

THE IDENTITY AND THE PERSONALITY – INGREDIENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL BRAND

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The impact of the Economic, Demographic and social-cultural mutations on the Small and Medium Enterprises of the Services Field

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Abstract:

The functionality and performances of the modern economies depend on working together permanently and on various levels of the firms belonging to all dimensional categories.

The changes in the last ten years, on the one hand, at the level of large enterprises and on the other hand, at the level of the external environment of the firms are as many challenges for the small business.

The XXI century brings dramatic changes in the physiognomy of enterprises. The small enterprise has to adapt step by step to these changes, as the limited financial resources will make it more difficult from the point of view of duration and the employees' attitude towards the change. Maintaining the small business on the market will require multiple efforts from the entrepreneur and employees.

Small Enterprise vs. Large Enterprise

A large number of specialists draw our attention on the complementarity between business and large enterprises, showing the fact that the last ones are efficient only thanks to the environment created by the multitude of the small ones, they cooperate with and the other way around. The argumentation of the existence of small enterprises cannot be done by bringing forward the disadvantages of big firms and the other way around. Both categories of firms hold positions that cannot be replaced in the "new economy", and by principle, cannot be opposed to one another.

Small and medium business are essential for the good functioning of large enterprises, at least for the following reasons:

they furnish a large majority of part, under-ensembles and a large quantity of raw materials, materials energy and the necessary utilities;

they represent the most numerous clients for the large enterprises;

they "absorb" the "unemployed force" produced by large enterprises;

they offer the big enterprises part of the labour force that had been hired before in small and medium enterprises

small and medium firms generate part of the large enterprises.

Large enterprises in turn, play an important part in creating and developing small business.

It is difficult to foresee the tendency of evolution of the enterprise medium dimension. We cannot state, for sure, that the general tendency is to grow, or, on the contrary, to diminish because of the contradictory evolutions worldwide; while in the USA the phenomenon of increasing the number of small enterprises is going on, worldwide there is an increase of the GOP that comes from the big monopolies. These we witness two phenomena:

An increase of the number of multinational firms by almost 100 times in the last thirty years, including their subsidiaries in different parts, of the world, which represents a clear hint of the growth tendency of the medium dimension of the firm. The growth tendency of the number of fusions is closely connected to globalization,

~~enterprises fearing they may not be able to survive on a globalized market if they didn't have enough large dimensions. Even the on-line sales seem to favour large firms, taking advantage of the name of their brand.~~

~~A second phenomenon in that of "flattening" the pyramids of the contemporary enterprises, and their replacement with large networks in different parts of the world, those ones employing a relatively small number of employees with different specializations.~~

~~————— If in the US the tendency appears to be in favour of the small business, that create each year 80% of all work places, in Europe, the tendency is to maintain a high level of bureaucracy, which represents an obstacle for new businesses. Even the small entrepreneurs think that the future belongs to large enterprises, since they don't have enough financial resources, they have difficulties in attracting investors, and the quality of their products is an attribute largely associated to the size of the business. On the other hand, the fall of some huge American business in the mobile phone field and the huge losses of the European France Telecom and British Telecom raise a question regarding the sizes of enterprises. It is said that a main reason of such disasters has been the gigantic dimension of such business, which led to a drastic fall in flexibility.~~

~~————— A higher percentage of the American population fears:~~

~~The unlimited power of the large American enterprises, not only on the economic level, but also on the social and political ones;~~

~~The maximization of the profit instead of seeking the customer satisfaction through secure and quality products;~~

~~The interests of the large enterprises differ from those of most Americans;~~

~~The political influence of large enterprises is too strong.~~

~~————— The results of an opinion pole at world wide level show that the large majority of the world citizens has lost confidence in national governments and in large enterprises, trusting the non-governmental organizations.~~

~~————— Although there is a tendency of growth for the medium size of the enterprise. Yet the recent tendencies confirm a consciousness of the negative effects of the anarchical growth of the size of businesses.~~

~~—————~~

~~————— 2. External Environmental Challenges of the Small and Medium Enterprises~~

~~————— The large enterprises continues to fight the sharp problems launched thirty years ago: the increase in bureaucracy and the impossibility to face global competition because of lack of flexibility. At the level of the external environment of firms there have been profound changes as well.~~

~~The differentiation of products already existing on the market, though new products that hold a lot more scientific and technical information and less capital. The knowledge and imagination limit the importance of the capital was the main obstacle for accessing the market, nowadays, we may think that this danger will disappear. Realistically, the fix capital of the industrial stage of the economy has been replaced by the right of intellectual property.~~

