

**A STUDY OF ANTI-BRANDING ANTECEDENTS WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO REDBULLS, STARBUCKS, ADBUSTERS AND WALMART**

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**ABSTRACT**

The growing pressure of capitalization on the economies of the world has been on an ever increasing note. With the growing competition in both the consumer market and the industrial market, some of the leading companies tend to cut down on certain important issues of corporate responsibility, social improvement initiatives and resorts to unhealthy measures. With the advent of Internet, the online active community is fighting back. In this paper, we have tried to identify some brands such as Redbull, Starbucks, Adbsuters & Walmart which have been successful without putting much emphasis on branding. We have also tried to see how they have been perceived by the customers in the long run.

**Keywords:** Branding , Anti Branding ,Brand Flow, Brand Triggers, Megabrands.

**I. Introduction**

Branding can be deciphered as a substance of wooving a product or service in the market. Branding is not just by what a substance can be known of. It has been evolving ever since it came into being with traits such as brand personality, brand association ,brand loyalty and brand equity e.t.c. Factors such as brand availability ,brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand Image and others help the brand to grow within a passage of time. On similar terms, existence of the negative sides cannot be denied at any cost or reason. Such may prove to be decremental in brand building and may prove to be fatal for the brand and the company using such brand.

Certain views refer to brand as a multi dimensional marketing tool that communicates a constellation of values (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley,1998).Brands are cultural symbols with identities that can be used to provide meaning (Levy 1959; McCracken 1989, 2005). Brands are not just names which rattles the consumer mindset, its the aforementioned strong attributes and values that make them what they are. So, the question arises, do same values of brands affect the brands for every market they exists , or, not. Secondly, Whether such values need to re-evolved constantly. This article shall try to pursue above questions and perhaps some relationship between values, brands, time and territory can be attained.If we attach the principle of universality

(Head and Tail),( Positive and Negativity), ( Yes or No) to the term ‘ brand’, we get anti- branding which reveals the negative side of branding.

## **II. Literature Review**

According to Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) “people buy products or brands for something other than their physical attributes and functions” (p.110). Fournier (1998) indicates that people buy brands because they have established loyal, long-term, committed, affect-laden relationships with particular brands. Brands can also lead to negative perception in the mind of consumers. As “brands attach meaning to a good”(Muniz 1997, p. 308), brands also have potential to symbolize negative perceptions associated with corporations. Anti- branding has also been sometimes referred as dissatisfaction from brands. In their study of dissatisfaction, Oliva et al. (1992) offer the concept of brand avoidance as the anti-thesis of brand loyalty, and use the term brand avoidance interchangeably with brand switching. Oliva et al. (1992) suggest that satisfaction leads to brand loyalty while dissatisfaction leads to brand avoidance/switching. Confirmation or acceptance of product is likely to result in satisfaction and occurs when consumer expectations from the product or service are equal to the experience. Disconfirmation occurs when consumer experiences are either above or below initial expectations and therefore can be positive or negative. Negative disconfirmation takes place when the consumer's experience with the product or service is below his or her expectations and is more likely to result in dissatisfaction (Halstead, 1989; Oliver, 1980).

## **III. Research Objectives**

- 1.) To identify certain brands which have been very successful without highlighting the essence of brand.
- 2.) To find how such brands have made an impact in the market during their growth.
- 3.) To identify those parameters which make these brands popular among the masses.

## **IV. Assumptions**

- (1) Null Assumption:  
Branding of products makes them successful in the growing market.
- (2) Alternate Assumption:  
Branding of products does not make them successful in the growing market.

## V. Analysis and Interpretation

### *A Emergence of Brands*

Brand cycle revolves around the concept of creating a product ,and segmenting the market , targeting the market suitable for the product, positioning concepts in and around the customer liking and attributes of the product.

