Business and Economics

ქართული ბრენდები - შემთხვევითობა თუ წინასწარ დაგეგმილი სტრატეგია

ბიბილაშვილი ლელი
საქართველოს უნივერსიტეტი

დღესდღეობით ბრენდს კომპანიების წარმატებასა და წარუმატებლობაში უმნიშვნელოვანესი ადგილი უჭირავს. თუმცა, თითოეული წარმატებული ბრენდის მიღმა უამრავი შეცდომა დგას, ბრენდები ასე ადვილად და მარტივად არ ყალიბდება. ბრენდის წარმატება სწორად დაგეგმილ სტრატეგიაზე და მის განხორციელებაზეა დამოკიდებული. სტატია მიმოიხილავს ბრენდს, მისი განვითარებისა და მართვის თავისებურებებს და წარმოადგენს ქართულ რეალობაში არსებულ ვითარებას ბრენდინგის თვალსაზ- რისით. კერძოდ, სტატიაში მოცემულია მტკნარი წყლის ბრენდებად ქცევის ამხსნელი ფაქტორები. სტატიაში მოცემული ინფორმაცია თვისობრივ კვლევას ეფუძნება და ძირითადად ბრენდის პერსონიფიკაციის, პირველადი და მეორადი ასოციაციების შესწავლის შედეგად კონკრეტულ დასკვნებს გვთავაზობს. სტატიაში, ამასთანავე განხილუ- ლია ბრენდის რაციონალური შეფასებებიც. სტატიაში მოცემულია მცდელობა ხაზი გაესვას საქართველოში ბრენ- დინგისადმი სტრატეგიული მიდგომის საჭიროების განსახზღვრას, რადგან კვლევის საფუძველზე მკვეთრად იკვეთება, რომ საქართველოში ის ერთეული პროდუქტებიც კი, რომელიც ბრენდად იქცა სრულიად შემთხვევითი ფაქტორების წყალობით გადაიქცა ბრენდად და არა ინტენსიური მარკეტინგული თუ სტრატეგიულად დაგეგმილი სწორი კომუნიკაციის შედეგად. ბრენდების, როგორც რაციონალური, ისე პერსონიფიცირებული შეფასების დროს საკმაო ცხადი ხდება, რომ საკომუნიკაციო აქტივობები საკმაო სპონტანურ ხასიათს ატარებს.

Georgian Brands – Casually or Intentionally

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Brands are powerful weapons transforming commercial force. Today brands are everything, and all kinds of products and services are figuring out how to transcend the narrow boundaries of their categories. To build sensitive brands with strong, persuasive and long-lasting values is far from easy. For every branding success there are a great many failures. Relationships are not quickly and easily built. You can't fake them.

The origins of modern branding go back several centuries, when producers and shopkeepers started to do business under their family names. As early as 1575, Lucas Bols started selling his liquor using his family names, in 1743 Claude Moet and Pierre Gabriel Chandon began selling their champagne, in 1759 Josiah Wedgewood his porcelain,in 1780 Johann Jacob Schweppes his tonic.

But brands as we know them today developed in combination with the industrial revolution in the 19th century. Many of today's brand leaders were founded in the 19th century: Colgate in 1806, Johnny Walker in 1820, Siemens in 1847 and so on. Initially their names were no more than guarantee of the quality and quantity of their products. With the emergence of mass media and advertising, these companies began to discover the influence which their names could exert in the marketplace and branding developed into a real business tool.

Brands in their modern sense originated in the mid-19th century. Since then, branding has evolved through a number of stages to reach the dominant role and position it has today. Six stages can be distinguished:

1850 – Identification Branding

The early brands represented the makers of categories and products. Their primary function was to give security about quality, quantity, composition and price. Competition was based on generic attributes.

1950 – Benefit Branding

Brands became representatives of unique product attributes. Different brands were developed to represent different attributes. Segmentation and positioning became the new ideologies of brand management.

1970 – Symbolic Branding

It was realized that a brand "image", independent from the product, often had a stronger influence on the consumer's choice than the product's attributes. Brands became representatives of psycho-social mean-

ings, with personalities and values, and consumers used the brand to express their own identity and self-image.