~~Stray and long term protection of the intellectual property right.~~

~~The overwhelming protection of any ideal affects small businesses by restricting the free exchange of information. This tendency encourages in fact, the creation of new forms of monopolized market. "The Economist" thinks differently; this business of the patents has reached paroxysm and it should be stopped. For example in 1999, in the USA there have been awarded more than 16.000 patents representing the double of those awarded in the previous ten years.~~

~~The reduction in the demand for standardized products and the passage for lots of industries, to the process of small production or unique product. The production of small enterprises can thus, satisfy specific wishes and needs of the consumers, on condition that they may have the financial resources that allow their rapid access and for a small risk, to new technologies.~~

~~Decrease of production costs.~~

~~This phenomenon is due, first of all, to the rapid reduction of the human resources need at same time with the increase of the performing technologies. As a result of the personalization of production, reduction of the production costs and a high productivity can be obtained through small production as well, such as, in general, small business production. Thus the link between competitiveness and the enterprise dimension is no more strictly proportional, small series production having the chance to become as advantageous as the large series production.~~

~~The tendency to globalization~~

~~Not only the enterprises export oriented are affected by this phenomenon, but also those focused towards the interval market, which have to face competition with highly performing enterprises all over the world.~~

~~Extension of services range that opens new opportunities to put into practice the knowledge and creativity of entrepreneurs, without necessitating, usually, important investment.~~

~~Permanence of change.~~

~~The extremely rapid rhythm of economic and social evolutions is materialized in the shortening of life cycle of products, creating thus, new opportunities for the creation and development of small business.~~

~~Increase of insecurity at work places.~~

~~The new enterprises offer permanent work places and fix salaries to a restricted number of high positions and for workers there are reduced work times (norms), non determined period contracts, cooperation contracts, etc. These last ones have to live under insecurity conditions. If we add to this the changes in the individual status versus society, meaning the necessity of satisfying the individual's desires and needs, it comes out that in order to meet these requirements at least professionally flexible and dynamic structures of small business are necessary.~~

~~A new role of the business and of the entrepreneur~~

~~The traditional entrepreneur will be replaced in future by three professional entities; the creators of monopolistic ideas, the enterprise conductors (nowadays' managers) and the investors. At the same time the percentage of the entrepreneurs that will be managers will be reduced. The business will be led professionally and the entrepreneurs will be the owners only. The figure of the modern manager will impose more and more in economy if the succeeds in combining the knowledge (economical political, psychological, etc.), to the power of persuading and the rapidity to make optional decisions. On the other hand, the recruitment of a brilliant manager will not be as it is thought the only method to solve problems and gain profit. Because of the complex problems that the future enterprise will have to face, the unique manager will have to "share" power with the managers of different compartments~~

~~3. The influence of economic and social cultural factors~~

~~In small enterprises the analysis of environmental changes allows the identification of answering strategies that will ensure their survival on the services market whose tendency, more and more obvious, is evolving towards liberalization.~~

~~The demographic environment has recorded a lot of changes in the post years, some of them having shock effects. An explosive tendency was recorded between 2000-2005 in the urban agglomeration. More than 500 millions Chinese people have migrated towards cities. Until the year 2030 more than 50% of all 10 billion inhabitants of the Earth will "crowd" in large urban agglomerations. This "homo urbanicus" will be the center of attention of services firm strategies, because it requires needs of high protection and security and thus, newly emerged markets will have to be identified as result of these needs. For example: in France the drinking water supplying services have introduced video cameras in order to fight pollution of waters.~~

~~The agglomeration creates new technical solutions in freight services, urban transportation services, telecommunications, etc. The "baby boom" phenomenon (Luc Bayer, Didier Burgand, 2000, p.25) seen through an accelerated reduction in forms population between 20 and 24 years old, brings to changes within the demand for services.~~

~~The reduction in the ratio of this segment in Europe between 1990-2010 according to estimations will be a real economic shock: France 11.0%, Great Britain 14.4%, Germany 23.7%, Spain 36.0%, Italy 40%.~~

~~This evolution determines a repositioning of the segment called "old people", that becomes "seniors" and the apparition of a segment called "the fourth age", people aged over 60 with revenues higher than the average, with refined tasks, desires for comfort, higher expectations in the field of quantity and personalization of services.~~

