept of eco-friendly brand image and green brand image emerged and gained importance (Chan and Leung, 2006). Norazah (2013) found that consumer awareness of brand image with green marketing elements affects consumers' purchasing decisions of green products when the product brand image with green elements was used as the principal source of information about green products. Nagar, (2015) perceived that the product involvement moderates a positive relationship between brand image and an attitude toward green advertisements resulting into a stronger brand image. The study also specifies that positive attitude toward green advertisements, attitude toward the brand and brand image augments the likelihoods of consumers' purchase intention of such brands. Similar results of green marketing efforts on brand image and consumer purchase intention were studied by Shukla and Saxena (2019). **116639ABC2** 

## Brand Image for NGO

The brand building exercise was found to have influenced donors and generate more funding for NGOs. Smillie (1995) contends that developing and nurturing a strong global brand is indispensable for the survival of the international NGOs. Bennett and Gabriel (2003) revealed that a strong and unique brand image, comprising of five dimensions (dynamism, compassion, focus, on beneficiaries, idealism, and non-political image), leads to more donations. Michel and Rieunier (2012) claimed that having a strong, favourable, and unique brand image enhances the potential for the increased number of donations. This study developed a scale to measure the brand image of charities. Four dimensions of non-profit brands emerge in the scale: affect, dynamism, efficiency, and usefulness. Brand image explains up to 31 percent of intentions to give money and 24 percent of intentions to give time. The study conducted by Paco et al (2014) concluded that intention to donate money and giving time to NGOs is positively impacted by brand image. Another study

done by Paco et al (2014) suggested that the dimensions of the brand image like usefulness and affect contribute to the intention to give financial aid to NGOs.

## **Other Studies**

Saxena and Dhar (2019, 2020) developed the three-tier models for durable products and non-durable products helped the researchers to understand the dimension, factors, and attributes of brand building. Bellezza and Keinan (2014) observed that the non-core products and non-core users acted as "Brand Tourists" and generated a positive value for the brand image. The difference between the non-core users is established on how the non-users are perceived by current users of core products: "brand immigrants" who claim to be part of the in-group of core users of the brand and "brand tourists" who do not claim any membership status to the brand community. The study shows that core consumers respond positively to non-core users when they are perceived as brand tourists. The brand tourism is moderated by selectiveness of the brand and brand patriotism, and is mediated by core users' pride.

A study on the effects of heritage image on destination branding of Iran's main heritage destinations revealed that heritage image and the unique image have a relationship with the general image of the destination, and that general image itself has a relationship with overall destination brand (Saeedi and Hanzaee, 2018). Islam and Rahman (2016) examined the effects of brand image and brand love on customer engagement with customer loyalty as an outcome. Brand image and brand love considerably effect customer engagement. Brand love act as a mediator between customer engagement and brand image. The study also exposes that customer engagement effects customer loyalty.

The current decade saw the use of the Lexicographic Analysis for measurement of the brand image for retail store brands on manifold factors of brand image associations like their wealth, variety, strength, differentiation, and uniqueness (Cortazar and Vela, 2015). The results of the study confirm that associations are formed on the basis of previous experience and/or come from sources not controllable by the consumer, such as third-party references, massive media, insecurity, too much traffic or too far. The study identified the more favourable or preferred associations when referring to a shopping mall. Examples of favourable associations are spacious, good location, a variety of stores, and the existence of movie theatres. The study also concluded that women make their associations (brand image) on variety of stores, beautiful, large and nice shopping mall, as opposed to the associations (brand image) made by men are spacious, difficult access, and there are parking lots.

Pich and Armannsdottir (2015) have done work on how to operationalize the external brand image of a political brand. The study reveals the applicability of the six variables then known as the 'brand image framework' to the political environment. The study also explained how to use political and non-political brands as a basis to explore external brand image and compare its consistency with internal brand identity. Jin et al (2012) studied the connections among restaurant experiences, brand image, satisfaction and loyalty in the context of full-service restaurants. The study also suggest that: (a) A restaurant's environment and food quality positively influences brand image and customers' satisfaction, (b) customers' perceptions of price fairness do not influence brand image but does affect customers' satisfaction, (c) development of customers' positive brand image does not drive satisfaction but does influence loyalty in full-service restaurants, and (d) customers' dining motivations moderate the association between restaurant experiences and perceptions of brand image.

# III. CONCLUSION

Through the review of the literature reveals a number of studies that show the direct and indirect effect of different variables on brand image formation. A study conducted by Saxena and Dhar (2018), revealed that old beliefs regarding brand image formation are losing relevance and new views are building up. This calls for the necessity for revising the brand image and understanding its multi-perspective view. However, brand image is an intangible association associated with the customers. Brand image is the net extract of customers' perception of the brand. The review of previous studies exposes the need to study the attributes, factors, and dimensions leading to the formation of the brand image. A three-tier model or a framework is required to

map the associations attached to a brand in a particular category. Based on this framework, further studies can be carried out by various researchers to strengthen the brand image construct. This will also give the practicenars some control on the brand image formation. Also, the operationalization of brand image is not much studied and lots of assumptions are there in the measurement of the construct. A standardized psychometric tool (instrument) is required to measure the brand image formation. This tool will be helpful to the academicians, practicenars, and research associates to study the impact of various attributes on brand image formation. Further, this tool will also help the customers in evaluating the brand image of various brands they are associated with.

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