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## **Strategic Impact of the Marketing Triangle on Building and Sustaining Successful Brands through Innovativeness and Creativity: A Balanced Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This paper reviews the importance of branding in marketing organizations. When making a purchase, a customer is influenced by a whole range of factors associated with the complete product offer. One of these is the “brand name”. Branding of a product is very important and several factors influence that. Identifying these factors and building a successful brand is really a challenge for marketers. Several researchers have suggested different methods for building successful brands. In this paper the researcher applies the concept of marketing triangle as a strategic tool and argues that there must be a balanced relationship among the employees, customers and the company to build a successful brand. Further, she proposes a conceptual framework for successful brand building and enhancing the corporate identity through employees’ innovativeness and creativity.

*Keywords:* Successful Brands, Innovativeness, Creativity, Customer Perception, Corporate Identity

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### **1. Introduction**

Branding is one of the most powerful concepts in modern marketing. Not only does it differentiate a firm’s product from that of its competitors it also provides an identity to an organisation’s different products for merchandising. Essential brand name is an intangible asset of a company. According to Panwer (1997) an established brand name is an intangible asset of a company. The sum total of the intrinsic and relative values it imparts to the product is known as brand equity. However, to establish a brand and create equity, firms have to first invest in the brand. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as “A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbols that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and / or to the firm’s consumers”. In essence brands are clusters of functional and emotional values and traditionally brand management has taken

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an external focus concentrating on meeting customers' needs. Kotler (2000) defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. When considering brands it should first be stressed that the term brand is used to encompass not only consumer products such as Nespray or Nescafe but a host of offerings, which include places (such as Bangkok), ships (such as the Queen Elizabeth), companies (Such as BMW and Kodak), industrial products, service products, and even individual people. Second, a distinction should be drawn between a brand and a commodity is the idea of added values. A brand converts a commodity into something which can command a high price (Meldrum & Mc Donald, 1995).

According to O'Guinn, Allen, and Semenik (2003) brands are all about creativity they always have been. Marketers use advertising and promotion to invent and reinvent brands all the time. The people who actually create the ads and shape the brand image can have a huge input into what the brand comes to mean. Making ads and promotions is one of the most important functions in the creation, growth and survival of brands.

King (1991) says increasingly the company brand will become the main discriminator. A characteristic of successful brands is the way that their position has been precisely defined and communicated internally. Everyone working on a particular brand is regularly reminded of the brand's positioning; an integrated, committed approach is adopted; and ensuring that the correct balance of resources is consistently applied.

Kapferer (1992) produces an esoteric statement. "A brand is not a product it is the product's essence in meaning and its direction and it defines its identity in time and space". Aaker and Biel (1993) define a brand is basically a name that refers to the product of a particular manufacturer in a particular product category. A brand includes tangible or intrinsic qualities such as appearance, performance data, package and the guarantees or warranties that are attached to it. Perhaps more importantly a brand involves aspects that the consumer attributes to it, beyond its tangible features. These aspects may include attitudes towards the company that produces the product or towards the brand itself, beliefs about the brand in relation to self and others and so on. Next, the author intends to identify the theoretical aspects and the review of literature of brands.

## **2. Review of Literature**

One of the most established definitions of a brand was proposed by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1960. It stresses the importance of the brand logo. The unique shape of Coco Cola bottle, the distinctive golden arch of Mc Donald's, part eaten apple of Apple Mackintosh are significant examples of brands through their logos. Gilbert (2001) identifies some consumers use the same outlet or purchase the same brand of product on most occasions or on a regular basis. This buyer characteristic is known as brand loyalty. Here a person will feel positively disposed to a brand upon brand attitudes. Another perspective managers adopt is when interpreting brands in terms of positioning. i.e, ensuring customers instantly associate a brand with a particular functional benefit for example BMW as performance and Volvo as safety.

Further Hankinson and Cowking (1993) define the brand personality is being a unique mix of functional attributes and symbolic values. Functional values are extrinsic, tangible product properties such as "hard wearing" or easy to use; whereas symbolic values describe intrinsic, intangible properties such as friendliness or 'fun'. Ultimately each company needs to find ways of encouraging

consumers to build a relationship with a brand for it to have any strength or staying power. This is why the brand personality is important and has consequently been developed in the current world.

de Chernatony (2001) further identifies another perspective noted about managers' interpretations of brands. Brands are about a vision senior managers have for making the world a better place. As a result of this vision, a role can be defined for the brand. A powerful brand vision consists of the future environment, the purpose of brand and the values that will characterize the brand. In this perspective, brands should provide an additional value to customers. It has also been noted that unless there had been a breakthrough in technology which created a new market, added values should not be conceived in terms relative to the core-commodity form but rather relative to competition or time.

