

ACADEMIC SUMMARY

The Role of Sensory Branding in Building and Enhancing Brand Image

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ABSTRACT: Our senses play a vital role in helping us to understand and evaluate the world around us. They also affect our decision making process. An image of the outer world is created through the information received and collected from our senses. This information is organised and processed in our brains to give meaning to it and we then respond to these different stimuli. Our memories are also full of images, odours, sounds, flavours and textures that have enriched our experiences, yet most of the research in the field of advertising is mainly concerned with the role of visual stimuli in attracting consumer's attention and creating brand image.

In an era where the immense technological development has resulted in an increase in competition between businesses in various sectors, it has become difficult to differentiate brands from their competitors and create or enhance specific unique brand images for them, throughout various touch points, effecting purchasing decisions.

The objective of this paper is to investigate whether combining visuals with other types of stimuli has an effect in creating and enhancing brand image. Using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Investigating in the following points: How do non visual stimuli (like odour, sound, texture...) contribute in creating and enhancing brand image? How do they effect purchasing decisions? How do they affect retaining and retrieving visual stimuli in the consumer's memory? The researcher has concluded that combing visuals with other appropriate stimuli make them more effective, memorable and creates emotional bonds with consumer. This in return affects brand image. In addition to that different stimuli can effect purchasing decisions.

KEY WORDS: Brand Image-Sensory stimuli-Sensation-Perception-Sensory Branding-Emotional Branding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology has affected the lifestyle of consumers, who now spend most of their time in front of screens, in virtual worlds, during the different activities they are involved in; whether it is for the purpose of education, entertainment, shopping or interacting with others. However, they lack real physical interactions in various environments. Bearing in mind that the information that the consumers learn and the perceptions they form of everything around them is gathered and formed by processes that involves a connection between the five senses and the brain, brands today have realized that they need to create experiences that stimulate different senses to create a higher level of engagement in order to stand out. As including different types of stimuli in

their identity programs can make them more memorable and enhance their recognition, differentiation and brand image.

2. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

2-1 Theoretical Framework:

Brand Image

It is the subjective perception of the brand in the consumer's mind, however, brands use different marketing and advertising strategies to influence that image and provoke certain feelings towards them. The importance of brand image –from a consumer's perspective is that it forms a sense of trust in the quality of offered products and services which reduces the time and effort involved in taking purchasing decisions. It also fulfills the human need of belonging to certain groups or social standards that result in social acceptance. Moreover, the importance of the brand image- from a brand's perspective- lies in the ability to raise the prices of offered products and services, as consumers would be willing to pay more in return for better quality. Also, a positive image encourages governments to offer these brands trade facilities.

Emotional Branding

The increase in competition and the technological advancements have made brand differentiation more difficult. Brands have realized that how consumers *feel* about them affects their behavior towards them. Therefore, there is an increase in the investment in creating emotional bonds with consumers, as this relationship will affect their loyalty and make their purchasing decisions in favor of the brands they are attached to.

Sensory Branding

Creating consumer engagement in a multi-sensory experience enhances the emotional bonds between brands and consumers. Using the appropriate various stimuli effects various areas in the brain making the sensory experience more effective and memorable. Various previous studies have proved -with the help of applying Neuro science and with the help of brain scans- that odors, texture, sounds and flavors have psychological and physiological effects on consumers. They can provoke certain emotions, thoughts and behavior and purchasing decisions. Brands today invest in designing unique gastric, auditory, tactile, and aromatic stimuli to be included in their identity programs, along with visual elements, to create differentiation and influence brand image

2-2 Analytical study

An analytical study was performed on Singapore Airlines. Investigating in the different stimuli used by the brand at various touch points, especially during air flights-which is the essence of their offered service-.The brand promotes the image of the “Singapore girl” to reflect meaning of hospitality, elegance and create distinction. A special perfume has been designed for the brand called “Stefan Floridian Waters”, composed of Citrus, Lavender and flowers, which have proved to have calming effects on humans. It is infused on the towels served onboard, worn by flight attendants and sprayed in aisles and waiting areas. Flight attendants wear distinctive uniforms inspired by local traditional Asian costumes, made of local textures and floral prints. A variety of meals are offered on board, including distinctive Asian dishes and flavors. In addition to a variety of playlists that the passenger can enjoy listening to during the flight. This distinctive, rich multi-sensory experience has made traveling with Singapore Air distinctive and memorable which definitely effects the brands image and positioning.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research Investigates in the following points: How do non visual stimuli (like odour, sound, texture...) contribute in creating and enhancing brand image? How do they effect purchasing decisions? How do they affect retaining and retrieving visual stimuli in the consumer's memory?

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to investigate whether combining visual elements with other types of stimuli has an effect in creating and enhancing brand image.

5. HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGIES

The research uses a mixture of qualitative and qualitative research methods.

It is hypothesized that creating a multisensory experience at various touch point increases the emotional bonds between the brand and the consumer and can effect brand image and purchasing decisions.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The researcher has concluded that combing visuals with other appropriate stimuli make them more effective, memorable and creates emotional bonds with consumer. This in return affects brand image. In addition to that different stimuli can effect purchasing decisions. That is why they must be chosen and designed to carefully express brand personality and influence the desired brand image

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