A Study of Brand Rebuilding

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ABSTRACT

A new conceptual approach applied to failing brand is gaining momentum. Some call it rebuilding, some rejuvenation. The study gives a brief overview of the various possible situations for brand rebuilding or rejuvenation, the methods applied and also the concerns in its implementation. It capitalized on the insights from the people involved in branding for various companies and with emphasis on brands that have been revitalized.

Keywords: Brand Rebuilding, Brand Rejuvenation,

INTRODUCTION

Revitalization of dormant brand can be a highly profitable strategy under the right circumstances. The marketplace is filled with anecdotal success stories of how brands have been “brought Brand represents the intellectual and emotional associations that people make with a company, product or person (Wansink and Huffman, 2001). The term brand is used generally and in a qualitative way. The jest lays in our unique, subjective interpretations, in our understanding, commonly guided by cultural context, interactions we have had with and about what we are evaluating, and our own personal conception of the world.

Brands have life cycle. It undergoes the phases of inception to launch, growth, maturing, decline, revitalization, and retirement. The new strategy of rebuilding or rejuvenation is a process wherein a brand which is on the verge of retirement. The objective is to bring it back to life to regain markets (Wansink and Gilmore, 1999). The study tries to look in to the various difficulties in brand rejuvenation and tries to bring out a model for brand rejuvenation that caters to the needs of brand managers at various organizations.

RELATED LITERATURE

Branding. Company brand is an important factor of any organization, yet it is one of the least understood assets. Great companies transcend tangible and functional benefits by creating positive emotional ties that can easily outlast any individual product or service. A strong brand builds relationships with customers, which guarantees business for the future (Young and Ubicam, 1994). The brand is the most valuable property a company acquires over time is its reputation, its goodwill, and its brand name (Wansink and Seed, 2001).

Branding in the new millennium is used to create an emotional attachment to products and organizations. The stakes involved in launching, maintaining, and evolving a brand are much higher today in the global economy, than they were in the past.

A brand is a powerful strategic weapon. It distinguishes a company from its competitors. It defines to the stakeholders, which is the company, what the company believes in and what they may expect from the company. A great brand is a story that is never completely told – each new product, promotion or advertisement is just another passage, one more chapter, and one more revealing insight into a complex yet familiar plot. (Wansink and Rajeev, 1994).

Brand is a continuum that starts with the most generic form (the commodity) and ends with that most unique and specific of things: a brand. Brand management underlines the fact that brands are not born as brands, but they are born as commodities. For example, more than a century ago, John Pemberton set out to create a tonic, not a global brand named Coca-Cola. And in 1962, when Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight each chipped in dollars 550 to set up Nike, their goal was to make running shoes for athletes, not create a global leisure brand empire.

The concept of branding has always been prominent in marketing circles. Recently, it has attracted much broader
management attention for a number of good reasons. For many industries, branding offers the best opportunity for creating growth. Branding is applicable to all categories and industries and even applies to commodities. That's because any product or service can be differentiated. And since any differentiated product or service can be given a proper name to signal its particular qualities, branding is possible in every case imaginable. The branding of products in what was thought to be commodity categories is so common that we no longer even notice it. Bananas, oranges, flour, aspirin, integrated circuits, paper, carpet fibers, water, and salt are all "commodity" categories possessing exceedingly profitable brand names.

**Brand Life Cycle.** The branding circles are debating as to whether or not a brand can have a "life cycle" of its own, or whether its peaks and troughs and a symptom of managing the brand. It is obvious that a product had a product's lifecycle, the peaks and troughs can come in a quicker timeframe, making the cycle more obvious. A brand can have a rise, and then fall out of favor, to be superceded by a new and improved brand. The fact that branding process takes many years affects the universal acceptance of the existence of a brand lifecycle. Without careful management, brands can follow the general pattern of a product lifecycle: moving through introduction, growth, maturity, and decline stages in a relatively rapid fashion (Keller, 2005).

Well-managed brands prosper almost indefinitely. Numerous studies have shown that many brands that were leading the market years ago are still in that position. To a large extent it has been proved difficult for a challenging brand to overtake them. They have the ability to extend the life cycle or, possibly, the effective marketing of these brands has meant that the life cycle, in its purest form, does not exist. The brand must remain relevant in an ever-changing marketing environment. It must continue to provide consumer value. (McEnally and de Chernatony, 2000).

In today’s competitive world, while many brands continue to lead their markets after many years, others have short life cycles and are frequently designed with this in mind. Brands either live or die. Certain branded products may "die" from obsolescence or changing consumer tastes, but brands can be rejuvenated with new products and services. With well-conceived strategies, a brand can be kept relevant to consumers and last almost indefinitely.