1990 – Experience Branding

The 1990s could be considered the decade of abundances and product performance and even psycho-social meanings became commodities. Pine and Gilmore welcomed consumers in the new experience economy. Brands now had to offer multi-sensory experiences.

1995 – Societal Branding

Branders became aware that they had a larger responsibility in society than just producing profit, paying taxes, employing people and obeying all laws. Citizens now expected them to contribute to broader societal goals as well.

2000 and beyond: Total branding

Branding is no longer just a marketing tool. It has become a summary of everything a business is, does and wants to be. "Brand Based Strategic Management" is the new idea, with the brand as the point of departure for the business strategy. Vision and mission are the leading branding principles. And everything about the brand has to be integrated into a harmonious whole. The brand has become a fully integrated piece of art.

According to AMA (American Marketing Association) a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition."

The key to creating a brand, according to AMA definition, is to be able to choose a name, logo, symbol, package design (brand elements), or other characteristics that identifies a product and distinguishes it from others.

Success of brands depends on correct strategic brand management process, which involves the design and implementation of marketing programs and activities to build, measure, and manage brands. But what is meant by correct brand concept and communication strategy. Several models exist that try to explain how to manage brands properly, but nowadays the most popular and widely used is Tomas Gad's 4D Branding model. According to this model successful companies will be those that live the brand – because they are the brand. To understand the brand fully, to live it and enable customers to live it means creating brand's own brand code. To do so requires using a four-dimensional model to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the brand. The four dimensions are: functional, social, mental and spiritual. By looking at brands in 4-D, organizations can create a brand code that can drive every aspect of the business-from product innovation to recruitment. Brand code equals differentiation. To be different is a biological drive, naturally people seek to be different to avoid degeneration. Business life is nothing but an exten-

sion of other forms of life. In business, differentiation is equally important. If you're not different in business, your whole existence is in danger, you will be replaceable and under constant pressure to lower the price. Sometimes the only difference you need is not in the product you deliver, but in the way it is delivered.

Consumers use brands in the same way as actors use theatrical props to augment and clarify their role and personality. A single consumer has may have multiple behaviors depending on which role is appropriate at that moment. The most important criteria when choosing a brand are not static; rather they depend on the situation. While working on brand concepts and positioning, one should consider mental, social, functional and spiritual dimensions. These dimensions are brand appeals for customers.
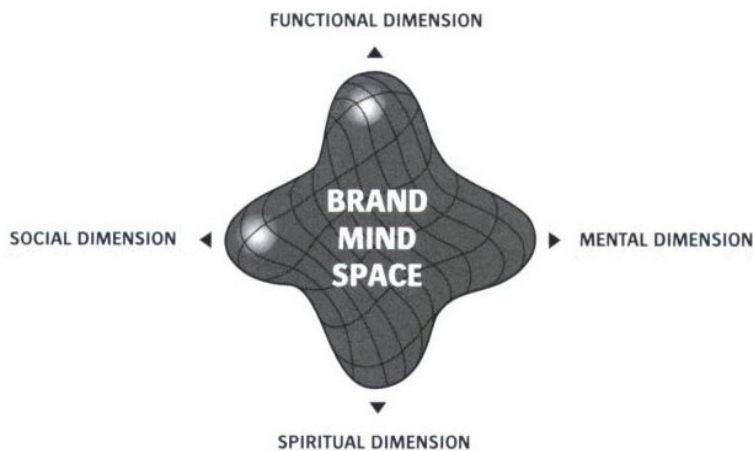
The functional dimension concerns the perception of benefit of the product or service associated with the brand. Almost always, the need to build a brand starts with making a more or less unique product or service, and the benefit for the customer is the basis for the brand. That is the perceived benefit, not necessarily the real benefit that the inventor or the engineer had in mind, but the one actually experienced by the customer.

The social dimension concerns the ability to create identification with a group. Social life and social acceptance are the most important part of people's lives. Buyers in any market make their purchase decision subjectively; basing it on what they feel best conveys or portrays their social identity.