In Figure 1, The brand so formed are said to be driven by 'triggers' which liquefies the flow of brand formation, their sustenance, reformation and exit from the market. According to a Mckinsey report, companies use brand promises( emotional bonds) to the existing brands for the purpose of creating strong distinctive delivery which makes strong brand equity possible. These 'triggers' are critical for brand success and should form a permanent feature of brand delivery to its customers. Some of the critical brand triggers include brand Identity, feeling related with the brand, thoughts that the brand gives birth to, brand attraction, brand energy, brand growth, structure of the brand, brand freedom, brand spirit and brand renewal. Too much or too less of these triggers over a long period can lead to brand collapse.

Another factor relevant under these situation is the 'TRS' which means Total return to shareholders. Higher ' TRS' can be derived by improving tangible benefits as well Intangible benefits through brand usage and consumption . While tangible benefits consists of direct values obtained that may include product benefits due to product quality and some additive values added thereon by the brand, Intangible benefits may be accrued to the pride and prestige ,self esteem, safety and security obtained ( motivational quotients).

Janet Hoek, professor in marketing at Massey University, was quoted in the Weekend Herald saying, "Marketers are adept at using puffery to imply benefits that do not exist."

"Marketers are portrayed as manipulative and dishonest and advertising as an ubiquitous irritant," continued Loerke, warning that perhaps, industry's greatest challenge today is an anti-brand, anti-corporate, anti-advertising sentiment that is pervading society.

***B Parametric Comparison between Brands***

Parameters included are :

Measuring Brands in terms of their origin ,identity, attraction, structure ,spirit & growth.

In the Table 1, we have tried to compare the brands on the basis of various parameters. We can see that these brands have originated from various places such as Asia( redbulls), U.S( Starbucks, Adbusters, walmart). This shows that brands exist everywhere, from one continent to another.

i) All these brands are highly customer centric, since they are used frequently by consumers across different markets.

ii) All these brands are very popular among the consumers due to high level of attractiveness.ie. two of them are liquid food ( Redbulls, Starbucks) and one of them is media tool( adbusters), and the other is a retail giant.

iii) The liquid foods have a monolithic structure which means they have a huge presence in their own markets, while adbusters is based on contributions from the general consumers, and Walmart is the most successful retail outlet which endorses different products and brands in its outlet.

iv) Redbull and Starbucks shows spirit of youthfulness and refreshness which means consumers can use them frequently. Also, Adbusters stands for transparency and no-biasness attitude and Walmart brings in quality concept which so closely related with consumer expectations.

v) All these brands have grown to be leaders in their own markets which shows that consumers have repeatedly preferred them due to the product they offer which speaks less of brand and more of a valued product.

***C Megabrand and Brand Avoidance***

In Figure 2. As we can see that during evolution,  $p_0 - b_0 = 10$ . As the brand grows,  $(p_1 - b_1) = 8$ ,  $(p_2 - b_2) = 6$ ..... $(p_4 - b_4) = 2$  ( taking into consideration equal gap intervals of 10,8,6,4,2,0). As brands become synonymous with product, it becomes  $p_5 - b_5 = 0$ , or  $p_5 = b_5$ .  $b_5(x=0)$  becomes the driving brand.

New products developed such  $n_1$  &  $m_1$  are being sold under the brand name of  $b_5$ .As number of products offered increases or accelerates, the brand  $b_5$  struggles and the gap between diversified products corresponding values

expands. b5 tends to break up, and  $x=1$  at level 1,  $x=2$  at level 2 and  $x=3$  at level 3 and so on. This shows that b5 is unable to keep similar values alive in all product categories.

### *Comparison with four Brands*

Similar problems did arise with STARBUCKS which started with high coffee experience & breweries, and as their popularity rises, they began to expand to new markets throughout the world. The figure stands around 13,000 retail approx. in major countries across the globe( moved to b5, then m1 and n1 and so on). The key to this problem was loss in customer focus and was more keen in gaining larger profit margin. As the number of stores increased, the control over factors such as product standards, customer tastes and preferences, cultural values, govt. Rules and regulations becomes poorer and dearer. This may have happened due to overestimation of future profits. As a result, significant losses were incurred by STARBUCKS in the later period.