~~Social and cultural environment includes attitudes, values, norms, beliefs, behavior and demographic tendencies that are specific to a given geographic area. Economic (on line) commerce, cyber marketing, integrated communication have produced a sociological mutation. The consumer of services can no longer be identified through a single variable of the social demographic type.~~

~~The social cultural landscape becomes internationalized. The production and distribution of services tend to concentrate at the European level. We witness a strong closeness in terms of preferences, the health and travel services coming first for the European families.~~

~~The impact on small and medium enterprises of services can be analyzed through comparing the two dimensions of the international environment:~~

~~global forces (buying components, scale economies potential, competition, etc) that push towards standardization;~~

~~local forces (cultural diversity of local regrelationes, distribution networks characteristics) that fight in favor of adaptation to local characteristics.~~

~~Markets will only be considered as a whole and for any service providing enterprise the problem is to know how to get organized in order to confront this global market (the European Union for example, own 50% of the volume of world services transaction):~~

~~The adaptation of the Bolkestein Directive regarding free implementation and circulation of services in the unique European market that will be applied to Romania in 2010 will generate higher waves of services.~~

~~The evolution of small and medium Romanian service enterprises will rely on reaching the competitiveness level that will allow their integration in the region and global commercial circuit, thus putting into value the local specificity of the demand can be the background for the creation of devoted clients.~~

~~Accomplishment of the domestic and external research in marketing becomes critical in elaborating market strategies, because its results can lead to service personalization solutions. It is more and more obvious that competitiveness through costs is not enough anymore for small and medium services enterprises to survive, especially in the field of services, where due to non repeatability / variable performance, it is hard to gain concurrential advantage through scale economies.~~

~~These research activities suppose expensive budgets and qualified personnel and thus it is an illusion to believe that the Romanian small and medium enterprises will develop them through their own forces. The solution would be we think partnership. The evolution towards partnership is not a voluntarist one but consequence of the scarce capital and the necessity to adapt to the newly created economic context created by the liberalization of markets at the same time with radical changes in the firm's marketing environment.~~

~~To conclude, we may say that, as any change, the analyzed mutations generate opportunities that can perceive them and know how to use in their own favor, as well as the one of their clients, but at the same time, they impose limits for the small and medium enterprises that do not have the capacity to permanently research the volume and structure of the services, and that do not have the flexibility and the savoir faire necessary to a quick adaptation.~~

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Abstract: In a world in which competition is becoming increasingly fierce and the products increasingly similar, building and maintaining powerful brands ensures an important competitive advantage for the companies. A brand's power is given by its brand equity, which has two components: the value of the brand and the image features which give it relevance and differentiate it from its competitors. In order to be successful, the brand needs to possess two essential ingredients – identity and personality – developed and maintained through an intensive marketing activity. A powerful brand which possesses both identity and personality has a significant added value compared to a generic product. Thus, it will be able to better satisfy the consumers' needs and they will be willing to pay more in order to obtain it.

Key words: brand equity, marketing communication, brand, successful brand, brand value.

In our days, the decisions related to brands represent an important part of the communication strategy and implicitly of the marketing strategy of any organization. Using brands is necessary due to at least two reasons: on one hand, the brand is the element which confers identity to the item it designates (this item can be a product/ service, a range of products/ services, an organization or, according to the latest trends, a place or even a country) and it has a direct contribution to the differentiation process, by creating a specific image; on the other hand, the brand fulfills a series of fundamental functions both for the consumer and for the producer and supplier.

— Due to its important contribution to the achievement of superior economic results, the brand is perceived by many managers as an *intangible asset* of the organization. Even if they are not recorded in the companies' balance sheets, successful brands often have a higher value than the tangible assets. There is a serious concern for determining the value of brands, a report issued by the Interbrand company being annually published by the BusinessWeek magazine. Already at its sixth edition, the report called "Best Global Brands" identifies the first 100 international brands. The top was established according to the value of the brands, determined based on a methodology that Interbrand has been applying for 20 years, period in which more than 4000 brands have been evaluated. According to this methodology, the brand value is given by the current net value of the earnings that the brand is expected to generate and ensure during one year (for the top published in August 2006, the period taken into consideration was 1 July 2005 – 30 June 2006). Tables 1 and 2 show the first ten top international brands in 2003 and 2004, respectively 2005 and 2006.

