

# Book review on building strong brands

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## **Book review**

Aaker's book *Building Strong Brands* is a work that builds on the growing recognition of the role that image and marketing play in international business. Beginning by defining a strong brand as being directly associated with brand awareness, the development of a reasonable hypothesis is developed (Aaker, p. 10). The presence of a strong brand equity position will benefit every level of industry including reducing associated marketing costs, positive brand associations, increased perception of quality and a much higher overall awareness of brand. However, the quest to build a strong brand is full of liabilities (Aaker, p. 27).

Associated issues that are common in the building a brand include pricing competition, the ease of competitor access, the diverse efforts of the media and the markets and finally the internal issue of often changing marketing strategies (Aaker, p. 27). Aside from base competition factors that can drive consumers to seek out competitors, to the simple desire to see a short term gain, the potential for detrimental aspects of the branding process are fundamental and numerous.

Utilizing the Saturn car Company in America as a working example of a strong effort to brand a company, Aaker's (p. 38) illustrates the positive elements that include strong consumer relations in their effort to establish a viable brand. This aspect of brand identity begins to play a pivotal role in development of industry on a world wide scale (Aaker, p. 68). With 'traps' that range from being stuck in a specific image allowing the consumer to dictate the direction, or stuck in a specific market, being susceptible to the external perspectives trap, or the product attribute fixation trap, the ability

to be successful is based on the companies capability of breaking free from the branding traps and succeeding in putting forth a strong credible image (Aaker, p. 77).

Aaker (p. 103) argues the relationship between the brand and the consumer can be reduced to a value that can be quantified and proven to be an asset. Employing the example of the Saturn brand being strong, but not necessarily reflective of their end product, demonstrates the value that the concept adds to the company infrastructure. Establishing the brand as an organization rather than a person assists in the ability to associate the company with the product, aiding in building base brand awareness (Aaker, p. 103).

In an increasingly integrated world, it is sometimes necessary to work with multiple brands in order to attain sufficient market exposure (Aaker, p. 104). The relationship that each of the segments possesses has the potential to impact, positively or negatively, the parent company. This is another demonstration of the increasing value of the international brand. Employing the Harley-Davidson company to illustrate the value of brand personality Aaker (p. 137) argues that this aids in establishing a working value model. The self-expression component, present in certain branding schemes, adds an element that increases the underlying personality perception, thereby increasing consumer identification.

No branding effort can be successful lacking a coordinated effort to implement the underlying branding strategy (Aaker, p. 176). Employing modern mechanisms allows for a strategic placement of assets which aids in the fundamental power of the brand identity and associated position to be realized. Illustrating the pitfalls of a changing brand strategy, Aaker (p. 208)

utilizes General Electric to demonstrate the value of considered brand deployment.

Once a brand has been established it must be managed correctly in order to obtain the most value from the effort (Aaker, p. 240). Alongside a successful management method will be the ability to leverage the brand to the benefit of the company. Illustrating that there are means to measure brand equity Aaker's book (p. 303) reinforces the argument that branding is both necessary and vital. Closing with a summation of branding vitals Aaker's *Building Strong Brands*, will long be a valuable text for both present and future consideration.

## **References**

Aaker, D. 1996. *Building strong brands*. New York: Free Press.

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