Brandology: New Generation of Marketing Knowledge

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Introduction

- The brand discourse exceeded the corporations’ boardrooms and business schools auditoria probably in the early 90’s and entered the agenda of sociology, anthropology, linguistics, etc. This fact demonstrates two fundamental changes – brands are not discussion topic reserved only for marketers any longer, since obviously it’s more a socio-cultural phenomenon than strictly commercial one, and in the same time, marketers and the new generation of managers should be ten time more careful for and prepared dealing with the brand matter.

- “Brandology” is neither newly born buzz nor yet convenient academic mix of management, modern social media theories and applied semiotics. Yet it’s something more. Therefore, despite of its a little bit pretentious ‘-ology’ ending, such a ‘science’ or at least ‘discipline’ deserves more attention since it offers different knowledge beyond the sum of the well-known marketing mix and communication theories that have been dominating the topic recently.
“McDonalization” (mid 90’s) was a multilevel metaphor describing increasing role of brands.
Standing on the shoulders of giants...

...but

- ...the “brand equity” concept redirected branding from the boardrooms to the realm of people seeking for their attention and attitude. Media, lifestyles, symbolic exchange, subcultures, cool factors, online communications and value adding lead the agenda of the complex relationship between production and socio-cultural environment of today.

- Brand topic tuned to be common axis for usually different and distant scientific discourses – sociology, anthropology, (social) psychology, etc., which together form the new knowledge network on this phenomenon.

- New Wave – markets are more social and communicative than ever before. Brands as a part and active agents of culture came into the stage.
"Consumerization Continuum"
Mary Goodyear (1996)

- Company Brands ≈ till late 80's
- Cynical Consumer
- Destructured Advertising
- Needs-based Segmentation
- Electronic Data Capture

- Consumer Driven Branding

- Postmodern Marketing

- Classic Branding

- Marketing

- Selling

- Brands as Icons
  - Symbolic Advertising
  - Creative Research
  - Segmentation Based on Usage
  - Saturated Marketplace
Hi, I’m Brand Futurist!

Why (not) Brandology?

Try to forget the past… not the brand!

Age of Hybrid Sciences and Interdisciplinarity

Futurology, Spanglish…?

Science (= "knowledge") is a systemic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe. Also refers to a body of knowledge itself, of the type that can be rationally explained and reliably applied.

(Brand) Knowledge /2

- Knowledge is a familiarity, awareness or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning. Knowledge can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit (as with practical skill or expertise) or explicit (as with the theoretical understanding of a subject); it can be more or less formal or systematic.

A discipline (= specialism) is knowledge or a concentration in one academic field of study or profession. A discipline incorporates expertise, people, projects, communities, challenges, studies, inquiry, and research areas that are strongly associated with academic areas of study or areas of professional practice.

The scientific method is a body of techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge.

Brand Knowledge /4

Everything aforementioned witnesses that nowadays we have new, independent of marketing, object of study and a huge range of perspectives as well as big data-base on it:

- new knowledge
- academic field of study or profession
- theoretical or practical understanding of a subject
- testable
- systemic
- integrating
- explanations
- predictions
- correcting

In brief, it’s business-oriented social science
Brand Knowledge vs. Brand Knowledge

“From the perspective of the CBBE model, brand knowledge is the key to creating brand equity, because it creates the differential effect that drives brand equity. What marketers need, then, is an insightful way to represent how brand knowledge exists in consumer memory.”

Kevin L. Keller (2012)

Consumer perspective [memory-recall system], but what exists in the managers’ mind?

Brand Knowledge vs. Brand Knowledge

- In the first place, manager has to have knowledge on brand on his/her part, in order to be able to create brand equity (as a knowledge for given brand) as a specific relation with consumers.
- Prof. Keller’s detailed explanations and bulk of examples are highly useful to understand how brand equity (i.e. inimitable value of particular brand) could work successfully, considering consumer’s psychological and economical characteristics, but not what is it “by nature”.
- The management perspective is at least as much important as the consumer’s one, thus, the statement is that semiotics was the key that opened the gates for new knowledge on brand and branding...
The power of science is in examining the objects and phenomena in various perspectives and to fix objective laws.

Semiotics is known with its focus on sign systems, their social use and life as well as on knowledge creation and sharing. It maintains that we are not able to know our world without signs mediation…

…therefore, it is natural to be powerful and useful enough to help managers to understand and control their brand in better manner.

Where Brand Came from?

- Classical marketing theory can’t answer this question easily. Historically, brand is highly bonded up with Product since, first and foremost, a brand should stand on something and, secondly, for something.

- Properly speaking, communication in the broad sense (i.e. not only in terms of Promotion – took narrowly as “communication”, but Placement, which makes Points-of-Contact, and Price, which most often is a tool for quality indication) is what fills up the simple “name” with associations, motivation, images, and added value (eventually). Hence, brands speak to us and we speak to them and through them in an endless and intensive process.

