

# The Multi-Dimensional Application/Use of Branding in the Universe of Marketers

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## **Abstract**

*The article considers branding as an instrument of multi-dimensional importance to producers contrary to the view of mono-dimensional use, in the sense that branding merely serves as an instrument of product differentiation in the entire marketing process. The multi-dimensional application of branding is believed to be made possible through its capability to evolve a “deep-brand” with essentially six levels of meaning, each meaning serving to achieve one marketing objective or the other. In this context, multidimensional application/use of branding is discussed along the following perspectives: (a) line extension/stretching enabling the marketing organisation to introduce new items with new features in the existing product category in order to achieve a number of set marketing objectives; (b) brand extension/stretching; (c) multi-branding; (d) co-branding/dual branding; and (e) brand equity; each perspective tacitly permitting the manufacturer to achieve a number of set objectives in the market place. In conclusion, branding as an instrument of multi-dimensional importance, in the entire marketing process, is discussed in the sense of the overall competitive advantage(s) it offers professional marketers.*

**Keywords:** *Branding, brand extension/stretching, brand equity, multi-branding, dual branding*

**Introduction:** This article takes a look at branding as an instrument of multi-dimensional use in the entire marketing process. Hitherto, the concept has suffered the problem of being viewed as an instrument needed or required by a manufacturer to differentiate his/her product from those of competitors (O’Cass and Grace, 2003).

In modern day marketing branding has evolved beyond serving the purpose of differentiation (Wernerfelt, 1988; Fan, 2005). This article is, therefore purposed to project branding as a

potent marketing instrument in achieving a number of marketing objectives beyond product differentiation within the marketing system.

First a definition; according to the perspective of this article branding is defined as economic and marketing activities designed to create branded offerings capable of enabling the producer(s) to achieve set marketing objective(s) Wood, 2000). The brand, according to 'American Marketing Association'. is a name, term sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these purposed to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and so differentiate them from those of competitors.

To-date a brand which is essentially the output of the entire branding process is indeed a seller's promise to consistently deliver a set of features, benefits and services to the ultimate consumers in the market place (Wood, 2000).

The starting point in deriving optimum benefits from the process is to ensure that it evolves a 'deep brand' which by extension enables the brand to function beyond product differentiation and effectively operate as an instrument capable of achieving a number of other marketing objectives.

**A DEEP BRAND:** The most distinctive skill of a given professional marketer lies in her ability to create maintain, protect and enhance brand. According to Kotler (2002) branding is the art and cornerstone of marketing. This distinctive skill is essentially directed, by the professional marketer, at creating, maintaining, protecting and enhancing a deep brand.

A brand is said to be 'deep' when it conveys six level of meaning namely: attributes; Benefits; Values, Culture; Personality; and Users. In the absence of any one level of meaning, the brand is said to be 'shallow'. Through these levels of meaning the brand is ably positioned to function effectively in the sense of assisting the marketer to achieve her marketing objectives. Next, is an examination of each level of meaning and how the brand under each level of meaning has effectively function:

**ATTRIBUTES:** A brand obviously brings to mind a number of attributes. For instance in the auto mobile market, Mercedes Benz brings to mind such attributes as expensive, well-built, well-engineered, durable, high prestige; high resale value and fast. The marketer can readily employ one or more of these attributes to advertise the car.

Thus the brand, through, its attributes has effectively provided the marketer with the basis for mounting, comparative, advertising and evolving product positioning platform for the product/brand.

**BENEFITS:** Consumers generally buy benefits rather than attributes. Marketers often translate product attributes into buying benefits (Hyman, Kopf and Lee, 2010). Attributes are hence translated into functional and emotional benefits.

The attribute durable can translate into functional benefit; I won't have to buy a new car every few years. The attribute expensive may translate into emotional benefits, 'the car helps me feel important and admired. Thus the branding process becomes the element of suggesting the emotional and functional motives for buying the product. The functional and emotional benefits become advertising selling point eventually.

**VALUES:** The brand tends to convey the marketers or producer's values. (Davis, 2002), hence the view that a brand, in the entire marketing process, serves as an instrument for attracting specific groups of buyers who intimately identify with marketers' values (Angulo, 2007).

Thus branding, working through a deep brand, can be effectively utilized as a segmentation variable. For instance, in the example of Mercedes cited earlier, its brand can be viewed as, a product denoting high performance; safety; and prestige. Mercedes as a brand thus readily becomes a marketing tool for attracting/luring buyer's who actively identify with the value variables who by extension can safely be targeted for cultivation.