Table 1 – Top international brands in 2003 and 2004 (the first ten)

Position		Brand	Brand value in 2004 (million US dollars)	Brand value in 2003 (million US dollars)
2004	2003			
1	1	COCA-COLA	67.394	70.453
2	2	MICROSOSFT	61.372	65.174
3	3	IBM	53.791	51.767
4	4	GE	44.111	42.340
5	5	INTEL	33.499	31.112
6	7	DISNEY	27.113	28.036
7	8	McDONALD'S	25.001	24.699
8	6	NOKIA	24.041	29.440
9	11	TOYOTA	22.673	20.784
10	9	MARLBORO	22.128	22.183

— Source: "The 100 Top Brands", BusinessWeek, 2 August 2004

Table 2 – Top international brands in 2005 and 2006 (the first ten)

Position		Brand	Brand value in 2006 (million US dollars)	Brand value in 2005 (million US dollars)
2006	2005			
1	1	COCA-COLA	67.000	67.525
2	2	MICROSOFT	56.926	59.941
3	3	IBM	56.201	53.376
4	4	GE	48.907	46.996
5	5	INTEL	32.319	35.588
6	6	NOKIA	30.131	26.452

7	9	TOYOTA	27.941	24.837
8	7	DISNEY	27.848	26.441
9	8	McDONALD'S	27.501	26.014
10	11	MERCEDES-BENZ	21.795	20.006

Source: "Top 100 Global Brands", BusinessWeek, 7 August 2006

In Romania, the BusinessWeek magazine published a top in December 2006, showing the most valuable Romanian brands at the moment. The top is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Top Romanian brands in 2006

Position in 2006	Brand	Brand value in 2006 (million Euros)
1	Dacia	387.0
2	BCR	355.6
3	BRD-GSG	208.3
4	PETROM	86.4
5	SENSIBLU	82.0
6	ROMPETROL	72.5
7	CRISTIM	62.8
8	ASIROM	60.9
9	ALTEX	59.4
10	DOMO	41.4

Source: "Top 10 Romanian Brands", BusinessWeek (Romania), December 2006

The history of the way in which brands have been used in the organizational marketing activity illustrates the efforts made by the producers and merchandisers for improving and adding value to the range of tools used on the market, which have had as a result new modalities of communicating with the consumers.

Brands evolved significantly in the Middle Age after the appearance of guilds. New regulations which required the compulsory branding of products were adopted in 1236 – at Padua, as well as in 1331 – at Monza. At that time there were two types of brands: the individual brand, which made it possible for the handicraftsman to be identified within the guild, and the collective brand, which functioned as a guarantee of the quality of the product. In 1534, a new regulation was issued in France, enforcing the introduction of unique brands in order to individualize the product or service and in 1544 the State introduces the punishment for forging the brand. Also, at the beginning of the 16th century the whisky distilleries used recipients marked with a hot iron. It was thus possible to identify the producer and to protect the products against forgery. Still, it was only in the 19th century when significant regulations related to brands appeared: in 1857 a new law becomes effective in France, according to which the brand which was registered and used previously can fight against the registration of another similar or identical brand. Similar normative documents appear later in most European countries and in the United States.

Still, the importance and the role of the brand in the activity of the organizations increased starting with the second half of the 20th century, due to the disappearance of mass society and production. Research studies carried on by marketers in this period show that individual customers have a tendency to stop buying products perceived as mere objects in order to satisfy basic needs. The consumers' expectations are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and due to the image they promote, brands can also satisfy superior needs, such as the need of belonging, of acknowledgement or of self-accomplishment.

The understanding of the role of the brand in the organizational marketing activity and of the importance of the efforts that marketers should make in order to develop a successful brand must begin with an analysis of the opinions expressed by various specialists related to this issue.

Although the literature in this field presents a rather large number of brand definitions, frequent references are made to the opinion expressed by the American Marketing Association:

“The brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or drawing, or a combination of all these elements, allowing the identification of the goods or services provided by a seller or group of sellers, as distinct from those of other sellers”.

Since it refers exclusively to the elements which define the visual identity of the brand, we consider the AMA definition to be incomplete. It is of course in accordance with the general perception on brands, perception which is also illustrated by a series of research surveys carried on among managers. According to a research study performed by H. Davidson, managers often define brands as “names or logos used to differentiate the company’s offer” or “the guaranty of a significant quality level”. Most of them focus on the visible aspect of the brand – the name or the logo, while the image features, which represent the invisible aspect, are mentioned by only a few respondents. Since the competition is becoming increasingly fierce and the products increasingly similar this omission is dangerous, as the features associated to the brand confer it an important competitive advantage.

In order to highlight this idea, Philip Kotler quotes Niall Fitzgerald, the chairman of the Unilever Corporation, in one of his books:

“A brand is a storehouse of trust. That matters more and more as choices multiply”.

