

Analysing brand positioning

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This report identifies a successful brand and the characteristics which make it prosperous. It also distinguishes between a company and a product while critically analysing a range of theoretical concepts to evaluate the brands within the Apple Inc. Company and its consumer relationships. This report also contains an idea on how to enhance Apple's consumer image with theoretical back up. Apple Inc. formally known as Apple Computers inc.

is an American based, Multinational Corporation established on April 1, 1976 that creates and sells numerous product core which are recognisable to consumers Apple's product timeline (Appendix One), these include, Mac, iPhone, iPad, iPod, iLife, iWork and iTunes. This company which was co founded by Steve Wozniak, Ronald Wayne and the most known, however unfortunately recently deceased on the 5th October 2011(2011-10-05), Steve Jobs has grown globally with over 350 retail stores in ten countries.

Apple is the largest technology company in the world by revenue and profit with over 46, 600 permanent full-time employees and 2, 800 temporary full-time employees worldwide. Between the years 1976 - 1998 Apple was in the market but its real success started in the late 1990s with its introduction of the new all-in-one computer called the iMac. Although Apple started out as a computer company rivalling market leader Microsoft, it has successfully reinvented its brand identity slowly overtime to suit the changing trends and times becoming the market leader in the mobile market.

Apple, from a brand architecture viewpoint, has a 'monolithic' brand identity. Everything within the Apple Company has the same brand identity which is uniformed investing strongly in the Apple 'i' products. The company have

statements on their website that radiate confidence, " it's the most amazing iPhone yet," (Apple, 2012) this demonstrates their arrogance but also their strong position in the market allowing them to stand out without fear of appearing egotistical. A brand is most commonly described as the 'concept encompassing all the distinctive signs (name, logo, symbol, colours, endorsing characters and even its slogan.)' (Kapferer, 2008, p211)

The apple shaped logo would be an example of the sign universally recognised for the Apple Inc. Company. However, lately the focus of brand has been towards psychological emotions created as customers respond to brands 'an individual audience member's experience as he or she interacts with a brand. '(Landa, 2006, p9)The experience of a customer is applied to the brand as well as the company. One bad experience with a product can put off customers buying any other brands for a company. An emotional response when choosing a product has developed from the added value perceived by customers.

Product association or identification is one of the many characteristics of added value that help a customer choose between different products. For example, Apple use the iconic apple logo with a jet black slim lined packaging which is automatically recognisable to customers. Commodities in the simplest form are raw materials such as milk or coffee beans that are traded and sold for commercial or an alternative use. This differs from a product because a product is often one item sold primarily on price which is sold business to business.

For my chosen brand Apple the product would be one of its many devices sold to customers such as the iPhone but the brand itself is most recognised by the apple shaped logo. Brand positioning " allows the service brand to gain a meaningful competitive advantage over its competitors and to appear unique to the consumer. " (McDonald et al, 2011) It is a strategy used by companies to emphasize the features and benefits the brand offers for its target consumers or by creating an image through advertising, such as luxurious or utilitarian. According to de Chernatony, brand positioning is about " identifying a differential advantage.

This statement suggests that de Chernatony was referring to differential or edge positioning which uses its unique selling point (USP) of the brand which will give you competitive advantage in the market. This method is generally used by smaller or new businesses to a market that are trying to succeed against major competitors. An example of this would be supermarkets using own brand food which focus on price. However, Brand positioning is more than just identifying the advantage; other factors need to be taken into consideration to have the full view.

One aspect is the perceived value of the brand by customers; a product is only worth what someone else is willing to pay for it. Another factor needing to be acknowledged is what is expected from the brand for the consumers. If consumers past experience with a brand is of a high quality then it will be expected for all future products. This links to the price of the product if a new product does not have the same quality as pervious products then this should be reflected in the price. The price of a product is easily quantifiable as this is normally based on own price compared to competitors.

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However, for Apple Inc it would have been more difficult to set a price as they are being innovative releasing technology which has never been used before. Central positioning is a strategy usually used by market leaders, for instance Heinz and its baked beans, because it focuses on the key benefits related with the product group as it is perceived as the best brand in the market. Conversely, impersonating brands can utilize a variation on central positioning by a replica position, as long as it " delivers the same benefits as the market leader. "(Lilien et al, 2007, p79)