**CULTURE:** Branding ably operating through a 'deep brand' mightily represents a culture. In this instance, the brand name Mercedes is employed by the manufacturer as an instrument of communicating to the market place, German culture such as: 'efficient' and 'organized'.

**PERSONALITY:** Branding similarly seeks to project a personality. A deep brand in one breath serves as an instrument denoting a no-nonsense boss (a person) and in another breath a reigning lion (an animal) denoting strength. Besides, the brand may also denote a well-known personality/person. Thus the brand may be useful in generating emotional benefits as well.

**USER:** A brand emanating from the branding process may be employed to suggest the type of consumers the product is meant to achieve. One may be surprised to see a 25 year-old manager owing and driving Mercedes Benz. One would definitely expect to see a 50 year-old top executive behind the wheel. The user can hence be expected to be the class of people who respect the brand's values: Culture and personality.

In a nut-shell, a deep-brand, as an outcome of the branding process, can be located within the entire marketing process as a viable marketing instrument/tool for effective product positioning exercise and mounting a logical persuasive advertising.

### **BRANDING: AN INSTRUMENT OF STRATEGIC DECISION**

Branding has immensely lent itself as an instrument offering the platform for Sellers/Marketers to undertake strategic marketing decision (Aaker 2004).

These involve namely:

- i. **Line extension:** where the existing brand name is extended to new sizes, flavours etc in the existing product category;
- ii. **Brand extension:** where existing brand name is extended to new product category;
- iii. **Multi brands:** where new brand name are introduced in the same product class;
- iv. **New brands:** for a new product category; and
- v. Co-brands bearing two or more well-known brand names.

**LINE EXTENSIONS:** According to marketing intelligence services conducted in United States (1993) of the 17, 363 new consumer packaged convenience goods introduced that year only a handful of 794 were found to be really innovative. According to DeNitto (1993), the rest were purely made of line extensions and product enhancement. And by extension, the vast majority of new product introduction consist of line extension, as much as 89 per cent in the case of grocery products.

Line extension strategy through branding enables the manufacturer to introduce new items in the product category by evolving features entailing new 'flavours,' 'colours,' 'added ingredients,' and to mention a few, package sizes. Locally, Nigerian Brewery Limited adopted this strategy to create and lunch into Nigerian market additional items to her malted product category through the medium of new features such as banana and strawberry flavours.

Similarly, Guinness Nigerian Plc creates and launch into Nigerian market additional items to her existing product 'Guinness stout' product category through the medium of new package size, and volume of content.

Internationally, Dannon Company is noted to have introduced several Dannon yogurt line extension to cover fat-free 'light' yogurt; dessert flavours like 'mint' chocolate; 'cream pie' and caramel apple crunch'; a sprinkle-ins containing everything from the crunch granola and chocolate graham crackers in a clear covered lid and creamy 'versions' versions yogurt specifically formulated to appeal to children.

The line extension might be innovative e.g. Dessert flavour or 'filling-in e.g. another pack size. Again Coca-Cola International successfully created and launched additional items into her market(s) world-wide in the form of 'cherry coke; 'diet coke,; Caffeine-free Coke, and 'Can Coke' through line extension strategy.

According to Kelving, Lane (1992) line extension as a strategic tool becomes readily attractive when a seller operates under excess plant capacity; same is under obligation to meet new consumer's needs, match competitor's new offering or lock up more retail shelf space. In each case an objective is achieved by the seller

Line extension, through branding process seeks to provide the platform for the seller to introduce 'branded variants' which consists of specific lines created and tailored to satisfy the interest of specific retailers of enable such intermediaries provide distinctive offerings to their customers. Thus a camera firm may supply its low-end cameras to mass merchandisers, whilst limiting its higher-priced items to specialty camera distributive outlet. This is a clear case of market segmentation made possible by branding.

Barring the risk, in terms of a brand name losing its specific meaning tagged as 'line – extension trap' by Ries and Trout (2004) associated with line-extension strategy, the fact remains that items launched employing this strategy have a greater chance of survival than out-right new product widely associated with a failure rate put at between 80-90 per cent.

According to Hardle and Lodish (2005) Line-extension strategy is largely fuelled by fierce competition in the market place and hence become viable instrument in effectively combating such a competition in the market place.

For instance crest and Colgate cleverly ignore the threat from Arm and Hammer's baking soda toothpaste through line-extension strategy.

**BRAND EXTENSION:** Branding can as well provide a marketing firm the platform to employ the existing brand name to launch a product in a new category into the market place. For instance, Honda employs its brand name to cover such different products as its automobiles, motorcycles, lawn mowers, marine engines and snow mobiles; Honda, in consequence, advertise that it can fit 'six Honda, in a two-car garage'. It is also documented in marketing literature that some speciality clothing retailers such as the Gap and Ann Taylor seeks to extend their brands into the bath and body-products field. Gap stores in USA now features soap, lotion, shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, bath salts and perfume spray.