- Consumer culture, in fact, supported by global media and growing trade connections worldwide, provided the infrastructure needed for the “brandelution” that burst approx. in late 80’s.
Why Brand is a Complex Phenomenon?

The more communication means we have the bigger and more intensified consumption of signs, images, myths, lifestyles, etc.
What the Famous AMA’s Definition Says about It?

- "A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary."

- Hence, the contemporary notion encompasses brand as a concept/entity, the aggregation of virtual and real contact with it, and the crucial role of media. But put in semiotic terms, we are talking about a collection or combination of signs and process of symbolic exchange.

Therefore…

- a brand has several different dimensions as:
  - Business format (managerial strategic approach to the segment/s and competition)…
  - Product (attributes, benefits, innovations)…
  - Medium (something to speak for, company’s communication platform)…
  - Cultural leader (communities, symbolicity, rituals, values)…
  - Social mediator (identification, events, interpersonal messages)…
  - Experience provider…

From top to bottom consumers have at their disposal more and more ways to ‘meet’ brands and to decide their fates by participation both in their production process and social life.
So, let’s deconstruct it…
‘Entity’ is not a ‘thing’, an object, but living unit in the Universe no matter actual or fictive.
‘Branding’ means making one brand happening, to create its sign system visible on the market landscape/map (from name and packaging to retail/online space and communities).
"Socioculture" is a structured but liable to change environment driven by communication, e.g. various sign systems and channels, shared meanings, subjects, institutions, etc.
“Meaning” should be considered as “producing meaning” (= process)… since it is not fixed and needs context and interpretation in action ...
Brand Meaning = Consumer Brand Equity

- Everything **valuable** in life and in market is **meaningful**, especially consumer-oriented brands, no matter in which (FMCG, luxury, sports goods etc.) sector they usually operate.

- Meaning gives one stable reason to consumer to buy many times, to prefer, to have positive attitude, to seek and to share information and his/her interest/s with other consumers.

- As Mark Batey puts it, meaning “refers to the semantic and symbolic features of the brand, the sum of the fundamental conscious and unconscious elements that compose the consumer’s mental representation of the brand” (2008:111 ff). In other words, brand is multidimensional entity (again) since it embraces public and personal, rational and emotional, prominent and hidden layers but somehow consistent. Just like our brain which reflects and tidy up the experience we have every day.
What’s the role of Brand Semiotics then?

Analogy is not a mare figure of speech but a scientific method which allows us to draw out the deepest specificities and characteristics of the object under study.

- It reminds me of…
- Let’s imagine that…
- As if it’s…
- It’s like…
- Could be a parallel…
So, Any Useful Analogy?

If Market is like a Cellar Full with Brands put in Barrels, then Brand Semiotics Studies…
...THE ANGEL’S SHARE

What Brand Semiotics Studies?

- Brand equity is neither a company’s property nor shareholders’, but stakeholders’. Wine and whiskey lose about 2% of their liquid annually during the maturing process but this makes them of high quality.
- Don’t get me wrong though! In fact, there are no angels in the market and semiotics deals with real people but they are true angels that makes our brand/s strong and resisting against the competition despite of all the whims, fads and continuously changing moods.
- The ‘spirit’ that our brands lose from their products year after year transforms itself in (“human” as Kotler et al. put it, 2010) spirit of loyalty and commitment that build meaningful long-lasting brands.
What Brand Semiotics Studies?

- **Metalanguage** (description/deconstruction) of brand and branding activities which goes beyond the usual market/ing discourse.
- (let’s repeat once again) “…correcting and integrating the previous knowledge and acquires **new one**…” (in marketing, consumer behavior, Globalization, material culture, cognition, etc.)
- It discusses and addresses the **future** more than the present (trends observation, meaning management, ads pre-testing, etc.).
- Could be **helpful** with respect both with every single element or act of brand/ing and with the whole entity (i.e. single sign and entire sign system of a given brand).
New Brand Knowledge in Education

- Bearing in mind what has been said, new look on the topic and new approach in teaching in branding and brand management should be adopt, no matter if we consider higher education or companies’ inner training. Branding is another/next level of doing marketing.

- More knowledge in humanities, cultural and social sciences should be put in management courses’ curricula to enrich and widen the market picture in branding. Moreover, a lot of people overlook the fact that, by its very essence, marketing is not a mathematical but social discipline, dealing with resources/products allocation (put simply) – an activity as old as human history and culturally constructed.

- Also, case studies, especially cross-cultural and consumer behavior ones, could make the matter more clear and human-oriented than tables and figures actually do.
- Arvidsson, Adam (2006), *Brands. Meaning and Value in Media Culture*, USA/Canada: Routledge;
- McCracken, Grant (2005), *Culture and Consumption II. Markets, Meaning and Brand Management*, Bloomington, USA: Indiana University Press;
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!