

ADVERTISING AND SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPMENT OF BRAND PERSONALITY

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ABSTRACT: The brands are the perceptual meeting points of the values, goals and promises of companies with the expectations of consumers. Developing brand personality is a key approach to create a strong bond between the consumers and the brand which comprises certain values and characteristics of a lifestyle, providing consumers a way for self-expression. Advertising strategies have an important contribution in the development of brand personality by creating a potential that strengthens the personal bond with the target groups. In accordance with differentiation strategies, this process is nourished by the demand for the match of inspiring human characters with the brands in the course of consumer experiences. Social media has become one of the most effective marketing environments in human history, and building the brand personality through social media has become a dominant strategic approach for brands. An effective social media strategy is achieved with an appropriate match of the contents and the communication platforms with respect to the nature of these platforms having their own functional constraints and own cultural tendencies. Fundamentally, trust has a determinative effect on the way the consumer perceives the advertisement from the very beginning. Therefore, companies need to prioritize trust in their corporate business strategies so that customers can approach ads and social media messages with a positive attitude.

Key Words: Brand Personality, Development of Brand Personality, Advertising for Brand Personality, Social Media Strategies, Brand Trust

INTRODUCTION

Developing brand personality is an effective strategy providing the differentiation of a brand against competitors in alignment with target groups. This process is nourished by a mutually beneficial relationship between the company and the consumers under the constraint in which, the promises of the company match the expectations of consumers. When it is the case of building brand personality, the interaction that is derived through advertising strategies have an effective contribution by creating a potential that reinforces the personal bond with the consumers. Social media has become a favorite marketing environment, providing an effective opportunity to connect the companies with the target audience at a low cost. In this regard, shaping the brand personality through social media has become a dominant strategic approach for brands.

1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND FOR BRAND PERSONALITY

Brand personality is a set of human personality traits that are applicable to brand perception and relevant for brand strategies (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003: 151); that is, "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997: 347).

Apart from the functional advantages, there is a tendency for brands to be perceived by consumers through human characters. In this context, the characteristics of a brand personality can be expressed by the dimensions of human personality. For this purpose, Aaker presented a five-dimensional model to be the Brand Personality Scale originated from the Big Five-model of human personality.

According to the brand personality scale formed by Aaker (Aaker, 1997: 352), the main characteristics are sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. For the brand personality, sincerity is expressed by traits such as down to earth, honest, cheerful and wholesome; excitement such as daring, spirited, imaginative and up-to-date; competence such as successful, intelligent and reliable; sophistication such as upper class and charming; ruggedness such as tough and outdoorsy.

In spite of the popularity of Aaker scale, there is a renewed brand personality scale as well with respect to criticisms towards certain aspects. According to this renewed scale (Geuens, etc., 2009: 103), the main characteristics are responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity and emotionality. For the brand personality, responsibility is expressed by traits such as stable, down to earth and responsible; activity such as active, dynamic and innovative; aggressiveness such as, aggressive and bold; simplicity such as ordinary and simple; emotionally such as, romantic and sentimental. This renewed scale is again, based on the Big Five dimensions.

When the brand personality scale is much similar to the human personality scale, it is more convenient to utilize consumer surveys enabling efficient analysis, to build effective brand personalities in terms of target groups (Geuens, etc., 2009: 98). In the course of time, this process leads consumers to prefer brands with distinctive brand personalities, expressing their own personalities (Belk, 1988: 140).

2. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF BRAND PERSONALITY

It has become a necessity for companies in today's competitive environment to develop more effective branding strategies than ever in order to achieve the advantage over the competitors. The importance of marketing strategies increases even more when the difference between products is not easily distinguishable through functional features on behalf of the consumers (Ridgway & Myers, 2013: 50). To give an example in this context, for the symbolic brands like fashion brands which meet needs such as self-expression and prestige, it is strategic to prioritize certain values so that the differentiation over competitors can be emphasized. Developing brand personality is a key approach to create a strong bond between the consumer and the brand which comprises certain values and characteristics of a lifestyle, providing consumers a way for self-expression. In this regard, cultural aspects are determinative in building appropriate brand personality strategies.