A brand’s position in the life cycle can be determined by plotting the brand’s strength, measured with parameters of differentiation and relevance and stature. Stature is measured with parameters of esteem and knowledge. These parameters are consistently linked with a brand's ability to deliver revenue and profit for its owner — no matter the category, no matter the country, no matter the age of the brand. (Keller, 2005).

Understanding the position of a brand in its life cycle plays a critical role in the brand manager’s decisions. A brand can undergo rejuvenation only if it has the potential to come back strongly into the market. It should have a high strength, meaning that the awareness and the knowledge about the brand should be high even the brand may not have a high score in strength.

**Brand Rejuvenation.** Brand Rejuvenation or Revitalization is a major overhaul of a brand, starting with its positioning and proceeding through creative regeneration of the brand identity. Prolong the life cycle of a brand or product requires the use of skillful marketing techniques.

The Rejuvenation program begins with the creation of a Brand Re-Development Team, just as a new products team, drawing on talents from many organizational areas consisting of energetic loose-cannon manager from creative or marketing services.

Over time, brands build up awareness and name recognition among consumers. People connect emotionally with a brand that reminds them of a specific time, place or experience, and old brands often have a reputation of reliability that new brands cannot match. Bringing back a dormant brand that consumers already recognize and are loyal to can save a lot of money. These savings are in the development, marketing and advertising expenditures that are required to launch a new brand. Making use of pre-existing awareness can also increase a product’s success rate by helping to cut through the clutter of products in the media.

A company must position its brand in the minds of consumers. A brand manager must find something new and different about that brand, get into the minds of consumers, and stake out a bit of territory. A company would like to gain a tiny amount of brain space so that he thinks of the brand while consuming a product in that category.

Brand Rejuvenation has a more holistic perspective than repositioning. It creates wider space in terms of market communication that includes escalated advertising and/or repositioning. The brands most likely to respond to
revitalization efforts are those that have clear and relevant values that have been left dormant for a long time, have not been well expressed in the marketing and communications recently, have been violated by product problems, cost reductions, and so on. If it is found that the brand really does not have any strong values, chances are that the product or business strength in the past was a function simply of performance and spending characteristics and that, in fact, according to our definition, it never really became a true brand. Bringing these brands back to life is more like starting from scratch. It really isn't revitalization.

Brand Rejuvenation may be required when a new competitor may have taken over the category and the company is struggling to generate revenues from the current product. A new variant has to be launched in order to regain market share (Horwitz and Weinberger, 2005): The whole product or service category may be declining, and a brand could be one of many brands that could use rejuvenation. It makes sense to build the brand while others are lying low because this is the time when the ambience is clutter free and your message gets across to the prospect much more clearly.

Transformation may be needed in order to communicate category leadership and develop an energized new visual identity system. This will unify the brand's expressions across all audiences. Rejuvenation may just be a need increase market share as the brand image may be becoming less relevant to people. It might be the appropriate time to reposition the product or rejuvenation may be an impale in promotion activity. The brand develops a strong association with the offering. Additional nodes strengthen the brand association network.

Perhaps, the brand has lost its unique point of differentiation and to revitalize the product or with a new image is necessary. The aging of the brand's target market sometimes results in the brand's inability to renew its positioning in the minds of the next generation of consumers. It is also possible that the brand may no longer meet the consumers' needs or desires, especially when the consumer has shifted to a different platform. This shifting usually ends in consumers' needs shifting from price to value.

Developing a concept capable of generating high impact and recognition is necessary when customer lacks understanding of the product or there is lack of customer engagement. It is also the applicable respond to customer lack of experience.

Modernizing the brand identity and making it more accessible is another approach to rejuvenation. Lackluster market success prompts the need to revitalize the positioning or package design. Completely revamp the package design system, including the brand logo, is necessary when existing package design fails to communicate a sense of natural well being.

Apart from the above reasons, neglecting the brand because of overconfidence that the brand is established and can sustain on its own, poor consumer relationship management and lack of appropriate response to increase in competition levels can bring in imperative scenario for brand rejuvenation.

**Methods of Brand Rejuvenation.** While going for a repositioning, it is important to accurately and completely characterize the breadth and depth of brand awareness; the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand association and brand responses held in consumer memory; and the nature of consumer-brand relationships. The brand equity in the minds of the customer has to be analyzed. Revitalization strategies obviously involve a continuum, with pure “back to basics” at one end and pure “reinvention” at the other end. Many revitalizations combine elements of both strategies. The possible approaches are (Horwitz and Weinberger, 2005).