With growing instability in society, brands appear to take over as identifications. The traditional class society is dying and instead we are moving to a kind of "branding society". In the social dimension the brand

quite often creates a cult around itself, it becomes a social insignia, or a "prop" in the lifestyle play of an individual.

The mental dimension is the ability to support the individual mentally. This dimension is by its nature a much more profound dimension: it really penetrates deep inside one's personality. Here the brand touches what the most of us would call our soul. It is about personal transformation. It's about change and getting new insights about yourself. All individuals need to have role models on which to model their life and behavior. The brand and its mental dimension serve that purpose. Experiences from early childhood up to the present day largely set our personalities, reactions and behavior. Sometimes this results in low self-esteem in certain areas of life. Help with reframing these mental pictures of ourselves is very important to us, and therefore a great opportunity for a brand builder.

The spiritual dimension is the perception of global or local responsibility. Spiritual refers to the larger system of which we are all a part.

To tell simply, after building 4-D branding model, main messages according to these dimensions and main differentiators of brands, one begins planning correct communication strategies, namely which communication channels to use, by what intensity and how to deliver to relevant segment main messages.

Not even using 4-d dimension model, one should have competitor analysis and main differentiating messages for communication. It's interesting if Georgian brands do use any branding modeland if they have what results they are getting. For that reason I have conducted qualitative research, namely focus groups mainly in youth on Georgian still water brands. The goal of the research was to find out how different the brands of the same product category are positioned, attitude towards brands, rationale evaluation,determine brand success and how well their brand concepts and communication tactics are planned.

Because leaders on Georgian still water market are: Bakuriani, Borjomi Springs and Bakhmaro, I concentrated mainly on these leader brands.

Brand	Share of consuming	Volume of consuming
Bakuriani	*60%*	*33%*
Bakhmaro	*55%*	*23%*
Borjomi Springs	*55%*	*22%*
Racha Waters	*42%*	*16%*
Bonaqua	*20%*	*6%*

Borjomi Springs - Free associations and personification

Free associations indicate leadership of "Borjomi Waters" on Georgian still water market.

Customers directly relate Borjomi Springs to it's location. Positive attitude regarding "Borjomi" which is formed on the basis of Borjomi history and experience usually is reflected on "Borjomi Spring" as well.

Personified "Borjomi Waters" stand out with leadership feature. Brand Person is chatacterized as influential, powerful, self-confident person who has achieved a lot and continues succeeding. This kind of description indicates that "Borjomi Springs" is one of the most successful player on Georgian still water market, though as mentioned above such perception is not conditioned by "Borjomi Springs" special or unique positioning, but is influenced by "Borjomi mineral waters" image.

"Borjomi Springs" as a Person	
Origins, Demographic characteristics, appearance, Dressing	60-65 years old man, who has achieved a lot but still tries to do something for people. Old man with white beard, but always looking and feeling young. Will never fade.
Positive Personal Characteristics	Smart, calm, balanced, businessman, self-confident, influential, powerful, monopolist, provident, well settled with successful future. Family man, has grandchildren. Handsome, healthy, bright minded. Traditional.
Negative Personal Characteristics	Unarranged, rough, dreary.
Lifestyle	Professor, Doctor, Businessman. Lives in wooden house like hunters hut, in ecologically clean environment, surrounded by flowers.

Rationale evaluations

While evaluating "Borjomi Springs" respondents underlined the Brands strong and weak sides. Advantages of "Borjomi Springs" are long lasting history of existence, what emphasizes company's experience and establish customers trust towards products quality and attractive bottle design

Bakhmaro - Free associations and personification

"Bakhmaro" still water is associated with relax, height, cold weather, fresh air, in other words to the memories and impressions related to resort Bakhmaro.