Van Riel and Balmer (1997) identify about the ethos aims and values that present a sense of individuality differentiating a brand. The component of brand identity includes personality, positioning, brand vision, culture, relationships (staff to staff; staff to customers; and staff to other stake holders) and presentation. However Poiesz (1989) argues that evaluating a brand's image needs to be taken into consideration with customers' levels of involvement with the category.

### *2.1 Branding Strategies and their Implications*

Knapp (2000) has expressed the brand strategy as follows "A brand is a way of life. It's not just about a word; it is about passion, commitment and a unique promise that gets fulfilled every day." Kotler (2000) identifies five major branding decisions, such as branding decision, brand sponsor decision, brand name decision, brand strategy decision and brand repositioning decision.

Wolff (1995) has developed a model regarding integrated branding process. He argues that a brand's central idea is transmitted through its products / services; staff's behaviour in the environment and communication. The importance of each of these will vary according to the brand.

Rokeach (1973) defines "A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence." Values are an important part of a brand and ultimately shape its destiny and that of its staff. Red Cross and Red Crescent have three core values, humanity, unity and independence, and these drive its staff to go into disaster-stricken areas to help others.

A study done by de Chernatony and Harris (2000) to identify the relationship between the employees' values and brand values shows how their values' profile compare with that of their brand and that employees need to think more about their commitment to the brand. The author believes from various researchers' findings that employees' innovativeness and creativity influences a major part in building and sustaining brands.

According to King (1991) increasingly the company brand will become the main discriminator. That is consumer's choice of what they buy will depend rather less on an evaluation of the functional benefits to them of a product or service and rather more on their assessment of the people in the company behind it, their attitudes, skills, behaviours, design, style, language, greenism, altruism, modes of communication, speed of response and so on.

### **3. Purpose of the Paper**

The purpose of this paper is to propose a standard conceptual model for Building Successful Brands with the help of theoretical analysis of the concepts of Marketing Triangle, Innovativeness and creativity to the practicing marketers.

This paper emphasizes on analysing the importance of Marketing Triangle on successful brand building. In any marketing organization internal, external and interactive marketing are the three major components in its marketing operations. The relationship between the company and the employees is defined as internal marketing; the relationship between employees and customers is called as external marketing and the relationship between the company and its customers is considered as the interactive marketing.

From the available literature, it is understood that branding is one of the key aspects in marketing and building successful brands is a challenge for marketers in the competitive market. Therefore the researcher intends to identify the factors influencing successful brand building that leads to the success of the organization.

### **4. Employee Innovativeness in Branding**

According to Huhtala and Parzefall (2007) managers need to acknowledge that employee innovativeness can be a resource. Employee innovativeness refers to employees' propensity to innovate (a complex behaviour consisting of idea generation, idea promotion and data realization) with the aim of meeting organizational goals in novel ways (Kanter, 1988; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Individuals, alone or in groups undertake innovative activities with the intention to derive anticipated benefits.

Creativity is central to innovativeness but the concepts are not synonymous; innovation can be seen as successful and intentional implementation of creativity, which is more subjective and context-specific by its nature (Miron, Erez & Naveh, 2004). Creativity may be limited to idea generation alone but by definition, innovation produces benefits for the people involved (Anderson, De Dreu & Nijstad, 2004). Therefore innovativeness requires creativity, but creativity does not always lead to an innovation.

Innovativeness requires that the individual is both able and willing to be innovative. In terms of abilities, above the average general intellect, certain cognitive capabilities, general skills, task and context specific knowledge, for example, facilitate innovativeness (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Taggar, 2002). Beyond knowledge and skills, innovativeness requires intrinsic motivation and a certain level of internal force that pushes the individual to persevere in the face of challenges inherent in the creative work (Georgsdottir & Getz, 2004).

### **5. Customer Perception**

The author argues customers become satisfied with the brand when employees use their innovativeness based on the market position. Kotler (2000) defines satisfaction as a person's feelings of products or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations.