Brand personalities are defined under the influence of the culture through certain parameters like values, regulations and national tendencies. Therefore, it is important to determine the characteristics and tendencies of the brand personality in a way that match the culture. Similarly, global brands can strategically be defined by personalities with respect to global aspects. There are consumers who prefer globally positioned brands for social approval or for the will to define themselves with an international status. Furthermore, the brand positioning strategy influences the brand personality through the content and presentation elements, such as language, aesthetics and aspects of the culture (Jun, etc., 2015: 273). Research results have confirmed that certain dimensions of brand personality have similar meanings in certain countries like sincerity while certain dimensions like ruggedness stay specific to culture

(Aaker, etc., 2001: 495). It has also been confirmed through research that consumers who are exposed to different cultural characteristics have a tendency to interact with a relevant brand personality trait in cultural basis (Rodriguez etc., 2013: 462). Culture has a significant influence in the perception of brand personality through different motivations. The consumers may perceive themselves through certain traits of a brand personality or they may expect other people to perceive them through specific traits of brand personality; in any case, this interaction contributes to customer loyalty when they are defined as culturally positioned by providing the customers the opportunity to reflect their identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005: 874).

Additionally, how consumers face uncertainties with respect to their cultures effects the brand engagement as well. In the case when the society's tolerance for uncertainty is defined with uncertainty-avoidance, researches confirm that in cultures where life strategies lead high uncertainty-avoidance, consumers try to avoid uncertainty to a large extent. For this reason, if there is an inconsistency between a perceived brand personality and the consumer's personality, a more negative consequence can be expected in these cultures. On the other hand, in cultures where there is low uncertainty-avoidance, such brands can be expected to be tolerated much easier. Thus, the level of uncertainty-avoidance of a culture is determinative in the evaluation of the congruity between the brand and the consumer (Matzler etc., 2016: 509).

Evaluating the overall validity of brand personality dimensions for different cultures is important to identify the expectations of consumers through the perceptions of brand personality in these cultures.

3. IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON BRAND PERSONALITY

Advertising strategies has an important contribution in the development of brand personality; it can be used either to create a new brand personality or reinforce an existing one. The ultimate goal is to achieve differentiation against the competitors. In this manner, advertising strategies can support the repositioning attempt of an underperforming brand in order to enhance attention over a new target segment as well.

A well-designed commercial can reflect specific traits of brand personality by certain components like the playing actors, the music, the content or an emotional attachment. TV commercials are still effective tools for advertising strategies and in the case when they go viral, they can even be more effective. Going viral, gives that TV commercial access to social media and enables the brand message to spread rapidly. Another important criterion for the efficiency of the advertisement is how positively the brand message is perceived by target groups.

When social awareness-oriented messages are added to persuade or remind the audience, the brand related messages are likely perceived positively. When a well-designed message provides a distinct contribution in behavioral change by the raise of awareness, as the reflection of the brand personality, the message of the company is likely be interpreted much positively (Souza & Tay, 2016: 504). For example, to reduce the number of the car accidents, speeding and phone texting can be mentioned through fear-and-hope-based scenarios in order to amplify the influence. The social awareness message can strategically be oriented according to the target groups; many examples have already been globally spread like 'preventing inappropriate fishing', 'climate change related issues', 'helping people decide to quit smoking' and 'nature related subjects like the extinction of living species'. Any social

media platform like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, also the mass media channels like newspaper, radio and television can serve with appropriate content to achieve an effective advertising strategy through social awareness-oriented messages.

In the case when the brand personality is shaped with advertisements through such social awareness projects, the ethical vision of the brands creates a positive perception and strengthens the company reputation. However, an unethical attitude can result in corporate scandals which gives serious harm to brand image and thus, to the company as well (Wen & Song, 2017: 28). Following the positive impact, ethical branding supports the companies in achieving advantage in the competitive environment with the increase in the number of ethically conscious consumers. In this respect, ethical advertising through corporate social responsibility is a frequently preferred communication strategy, providing an effective way to develop a positive image (Nasruddin & Bustami, 2007: 93).