Correspondingly, Red Bull , despite a poor start, managed to attract customers with stronger intent on creating a distinctive value driven approach towards its customers. The brand was more focussed on delivering a high energy drink and using a high sales pitch were able to rise up very fast in the drinks segment. Their target customers were mainly the young generation with a brand promise of more energy each drink. They have nearly captured 40% of the overall market shares worldwide.( moving towards b5.)

Adbusters campaign through print media was more of a revolution and a voice against 'consumerism'. The term 'consumerism' itself means treating consumers as a separate group in the society which has to be treated in a specific way ( such that consumers become more of a market object rather than a social object.) The method for this approach was more of making the system transparent by enabling the consumers to go through information which corporate's may hide off during a product or brand promotion. It had major contributions from eminent socialists and the campaign acted as a platform of exchange of ideas against consumerism .Some popular campaigns included 'Subvertisements', & 'Culture Jamming' aimed at improvising to resituate pre-existence of ideas in consumer minds. It also looked at interrupting the efforts of MNC's to rule the market by creating wrong perception of products by use of symbols, logos & slogans of the brands being promoted.

Walmart brought a new refreshing mindset of attaching the brands image with the environment aspect of keeping clean & enabling customer's viewpoint reach

the company's work culture. Walmart's work ethics became relative of reducing costs from supply chain for improving the efficacy of customer delivery & customer satisfaction. Walmart was able to reciprocate to customers requirements by conducting 2700 consumer tests. Walmart showed that product quality & attributes across different brands was more important than own label products. The consistent policy of offering greater value in terms of cheaper quality products. Walmart is better placed in terms of transition to own brand strategy due to its deep penetration & bargaining power within the consumer segment.

## **VI. Findings and Suggestions**

Some of the major findings and related suggestions are:

1.) Brands emerge as a result of product requirement among the consumers. So, product is more important than brand. All the dimensions of product such as quality, quantity, price etc. decides whether brand name is popular or not. Companies should concentrate more product attributes rather than brand.

2.) Consumers prefer those products which gives them sustainable quality for a long period of time. Also, Consumers changing requirements such as tastes, preferences, product perception decides their expectation level from brands which becomes a mere source of such products.(Redbull, starbucks)

3.) When certain brands set up standards higher than normal Industrial/market standards, and that too for a long period of time, then the brand names used becomes synonymous with products associated thereof. Alternatively when a brand evolves, product attributes are used for selling the brand. But as the time passes, brand name surpasses the product thinking and makes a name for itself. At that point, Brand holds greater significance & customers associate higher values prevalent with the brand. The company may opt to diversify into more product categories to be sold under the parent brand name. The brand can then be called as a megabrand. (Walmart)

4.) Consumer freedom must be accepted by all the brands which exists in the market. Consumers decide what they want from the brand and not the vice-versa.( Adbusters)

Therefore, we can say that our Null Assumption (Branding of products makes them successful in the growing market.) is not true and the alternate assumption

of “ Branding of products does not makes them successful in the growing market.” stands true.

So, “Anti- branding can be termed as a state of development of brand-culture, where after attaining synonymity condition with the product, the parent brand loses its focus from the actual values that helped it attain its status, & thereby trying to concentrate on too many product ideas at a time, loses its shine and destroys in the process.”