Compared to "Borjomi Springs", in youth segment "Bakhmaro" brand characteristics are less dynamic and energetic. The focus group respondent mentioned that Bakhmaro is quite calm resort where people go to have some rest and that way is "Bakhmaro" water perceived

"Bakhmaro" as a Person	
Origins, Demographic characteristics, appearance, Clothing	Old Man with beard. Lonely. Tall, with bright teeth.
Positive Personal Characteristics	Helps people in health issues, caringand hard worker. Cheerful, experienced, respected.
Negative Personal Characteristics	Distant, never smiles, uncommunicative, closed person.
Lifestyle, Living Place	Shepherd, lives alone, rejected from others, lives in a hut,has a sheep-dog.

Person-Bakhmaro is an old man, who living in a calm environment and is less communicative with others. On the other hand he has a great experience in life and people respect him. Research data indicate that Bakhmaro is not discussed as a brand having big potential for development. While describing brand, respondents mentioned that they don't think that brand will have a successful future.

That kind of description indicates that consumers don't perceive Bakhmaro as a modern and developing brand, despite this, in general, they have positive attitude.

It's worth to mention, that characteristics of brand like caring, healthy, cheerful indicate that like all other abovementioned brands Bakhmaro is perceived as wholesome for health.

Rational Evaluations

Research respondents while evaluating the brand rationally directed their attention on brands advantages and disadvantages,bottle design attractivenessanddelicious taste. As respondents stated Bakhmaro is closer to natural water taste.

Regarding disadvantages the major complaint respondents had were following: lack of marketing activities, bad distribution.

Bakuriani - Free associations and personification

Primary associations related to Bakuriani are positive.Mainly, positive emotions are influenced by product name. Associations like snow, rest, resort, relaxing, ski, playing snowballs are in direct connection with brand's name and positive memories associated with Bakuriani resort.

"Close your eyes while drinking Bakuriani and imagine yourself in Bakuriani"

Free associations technique demonstrates that brand characteristics are influenced by brand name, Bakuriani brand is characterized as clean, pure and cooling water.

"Bakuriani" as a person	
Origins, Demographic characteristics, appearance, Clothing	Teenager Young man (30-35 years old) Gray haired man (60 years old) Tall, classical dressing Snowman
Positive Personal Characteristics	Decent, free, sociable, communicable, active, sportive, athletic, healthy, nature loving, kind, caring, useful.
Negative Personal Characteristics	Not punctual, unserious.
Lifestyle	Sportsman, skier, champion. Businessman Lives in wooden house with fireplace; lives in ice palace.

Personified brand's characteristics like kind and caring indicates perceived usefulness on health of brand.

In most cases personified brand Bakuriani is family man with wife and small children and is committed to them. That kind of association emphasizes the fact that Bakuriani is mainly consumed by little kids in families.

„For me he is a family man, has 1 child and wife, he devotes his whole life to children"

Associations like tardiness and unpunctuality indicates on its less organized distribution system, and is explained by its unstable availability in stores.

"It delays, because sometimes we can't see him in stores"

Associations like young and energetic indicate that brand is mostly perceived for youth segment. Such perception can be explained more by its name rather than its positioning.

Rationale Evaluations

Research respondents while evaluating the brand rationally directed their attention on brands advantages and disadvantages. While listing brand's benefits they stated its taste and origin.

„When ice melts, water from melted ice is very wholesome for health and organism, all bacteria die.

Conclusion

Research of still water market gave us a following result; these are the products which became brands mostly by environmental factors, rather than by correct and intensive planning and communication. Brand images are mainly established by their names indicating place of origin, and associations related to these resorts.

Companies of abovementioned brands have low intensity in communication activities, besides this   positioning and image of brands is elusive. No defined niche is taken by still water products.

As a matter of fact still waters are influenced by mineral water brand characteristics. E.g. Borjomi Springs are influenced by Borjomi mineral waters brand and Bakhmaro is influenced by Nabeghlavi mineral waters brand positioning.

Research shows that customers are not loyal to one or the other brand, due to the fact that there is no concrete reason for it, as on one hand consuming one of the brands is mainly provoked by habit and on the other hand there are no product specific characteristics defined by customers like taste. And the last but not the least there's no distinct brand appeal for customers, because of irrelevant brand concept planning and communication tactics.

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