With an understanding of the current and desired brand knowledge structures in hand, the customer-based brand equity framework provides guidance as to how one could best refresh the old sources of brand equity or create new sources of brand equity and achieve the intended positioning. Two such approaches are possible

1. Expand the depth or breadth of brand awareness, or both. This can be achieved by improving consumer recall and recognition of the brand during purchase or consumption.

2. Improve the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand associations making up the brand image. More favorable responses and greater brand resonance can result when brand salience and brand meaning are enhanced.

Strategically, lost sources of brand equity can be refurbished and new sources of equity can be established in the same three main ways that sources of brand equity are created. It starts with: changing brand elements, changing the supporting marketing program, or leveraging new secondary associations.

**Making Old Brands New.** Many once-strong brands wither away into obscurity because their brand managers lose
sight of the customer, and choose to attack the competition instead. Brand managers need to focus on the three ways customers interact with a brand. Managers need to understand how customers perceive, choose, and use the brand. This is because, when most people buy products, they buy 1 or 2 at a time. They anchor on a low number (like 1 or 2), then buy more if the product's on sale. When promotions suggest high numbers people shift their reference point to the higher number, and buy more.

Profit pressures on mature brands lead some companies to focus on the competition at the expense of the customer. In the face of these pressures, companies can either fight the competition or shore up the loyalty of existing customers. Increasing customer loyalty has both short and long term benefits, but companies must understand the interaction points between customer and brand which talks about how customers perceive a brand.

In mature brands this point is very essential. The product might have fallen out of favor, or the household might already have the product in inventory and it must be used up before it will be bought again. In these cases choice can influence perceptions and then usage or usage can influence perceptions and then choice.

**Expanding Brand Awareness.** With a fading brand, often it is not the depth of brand awareness that is a problem—consumers can still recognize or recall the brand under certain circumstances. Rather, the breadth of brand awareness is the stumbling block—consumers only tend to think of the brand in very narrow ways. Therefore, one powerful means of building brand equity is to increase the breadth of brand awareness, making sure that consumers do not overlook the brand and that they will think of purchasing or consuming it in those situations in which the brand can satisfy consumers’ needs and wants

**New Uses that Revitalize Old Brands.** Mature brand manufacturers are increasingly researching and developing ways to market new uses for their products. In order to increase the frequency of usage, additional applications of the product, either within the situational category or across category, provides an ample opportunity for increased sales.

**Improving Brand Image.** Although changes in brand awareness are probably the easiest means of creating new sources of brand equity, more fundamental changes are often necessary. A new marketing program may be necessary to improve the strength, favorability, and uniqueness brand associations making up the image. As part of this repositioning to the existing positioning any positive associations that have faded may need to be bolstered, any negative associations that have been created may have I be neutralized, and additional positive associations may have to be created.

**Repositioning the Brand.** Repositioning the brand requires establishing more compelling points of difference. This may simply require reminding consumers of the virtues of a brand that they have begun to take for granted.

**Changing Brand Elements.** Often one or more brand elements must be changed to either convey new information or to signal that the brand had taken on new meanings because the product or some other aspect of the marketing program has changed. The brand name is the most difficult to change. Packaging, logo and other characters may be changed.

**Entering New Markets.** Positioning decisions require a specification of the target market and the nature of competition to set the competitive frame of reference. The target market or markets for a brand typically do not constitute all possible segments that make up the entire market. In some cases, the firm may have other brands that target these remaining market segments. In other cases, however, these market segments represent potential growth targets for the brand. Effectively targeting these other segments, however, typically requires some changes or variations in the marketing program, especially in advertising and other communications, and the decision as to whether to target these segments ultimately depends on a cost-benefit analysis.

**The Process of Rejuvenation.** Brands sometimes have had to return to their roots to recapture lost sources of equity. The meaning of the brand has had to fundamentally change to regain lost ground and recapture market leadership. Reversing a fading brand's fortunes thus requires either lost sources of brand equity to be recaptured or new sources of brand equity to be identified and established.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study is a combination of primary and secondary research. Primary data were collected via mail surveys from 32 executives of companies that have taken up brand rejuvenation. The study also involves interactions with 15 brand
managers of various companies in Cavite Export Processing Zone.

An online survey was created in order to get the insights of the people involved in branding. A questionnaire was used to gain the responses about a few parameters of brand rejuvenation.