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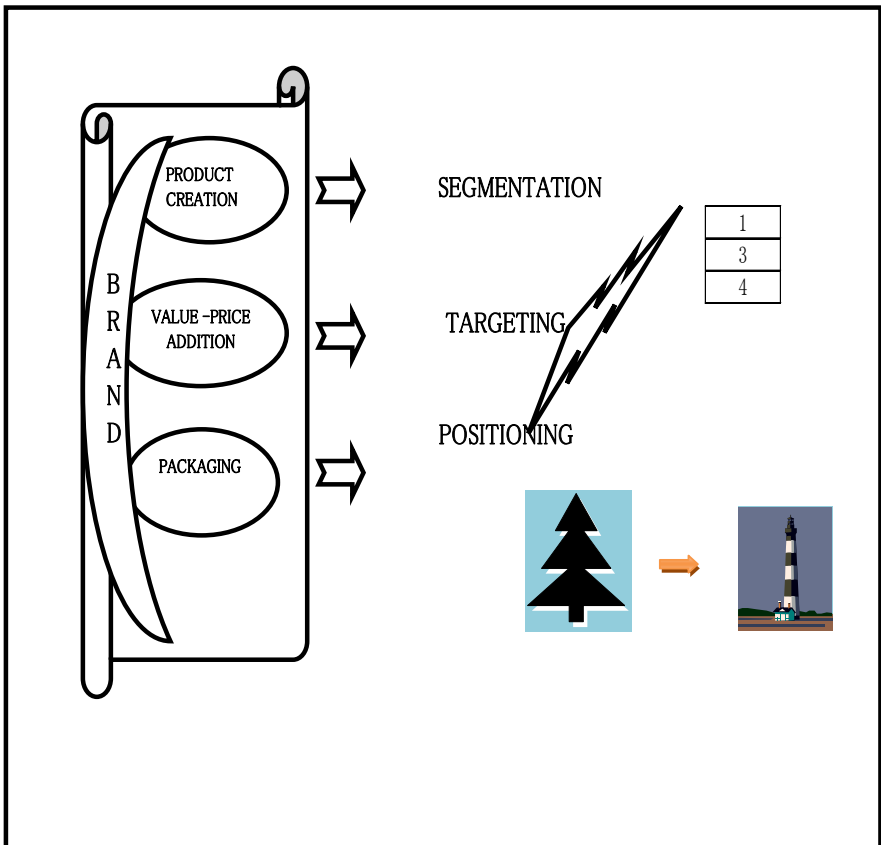
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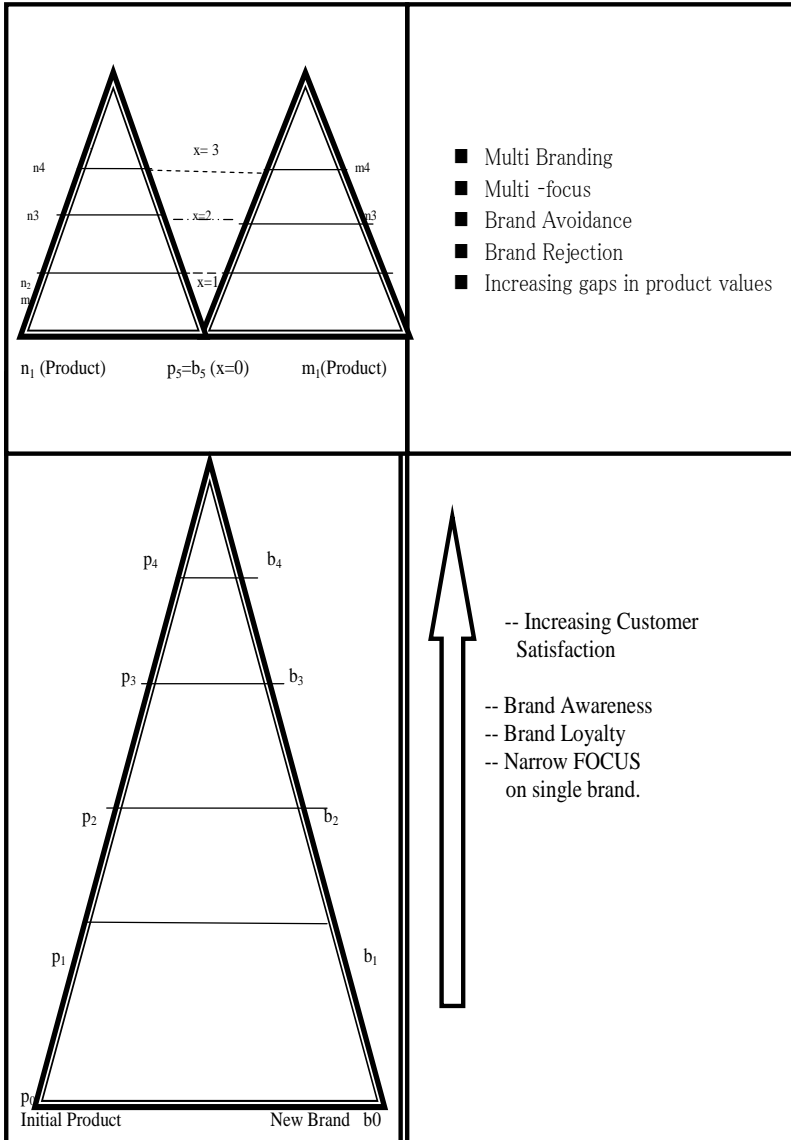
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**Figures and Tables**