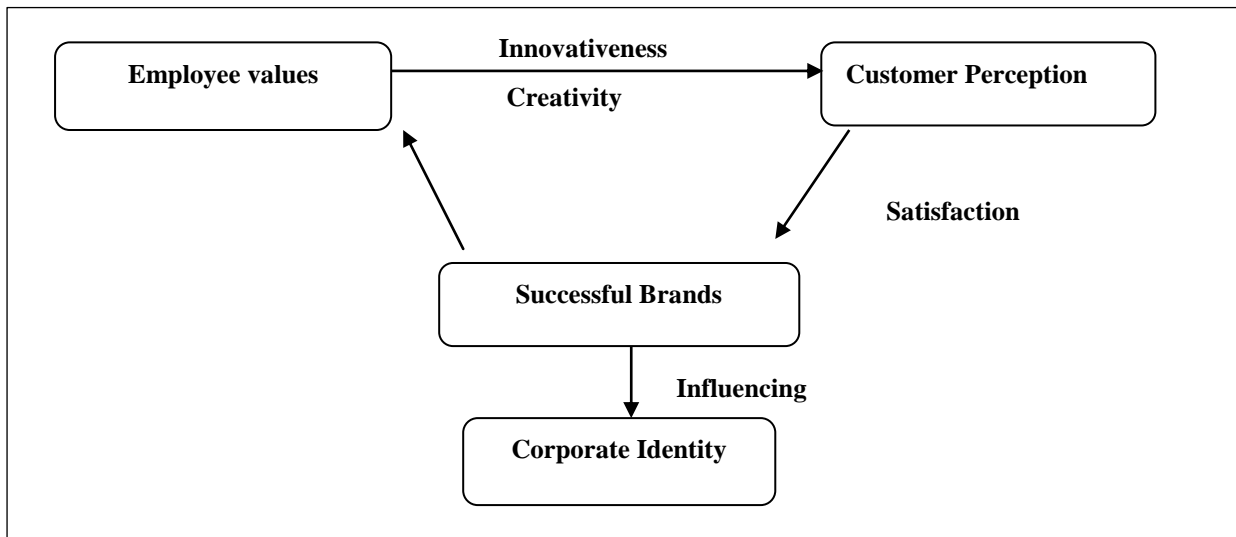
Berry (1983) says, 'Relationship Marketing'- the attraction maintaining and enhancing of customer relationship leads to customer satisfaction. Aug et.al. (2000) studied customers from Asian countries and found strategies adapted to customer recession (economic crisis) in their countries. The

adoption of variety of strategies in countering recession can be seen being applied by Sri Lankan customers too. Further the actual customer delivered value is more relevant than the intended customer value. For example Sunlight soap is considered to have utility value and is in the cleanliness related segment. Say Starlight Soap was closely placed near Sunlight in the consumer mind. It would mean that customer's perception of advertised Starlight positioning of 'Soap of international quality' could be considered as inconsistent. Thus the intended customer-delivered value 'quality' Soap could be different from perceived customer-delivered value 'utility' Soap.

### **6. Suggested Model for Successful Branding**

Various researchers have found different models that enable the brands deliver their values in a competitive business environment. The art of managing a brand over time depends on brand managers being totally aware of what their brand kernel is and realizing that this must not be changed (Kapferer 1992). Branded products with long histories for example Kelloggs' various cereals have been forced subtly to adjust their offering to keep them relevant to the changing market conditions. The Figure I shows the model proposed by the author to build successful brands.

**Figure1: The Proposed Model for Building Successful Brands**



According to this model the author feels the concept of Marketing Triangle influences on determination of brand building and sustainability. Employees' values are increased through motivation, and training. When the company satisfies its internal staff, it could be able to satisfy its external customers. Internal marketing means to satisfy its own employees. If the employees are satisfied with their job they would like to expose the innovativeness in their marketing activities, such as good relationship marketing, and building successful brands in enhancing the promotion. This will lead to customers' perception towards the company's products/ services, i.e. external marketing. Through the effective external marketing, the customers' satisfaction would be achieved and it will focus on building a successful brand value. Finally, when the company's corporate identity will be raised through the interactive marketing. Customers prefer successful brands based on their creativity and appropriateness for the demands, needs and the culture of them. At the same time due to the success of brands in the market, employees who involve in marketing activities will be stimulated and that will influence in determining the employees values and their innovativeness and creativity. Therefore, the author recommends that there is a balanced relationship to be maintained among

employees, customers and the company in order to build a successful brand, increase its values and sustain in the competitive market.

## 7. Conclusions

The researcher's main purpose in this paper has been to develop a conceptual framework for building and sustaining a successful brand and the effect on organization's success. Her central argument is three fold. First, employees should have positive values inclined towards innovation and creativity. Second, innovation and creativity are intertwined concepts which influence the customers' perception. The customers should perceive satisfaction from the brand. Third, the interaction between the employees, customers and the company together decide the successful brands and the corporate identity. This conceptual framework opens a number of areas for future empirical research. For example, measurement of employees' values on brand image, measurement of customers satisfaction in a particular brand and the influence of brand image on corporate identity.

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