The major questions included the need or the cause for brand rejuvenation, the amount of time anticipated to carry out a brand rejuvenation process. The respondents were given ten major causes for brand rejuvenation to choose the most feasible cause.

**ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

An online survey was created in order to get the insights of the people involved in branding. A questionnaire was used to gain the responses about a few parameters of brand rejuvenation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUSES</th>
<th>N*</th>
<th>RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of market share due to competition</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product differentiation is absent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole product category is declining</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spike in promotion activity</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or increase market share</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of product understanding by consumers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain category leadership</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pep up brand image</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernize and increase visibility</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product attributes were lacking</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

* multiple response

The major questions included the need or the cause for brand rejuvenation, the amount of time anticipated to carry out a brand rejuvenation process. The respondents were given ten major causes for brand rejuvenation to choose the most feasible cause. According to the respondents, loss of market share is the most recurring cause for brand rejuvenation. Respondents also say lack of product differentiation and declining product category prompts for brand rejuvenation. Three out of the five respondents have signified that brand rejuvenation is usually a promotional activity and it is not for bringing in invention to the product. Overall the responses suggest that the causes for rejuvenation are not always common.

Bringing these brands back to life is more like starting from scratch. It really isn't revitalization. At the level at which the buck stops and budgets are decided rejuvenation plays a critical role for a brand to come back to life. Some companies believe reputation matters more than anything else and this is true as the stakeholders of the company already have an impression of the company. Every day, these impressions dictate how people behave towards the company. The question is how much of attention needs to be given to this. This determines whether a company chooses to actively manage these perceptions or leave them to chance. The sum of most of these impressions can be called your as a brand. It tells the world what it can expect from the company.

When questioned about the time frame required for a brand rejuvenation process to be carried out, the respondents feel that the time can be estimated. The reasons or the methods for estimation vary among the respondents. Three of the five respondents feel that market situation can be a major factor in determining the time required for the activity.

Previous success of the brand and the intensity of competition can be factors to some extent. The responses for the question regarding the fear of a brand losing its old identity, respondents feel that using new features to promote can be a method of doing this. They also felt that losing the old identity would be better for the brand in order to achieve successful brand rejuvenation.
Table 2 Tackle the Issue of a Brand Losing Its Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N*</th>
<th>Do not change much of the features</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote using the new features</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wash away the past image</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retain certain attributes</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*multiple response

Retaining certain attributes of the old product can facilitate brand positioning and gain markets. The marketer has to carefully position the brand such that it allows the brand to have a normal and organic growth. Meaning, if brand extensions/non-complimentary features are to be introduced, then the brand’s positioning should allow this to appear as natural for the consumer. If it does not, then the consumer will get confused and often the brand suffers as a result.

Conventional thinking is said to affect the rejuvenation process. The common stand is that conventional thinking would retard the process or lead to a repetition of the old stuff. In it common under the circumstances that unorthodox, out-of-ordinary measures typically get the necessary attention and window-of-opportunity from consumers, are called for.

The methods of overcoming this can be recruiting, outsourcing the activity of brand rejuvenation. A respondent also felt that conventional thinking would not affect the rejuvenation process as the team may require some conservative thinking and traditional knowledge to be applied for brand rejuvenation. What help will be out-of-the box execution ideas. Brand aesthetics may or may not be retained while a brand is being rejuvenated. This question derived mixed response from the respondents with two of them saying that the aesthetics have to be retained and the other two saying that there should be a change in the brand aesthetics.

In the method of shifting consumer perception generated a response stating that the brand essence shall be changed in order change the perception. Repositioning the brand was another option the respondents feel would change the perception of the consumers. Scheduling of the brand rejuvenation program, according to the respondents depends on the market situation. This is because of the fact that relaunching a brand should be at a stage when the market has a demand for the product category. The decision, according to the respondents, has to also depend on the brand’s health and the competition.

The respondents cited that a budget for the rejuvenation process has to be prepared at the beginning. One of the respondents feels that a separate budget need not be prepared for the purpose of brand rejuvenation.

Respondents feel that a set pattern or model cannot be followed for rejuvenation. They feel that different brands have to be revitalized in different ways as their position could be at different levels. Certain models do not fit to the Indian context and some brands cannot be rejuvenated in a simple straightforward pattern. The general ingredients according to them would be building awareness, involving channel partners by allowing better margins.