Although it is not necessarily a real definition of the term, the opinion expressed by N. Fitzgerald is extremely valuable. The Unilever Corporation includes in its portfolio numerous successful brands, which shows that the marketers working here have understood what role a brand can play and especially what can add value to a brand in order to make it become “storehouse of trust”.

The recent marketing literature and practice have shown that the specialists are giving more and more importance to the brand image and especially to its positioning on the market. They consider that when defining the brand it is important to take into consideration the features which characterize it and make it attractive and specific. Mary Lewis states that:

“The brand is the aura of beliefs and expectations related to the product (or service) which give it relevance and make it easy to distinguish. It is extremely powerful, as it goes beyond the physical characteristics of the product and enters the area of psychological characteristics”.

This definition is interesting due to several reasons. First of all, the brand is defined from the consumer’s perspective, which we consider to be the correct approach, as the brand value depends to a large extent on the amount of money the consumer is willing to pay in order to acquire the brand. In the second place, the author shows that the associated values offer relevance to the brand – which means they make the brand important from the consumer’s point of view – and make it easy to distinguish – which means they allow the consumer to identify the brand in relation to other brands. Third, it is shown that a brand’s power is given by its capacity to develop based on psychological characteristics. This last aspect is extremely important in the current context, especially on the markets characterized by a strong competition.

There are also authors who prefer to make the distinction between a brand and a successful brand. For example, L. De Chernatony and M. McDonald offer the following definition:

“A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place which benefits of such a development that the buyer or the user perceives the added values as relevant, unique and strong, his needs being thus satisfied to a larger extent.”

Basically speaking, this opinion is not significantly different from the one expressed by Mary Lewis. But it has to be appreciated due to the fact that it shows that by investing in the development of the brand equity, the marketers create the premises for satisfying the consumers’ needs to a larger extent. Since the added values are perceived by the consumers as relevant, unique and strong, the brand becomes a privileged choice which can enjoy a long-term success.

Chris Fill is another author who speaks about brands and their role in the marketing communication process. According to him, it is important to pay attention to the fact that both the managers and the consumers should get involved in the building of a brand. It is good if both parts have the capacity to differentiate the company’s offer from the competitors’ and to associate certain features or feelings to a brand. According to him:

———“A successful brand is the one which creates and maintains a strong, positive and long-lasting impression in the buyer’s mind”.

Here we have another reference to what a successful brand represents. The author of the definition shows that a brand’s success depends on the associations it generates in the consumer’s mind. Moreover, we have to mention an element which is not present in the previous definitions, namely that the successful brand benefits in the consumer’s mind of a long-term image. Consequently, we cannot say about a recently launched brand or about one launched a few years ago that they are successful brands. In order to be included in this category, the brand needs time, a period in which it should confirm the consumers’ expectations.

—For some time now the specialty literature has been operating with a concept which synthesizes all the elements that add value to the brand and transform it in a successful brand: brand equity. According to David Aaker, brand equity represents a set of assets and liabilities connected to a brand, to its name and logo, which have the capacity to “increase (or to decrease) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/ or to the firm’s buyers”. These assets are grouped by Aaker in five categories: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, features associated to the brand and other assets owned by the brand (patents, trademarks, etc.).

—In order to assess the value of the brand equity two elements are taken into consideration: the financial value of the brand and the specific features which define its image.

—Marketing specific communication plays an important part in the building of the brand equity. Once it is created, the brand itself becomes a powerful communication channel through its name, logo, but especially through the features which enable it to differentiate itself from the other brands and offer the consumers the possibility to better satisfy their needs.

The brand is in some respects similar to a person, as it has its own identity and personality. Its name and logo define its identity, showing who the brand is, while the set of associated values characterize its personality, showing how the brand is.

According to the specialists, the identity of the brand is “a specific combination of visual and auditory elements” which ensure the brand recognition and differentiation, also creating a connection between the brand and all the pieces of information related to it. The elements referred to here are generally the name and/ or the sigle – representing the verbal components of the brand, the sign or/ and the logo – representing the figurative features of the brand.

In exchange, the personality reflects the positioning of the brand, being thus based on the features seen as relevant, unique, strong and able to generate a positive long-term image in the consumer’s mind and to offer him serious reasons for buying.

The identity and the personality are the ingredients which lay at the basis of the creation of the brand equity and which determine its success on the market. This is why marketers should focus on these elements when they take into consideration the launching of a new brand on the market or the repositioning of an already existing brand.

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