Antje Walliser

Successful Branding - A critical examination of Customer Experience Management for Persona International

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Hochschule Reutlingen
European School of Business

Lancaster University
Management School

Successful Branding –

A critical examination of Customer Experience Management for Persona International

Freie wissenschaftliche Arbeit

zur Erlangung des Grades eines Diplom-Betriebswirtes (FH)

und Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

Datum der Abgabe : 09. Februar 2005

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EIDESSTATTLICHE ERKLÄRUNG

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAM	Brand Asset Management
BCE	Branded Customer Experience
ROBI	Return on Brand Investment
Persona	Persona International
CEM	Customer Experience Management
CEM+	The Customer Experience Management Tool
ESB	European School of Business Reutlingen
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
R&D	Research and Development

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine and empirically test the branding approach *Managing the Customer Experience* by Smith and Wheeler.

A comparison of branding theories, differing in their focus internal or external of the organisation during the brand development and implementation process, is carried out. Smith and Wheeler suggest an external orientation during the brand creation. The evaluation shows however that an additional focus internal of the organisation is indispensable:

During brand development the management brand vision and the organisational culture should be considered, as Harris and De Chernatony suggest. Internal acceptance of the brand, avoidance of resistance, and use of internal knowledge can be achieved by this. Furthermore the company vision, mission and values have to be considered as Davis suggests. Misalignment between the brand and company strategy can cause negative consequences like a dilution of strategic focus. After empirically testing the Smith and Wheelers' brand development process by means of Persona International, the previously identified shortcoming are practically explored.

Implementing the brand, Smith and Wheeler suggest to aim at creating an unbeatable customer experience with the help of employees. This idea is shown to be promising as strong customer loyalty can be created, in turn allowing to profit from all the benefits a strong brand embodies.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit hat das Ziel, sich kritisch mit der Theorie *Managing the Customer Experience* von Smith und Wheeler auseinander zu setzen und diese empirisch zu prüfen.

Zunächst werden Branding-Theorien in Vergleich gestellt, die sich durch ihren unterschiedlichen Fokus innerhalb oder außerhalb der Organisation während der Markenentwicklung und Implementierung differenzieren. Smith und Wheeler schlagen dazu eine externe Orientierung während der Branderschaffung vor. Die Auswertung zeigt jedoch, dass ein zusätzlicher Fokus innerhalb der Organisation unentbehrlich ist.
Wie Harris und De Chernatony vorschlagen, sollten während der Markenentwicklung die Brand-Vision des Managements, sowie die Organisationskultur berücksichtigt werden. Dadurch kann die interne Annahme der Brand, Vermeidung von Widerstand und das Nutzen von internem Wissen erreicht werden.

Des Weiteren sind nach Davis die Vision, Mission und Werte des Unternehmens einzubeziehen. Fehlausrichtungen der Brand- und Firmenstrategie können negative Auswirkungen haben, wie zum Beispiel die Schwächung des strategischen Fokus. Nachdem der Markenentwicklungsprozess von Smith und Wheeler mittels Persona International empirisch getestet wurde, wird auf die identifizierten Schwachstellen der Theorie praktisch eingegangen.

Bei der Markenimplementierung empfehlen Smith und Wheeler das Schaffen einer unvergesslichen Erfahrung für den Kunden durch die Hilfe der Mitarbeiter. Dieser Ansatz wird als viel versprechend empfunden, da auf diese Weise starke Kundenloyalität erzielt werden kann, die wiederum ermöglicht, von allen Vorteilen einer starken Marke zu profitieren.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining the Task

> *"I believe there is almost no limit to what a brand can do,*
> *but only if used properly"*
>
> Richard Branson[1]

In a highly competitive business world, differentiation is an essential key to success for companies. Branding has been a long discussed method to create such a necessary competitive advantage, however an effective and smart branding approach is necessary to ensure success, as the quote of Richard Branson shows.

The American company Persona International, offering consulting tools and methodologies to their licensees, recognizes the importance of branding to stay ahead of competitors. Thus, it was decided to launch a branding initiative. The branding strategy *Managing the Customer Experience* by Smith and Wheeler was chosen by Persona, which is also sold in form of a tool designed by Shaun Smith, called "Customer Experience Management CEM+"[2]. The idea behind this theory is to establish and reinforce a brand by offering the customer an unforgettable experience with the product or service of the company. Consequently, the brand promise is developed on basis of the customer expectations.

As for Persona, two kinds of customers exist, one being their direct partners and the other being the clients of the partners, who are the end-users of the tools. It was decided that the branding initiative should be focused on the partners first, as they are mostly also aware of the needs and expectations of their clients.

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[1] Branson, R. in Smith, S. & Wheeler, J. (2002) p.xiii
[2] Trademark by Shaun Smith