4. DEVELOPING BRAND PERSONALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Developing brand personality by virtue of social media is widely accepted as an effective communication strategy for brands. On this basis, social media strategies are shaped according to the characteristics of the chosen platforms. For example, it is clear that LinkedIn users are active through career related topics and it is well-known that in Facebook, age distribution is pretty evenly spread. In order to increase the effectiveness of the company messages to get noticed among other products, emotional content is effective (Lee & Cho, 2016: 236). In this manner, inspiring commercials are powerful communication tools which make the audience feel positively. Well-designed company and brand stories can also promote brand awareness. An attractive story can lead positive consumer thoughts which helps negative reviews about that brand to get reduced. Besides, such positive emotions that accompany storytelling supports the increase in brand trust.

An effective social media strategy is achieved with the appropriate match of the platform and the content because, each platform has its own constraints and own cultural tendencies. Another advantage of social media platforms is that they increase the diffusion rate of brand information (Lou & Koh, 2016: 2). This fact is one of the major advantages of social media with respect to previous traditional mass media strategies, enabling diffusion of brand information through consumer to consumer interaction. Nevertheless, it is a challenge for advertisers to achieve the active participation of the network users and persuade them share the brand content. The point is that, with the excessive amount of the shared content across the social media platforms, it has become a challenge even to make network users notice the related messages.

As a unique communication tool, advertising has a wide range of ways of expression for different social media platforms; it is as if each of these social media platforms has its own language. Facebook is a very effective platform enabling different kinds of advertisements like banner advertisement, rich media advertisement, video advertisement and sponsorships (Lou & Koh, 2016: 3). Especially, entertainment-oriented video advertisement on Facebook is gaining immense attention; as a matter of fact, language of Facebook is mainly the entertainment. This is why, advertisers shape their Facebook strategies mainly on the basis of entertainment. Facebook provides a good opportunity to expand the access to the posts; that is, the more likes and comments lead a higher engagement which can be achieved by a well-designed content.

LinkedIn is an important platform to share content especially by articles. Instagram helps to engage with the followers through its visual medium to accelerate the branding goals by sharing infographics, gifs and even short videos.

Twitter is another important choice as a text-oriented communication platform. The increase in the number of characters, from 140 to 280, is expected to positively affect message content options. There are mainstream popular hashtags which connects a great number of user. It is important to keep the page as active as possible by frequently tweeting and retweeting. Twitter is providing a more directional interactivity because, Twitter users have a tendency to follow the flow of messages that share a similar way of thinking or ideologies (Zhang, 2017: 161). In the same manner, also the brands are followed by consumers on this platform therefore, it is advantageous for brands to intensify personality traits to commence dialogs.

5. BRAND PERSONALITY IN BUILDING CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Consumers have a tendency to match human characteristics to brands with respect to self-expression, and this acknowledged brand personality improves the consumer-brand relationship. The interactive nature of social media provides appropriate platforms for brands to connect with their target groups through accepted personalities by bringing the relationships to a more personal level (Zhang, 2017: 159). In this manner, brand personality in social media communication helps to improve consumer loyalty and positively affects the purchase intentions. Researches confirm that sincerity has a stronger influence on brand commitment with respect to other dimensions of brand personality (Martin & Sauer 2013: 214). Comprising the appropriate conditions to perform sincerity, social media has strongly been preferred to strengthen the psychological bond between customers and brand.

In the perspective of brand personality strategies, people are consuming different brands in order to express themselves. Attractive brand personalities nourish the attention of consumers for the reason that they arouse the desired aspects of their identity (Aaker, 1997: 347). In this regard, consumers choose brands to emphasize character attributes they want to express and feel about their own selves. Durability of these brand personality traits allows the consumers to remember or recognize the characteristics they have in their identities. This interaction positively effects the consumption behavior, and enhancing the brand attachment, promotes loyalty (Giroux, etc., 2017: 182). The harmony between the brand personality and the consumer personality is very important in the name of the desire of the consumers to associate certain characteristics of their own self with brand personalities.