Managers attempt to reposition individual brands independent of the portfolio. Certain brands do well when they are under the cluster of brands from a company. When they are positioned separately, they may lose their identity and the customers conventional thinking in the marketing function does not lead to successful brand rejuvenation. This calls for some basic recruitment in at all levels of the company. Brand rejuvenation should be accepted at all levels and departments of the company namely, the marketing, finance, human resources and the operations. With regard to brands, which are being given a new lease of life at the same platform, can be affected. Some basic features and benefits may be found missing if the customers look for older options. The brand may be repositioned weaker than its old positioning.

Perception about the product has to be changed in the minds of the customers. This could act as a challenge for the management. Customers may not be ready to accept the new product when the promotional activities do not exhibit the changed brand. Market may not respond when the demand for the product is not on the rise. Usually, brands are revitalized when the demand for the product category is on a high. The financial aspect in brand rejuvenation plays a major role. The Investment decisions are very critical. Brand rejuvenation is sometimes compared to a calculated gambling, as the returns cannot be predicted. The return on investments is not guaranteed, as it depends on various factors. Budgeting for brand rejuvenation has to be done at the year-end of the previous financial year.
The Channel plays a major role for the success of a brand revitalization activity. The response from the distribution channel has to be positive. They need to carry the brand with a difference. Education of the channel becomes critical. An over reliance on quick-fix advertising instead of addressing more fundamental product performance problems can be an issue while developing a new communication strategy. Rejuvenated brands do not perform well after rejuvenation because they look only at the advertising aspects while neglecting the others.

The pace of technological change, which is shortening product life spans, can act as an issue during rejuvenation. From product innovation to parity to obsolescence is a much faster route, making effective brand rebuilding at the product level more difficult. Ever-increasing channels of communications, the Internet and new global markets, provide an opportunity and a threat to the brand builders. They create new opportunities to create truly global brands, but they need a lot of contemplation, as they are not stable.

A growing sophistication in the way companies view brand equity and manage their brand development, which is leading to new, better models of brand architecture.

CONCLUSION

Brands must make the product relevant and meaningful to the target customers if it must enhance the product over and above the basic generic level. A product that comes off the assembly line tends to be merely a physical object. Branding pushes the product into a perpetual realm by integrating what it is. Branding gives the customers reasons to buy and use the products. Brand rebuilding gives a second life for a brand.

Today Brand Rejuvenation is in very high demand as companies realize that building a brand would take ten times more money than rejuvenating an existing brand. New product development tries to create brand equity from a blank sheet of paper. But it can frequently be more rewarding to start with a sheet already written on, with a hidden message we can decode for a relatively small investment.

Brand managers have numerous options for revitalizing the sales of an established brand in a mature category. The strategies suggested here present opportunities for many managers to salvage and leverage the equity that has been built over the lifetime of the brand. Brands die because of neglect and consumer indifference. While bad brands may fade away, “A good brand though, should never go.”

The very creation of a brand is influenced by the purpose or the goal of a brand. The major decisions about a brand would dependent on why the brand was created; the basic idea of a brand or a product would be generated after the need is assessed. A brand audit may be necessary for certain brands in order to get the entire history and perception of a brand. This may give us the cause of under taking brand rejuvenation. In order to make successful brand rejuvenation, we have to bringing in a synergy between the visions, mission statements of the company along with the intents, strategies, facts and analysis. The management plays a critical role in the success of the brand rejuvenation process.

As a result of Brand Rejuvenation, the stakeholders of the company now see the company, as it would like to be seen, may be as it was seen before it lost its brand equity. The ensuing goodwill allows goals to be achieved with less resistance, effort and expenditure. Relations between need and the method of brand rejuvenation

The study tries to relate the various factors that bring about the necessity of brand rejuvenation and the various methods available for brand rejuvenation. If the cause for brand rejuvenation is the product itself, i.e., the product has lost its appeal or usage, and the market is not accepting the brand. The product attributes have to be changed and the company may bring out newer uses of the product so that the product can be relaunched.

The positioning may have to be changed on the whole. This can be done brand requires establishing more compelling points of difference. This may simply require reminding consumers of the virtues of a brand that they have begun to take for granted.

When the cause for brand rejuvenation is the customers, it prompts the company to change the perception in the minds of the consumers. Bringing out new uses will also affect the consumers and thus change the brand image.

If the reason for rejuvenating a brand is the competition, which has affected the sales and the image of the brand, the company may have to undertake the process in more than a couple of ways. It could be done through entering into newer markets or changing the brand elements and the perception in the minds of the consumers so that the market
share is picked up. If the brand rejuvenation is prompted as a result of the failure of the strategies of the brand, the company may have to get into strategies that may be focused towards the changing of brand image, perception in the minds of the consumers and competitors or entering into newer markets and also making a better positioning strategy.

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