Armour is noted to have employed its 'Dial brand name to have pushed into the market place a variety products that ordinarily would not have gained access into the distributive outlets without the strength of the 'Dial' name Brand extension, as a strategic instrument seeks to offer a marketing firm a number of advantages such as conferring instant recognition and early acceptance on a new product; whilst it also enable a firm to enter new product categories more

easily. A case in point is Sony who prints its name on most of its electronics products and, in consequence, instantly establishes a conviction of high quality in favour of these new electronic products.

As a strategy it serves to save considerable advertising cost that would normally be required to create awareness for a new brand in a different products category. Barring the risk of brand dilution arising from over-extension, the strategy can be essentially instrumental to building a viable and successful brand association for a new product.

**MULTI BRAND:** Multi-brand strategy, through branding process, seeks to provide the stage for a seller to introduce additional brands in the same product category for such purpose(s) as evolving different features and for appealing to new buying motives. This strategy equally assists a firm to lock more distributors' shelf-space and protect its major brand name by setting up 'flanker brands'.

For example Stiko establishes different brand names for its high priced (Seiko lasalle) and low-priced watches (Pulsar) to protect its flanks. Procter and Gamble (P&G) has nine different brands of detergents.

Again a firm may, through acquisition process operate or function as a multi brand organization with each acquired brand having its loyal following. Hence ELECTROLUX, the Swedish multi national, own a plethora of acquired brand names such as Frigidaire, Kelvinator, Westinghouse, Zanussi, White and Gibson for its line of appliances.

**COBRANDS/DUAL BRANDING:** Co-brands otherwise known as dual branding is indeed a rising phenomenon in the entire branding process (Park, Jun and Shocker, 1996; Washburn, Till and Priluck, 2000).

The phenomenon seeks to set the stage for manufacturer(s) to combine two or more well-known brands in an offer in the hope that the strategy or phenomenon will strength brand preference or promote purchase intention. Thus dual branding can be viewed as an instrument or tools for strengthen brand preference and promoting purchase intention in the entire marketing process.

In co-packaged product, each brand seeks to reach a new target audience by associating with the other hand.

Variants of Co-branding can be drawn to include:

- i. Component Co-branding
- ii. Same Company Co-branding
- iii. Joint-Venture Co-branding and
- iv. Multiple Sponsor Co-branding

Volvo ably exemplifies the phenomenon of co-branding when it advertises that it uses Michelin tires.

General mills illustrates dual branding when it advertises Trix/Yoplait Yogurt. Joint-Ventures as in the case of General Electric/Hitachi Light bulbs in Japan, and Multiple-sponsor co-branding, as in the case of Taligent a technological alliance among Apple, IBM and Motorola.

**BRAND EQUITY:** Branding is viewed in the marketing literature as capable of evoking or creating brand equity (Wood, 2000). According to Aaker (2007) brand equity relates to the degree of brand-name recognition, perceived brand, quality, strong mental and emotional associations, and other assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships (Wood, 2000; Myers, 2003).

A number of firms seem to work out their growth based on brand equity through the process of acquiring and building rich brand port-folios.

For instance Nestle acquires Rown-tree (UK) Carnation and Stouffer (US) Buitoni-Perugina (Italy) and Perrier (France) thereby making it the world's largest food company. However, high brand equity seeks to provide a number of competitive advantages including:

- i. Reduced marketing costs because of high level of consumer brand awareness and loyalty.
- ii. Enormous leverage in bargaining with distributors and retailers, as customers expect them to carry the brand.
- iii. The firm can charge a higher price than its competitors because the brand has higher perceived quality.
- iv. The firm can charge a higher price than its competitors because the brand has higher perceived quality.
- v. The firm can more easily and readily launch brand extensions as the brand name connotes high credibility and finality.
- vi. Defence against price competition in the entire marketing process.

In conclusion, the multi-dimensional instrumentality of branding in the entire marketing process seeks to offer a marketing organization, barring any known risks, several advantages which are drawn to include:

- It makes it easier for the seller to process orders and track down problems
- It provides legal protection of unique product features which competitors may likely want to copy.
- Branding gives the seller the opportunity to attract a loyal and profitable set of customers.
- Branding helps the seller segment markets. Procter and Gamble offers eight detergent brands each formulated differently and aimed at specific benefit-seeking segments.
- And lastly, strong brands helps to build corporate image, thus making it easier to launch new brands and in consequence gain acceptance of distributors and consumers.



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