**Fig 1. Brand formation**



**Fig. 2 Brand creation and relation with product (Megabrand)**

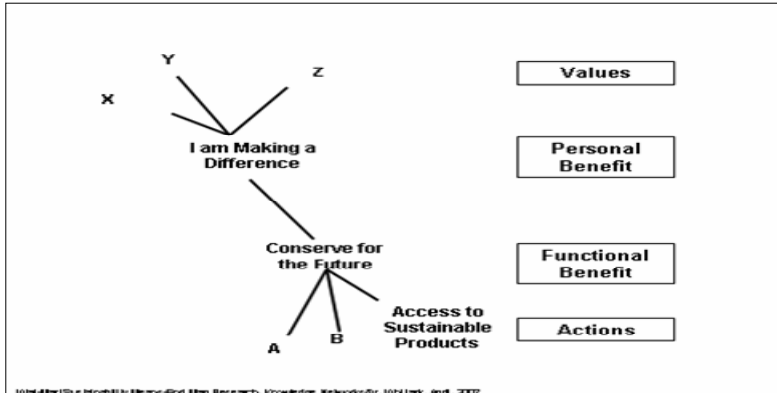


**Table 1. Comparison between different brands**

<i>Company--&gt;</i>	<b>RedBulls</b>	<b>StarBucks</b>	<b>Adbusters</b>	<b>Walmart</b>
<i>Key Triggers</i>				
Brand Origin	Thailand.	Seattle, U.S.A	Vancouver, British Columbia,1989 <sup>7</sup>	Rural Rogers, Arkansas,196 2. <sup>8</sup>
Brand Identity	Energy drink( 40% market share) <sup>3</sup>	High-End Coffee	Ad free magazine.	Largest Retail Outlet.
Brand Attraction	High, Increasing	High, Focus on taste and aroma <sup>5</sup>	Non-profit, anti- consumerist. <sup>7</sup>	Environment friendly products. <sup>9</sup>
Brand Structure	Monolithic. <sup>10</sup>	Monolithic. <sup>1</sup> 0	Based on contributions.	Endorsed. <sup>10</sup>
Brand Spirit	Youthful, party loving, and exuberant. <sup>6</sup>	Coffee ,Refreshing experience	Transparency, freedom of speech or the public's access to the airwaves or corporate information. <sup>7</sup>	Better quality at cheaper costs. (reducing supply chain costs.)
Brand Growth	North America,Euro pe,USA, Asia	12,500 retails worldwide in 39 countries. <sup>6</sup>	International circulation amongst 120000 readers. <sup>7</sup>	3500 stores in U.S, \$255B sales in 2009. <sup>9</sup>

Exhibits

Exhibit – I Walmart Value



( Source: 2009, The ARF, Retail+Etail Silver Winner)

Exhibit – II Adbusters



(Source: <http://www.adbusters.org/magazine/93>)

**Exhibit – III Starbucks**



(Source: <http://brandextensions1.blogspot.com/>)

**Exhibit – IV Red Bull**



(Source: <http://www.rense.com/general88/bull.htm>)

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