In the core of corporate strategies generally all marketing decisions support the main company goal of achieving strong consumer-brand relations, and brand personality has a crucial role in these strategies. As long as the characteristics of brand fulfils the personal traits with respect to the demand of target groups, higher purchase intentions can be expected in the long run (Liao, etc., 2017: 2).

6. BRAND TRUST FOR BRAND PERSONALITY

A favorable brand personality is expected to enhance consumer preference, and promote the level of trust (Freling & Forbes, 2005: 405). Certain characteristics of brand personality are considered to be relatively more influential over brand trust. It is more likely that the sincere brands that are associated with traits such as down-to-earth, honest, cheerful and genuine are more trustworthy by consumers than other brands in terms of brand personality because trust means keeping promises, fulfilling the promises and being sincere (Sung & Kim, 2010: 644).

Similarly, in the case when competent brands are associated with personality traits such as responsible, dependable, efficient and reliable, the brand trust is expected to get positively affected.

Which came first: The chicken or the egg? As much as there is 'Brand personality for brand trust', there is, 'Brand trust for brand personality'. That is, brand trust is required for a favorable brand personality as highlighted in the title.

Developing brand personality is a long-term strategy depending on the communication tools mainly the advertisement and social media. The essence of this strategy is how consumers perceive the ads and the messages. Social media comprises some advantages with respect to traditional mass media channels such as low cost and customization possibilities. Hereby, social media has become an important environment influencing the consuming behavior through brand awareness. The point is that, regarding the interactive nature of these online multi-directional communication platforms, companies are experiencing difficulties in maintaining the control over the flow of branding information. Therefore, it is important for companies to perform social media activities with the guidance of consistency.

Advertisements are appropriate forms for the contents of the branding strategies to strengthen the bonds with target groups especially through the messages with emotional attachments. On the other hand, researches have confirmed that trust has a positive influence in brand and company evaluations (Hahn, etc.: 2016: 50). Fundamentally, trust has an effect on the way the consumer perceives the advertisement from the beginning. In order for the consumer to be able to appreciate the brand-related advertisements or any related message positively, brand trust needs to be established from the very beginning at least at an acceptable level. Therefore, following the corporate strategies, it is important for companies to prioritize the maintenance of the trust.

Brand recognition creates an advantage in a competitive environment that enables more efficient marketing strategies. Nevertheless, brand equity can comprise negative ingredients as well that can lead a decrease in the value of both the product and the company. Hence, it is important for the long run brand strategies to be carefully designed in order to achieve a more powerful brand equity.

The brand experience can be defined as the perceptual impression of the consumer at any moment and any stage of the contact, including the images in the advertisement, from the first personal contact to the usage (Alloza, 2008: 373). Throughout the brand experience, trust in the purchased brand can be considered as a means to increase credibility and to reinforce the repurchasing behavior of consumers (Amine, 1998: 314). In an increasingly competitive environment, the brand becomes one of the most strategic assets for a company. Consumers tend to pay more when the brand is concerned, because they perceive that product along with the brand value as differentiated regarding the competitors. For this reason, companies try to gain advantage by developing strategies to make brands stronger, and the primary strategy for this process is to ensure brand trust.

7. CONCLUSION

Brand personality is not created by just publishing a message, but by turning that message into a building block of brand personality through the way it is perceived by the target groups. Long-term brand personality development goals rely on short-term achievements through these building blocks. Namely, appropriate communication strategies lead positive perceptions with respect to the content of that message and the preferred platforms. In the case when these messages comprise values and emotions to be shared, contribution to consumer engagement is expected to be more influential. However, with respect to consistency, maintenance of trust is a crucial factor in this process. A strong brand personality enhances the brand trust, but a downturn in brand trust effects brand strategies, even the overall corporate strategies negatively. The customer expectations are shaped mainly, by company commitments; hence, presence of a sincere effort is crucial to meet these customer expectations -even in times of crisis- in order to ensure the maintenance of brand trust.

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