

Emotional Branding in the Durable Goods Industry – Illustrated on Italian Company

In order to reach a clear brand position and to decrease brand parity it is necessary to give brands an emotional appeal. Brands have to take into consideration desires more than needs and therefore should fulfill the consumers' emotional expectations. The goal of this paper is to develop an alternative branding concept, which is able to compensate the weak points of a classic branding strategy by implementing emotional branding aspects. The findings should give some evidence of how an emotional branding strategy can be applied to the branding concept of a company which operates in the durable consumer goods industry

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Introduction

Brands are one of the most important tools in today's global business. They have a value of nearly one third of the world's wealth. Some of the biggest companies behind the brands have a greater value than the gross national product of certain countries in the world. So it is not surprising that brands are gaining the power and ascendancy to change today's society (Davis 2005).

This importance certainly implies a multiplicity of challenges. The brand management currently faces a various number of changing conditions. Today branding is characterized by the equalization of product quality, saturated markets, brand inflation and information overload (Burmam/Meffert 2005). Furthermore, there is also the problem of highly perceived brand parity. According to the "Brand Parity Survey 2004" this signifies that 62% of customers think that brands are replaceable (BBDO Consulting GmbH 2004). Resolving these problems merely with intensive advertising might increase brand awareness, but does not entail a strong and differentiated brand (BBDO Consulting GmbH 2004).

In order to reach a clear brand position and to decrease brand parity it is necessary to give brands an emotional appeal. Brands have to take into consideration desires more than needs and therefore should fulfill the consumers' emotional expectations (Gobé 2001).

Brand

There are different approaches to the term "brand". According to the formal approach, a brand has to be marked in such a way that it can be identified and therefore differentiated from the competitors' products. The formal approach focuses on the dichotomy between labeled and not labeled products (Havenstein 2004). The material related approach stresses the inseparability of brand label and brand object, nevertheless the dichotomy between labeled and non labeled goods is maintained (Havenstein 2004). The brand is defined by diverse characteristics, which are summarized in a catalog of attributes (Meffert 2005). In this context the main issues are the difficulties of operationalization and the validity sole for manufacturer labeled fast moving consumer goods (Baumgarth 2004). The ultimate approach illustrated here is focusing on the identity of a brand. A brand with an identity, according to this concept, is more likely to obtain the consumers' confidence and consequently to create a long lasting relationship (Meffert 2005). This approach is also the most adapted for the concept of emotional branding discussed in this paper. The brand perception considers not only the brand image from the customers' point of view, but the physical- functional components, the

differentiating characteristics and the symbolic-emotional- contents as well (Meffert et al. 2005).

Branding

It is the goal of branding to create an outstanding brand position, to clearly assign a product to a specific brand and to create an image which inspires the customers to buy a certain product (Esch/Langner 1999). The concept of branding and the most important determinants are interpreted in different ways (e.g. Murphy 1990, Esch Langner 1999, Baumgarth 2004, Keller 2008). There are certain judgments which are particularly important for the process of branding and which are required by all stakeholders. Brand quality is often the basis of consumers' choices and brand credibility describes to which extent a brand can be authentic in terms of brand expertise, brand trustworthiness and likeability. Brand consideration depends on the strength of the associations that a brand can create, and in conclusion, brand superiority measures the uniqueness of a brand in comparison with others (Keller 2008). In the context of emotional branding a further aspect has to be added. Brands need to focus on the customer's emotional response. If, beyond the hard facts mentioned above, a brand is able to elate customers it will obtain an emotional bond which is more important than the sole appreciation of a product and which will also help to sell the product at a price premium (Davis 2005). The most important variables for establishing a profound relationship will be examined in the following chapters. Considering the practical part of the thesis, the characteristics of the diverse product categories will be discussed in the following paragraph.

The durable consumer goods industry

Consumer goods are however characterized by the fact that they refer in general to the private final customer. There are two categories, the fast moving consumer goods and the durable consumer goods. Durable consumer goods, e.g. cars or computers, have a longer product life cycle than fast moving consumer goods and are sold in a higher price segment (Meffert 1991). The consumers emphasize on product features such as reliability, durability, service and environmental compatibility. The decision making process is less immediate as for fast moving consumer goods. Therefore substantial consultancy is essential for developing a consumer relationship and brand loyalty (Bellmann 1990). Nevertheless some products represent, depending on the type of purchaser, durable consumer goods as well as industrial goods, in case of usage for subsequent production (Bellmann 1990). By this means not all the characteristics of the consumer goods marketing are also valid for durable consumer goods,

for example the decision making process is not spontaneous and the consumer has a superior information demand. The product can be adapted to single requirements and, regarding the after sale services for technical goods, the consumer relationship is fairly permanent. Assimilation of quality and economies of scale also in the durable consumer goods industry indicate the necessity of a branding concept which involves the consumers not only on a rational level, but also on an emotional one.

Emotionally connecting with brands

Emotions

There is a vital controversy about the definition of the term emotion. Researchers have diverse perceptions of emotions. They observe the term as motivators and regulators as well as a sign of well being or as a guarantee of survival of the species. Basically researchers agree only on two facts. Emotion is a physical and mental condition and it consists of diverse components like subjective, neurological-physiological, cognitive and communication components (Ulich 1989). Nevertheless some definitions and important facts will be introduced to clarify the term emotion also connecting it to the construct of branding. One important definition is the one of Plutchik, who defines an emotion as “[...] a bodily patterned reaction of either destruction, reproduction, incorporation, orientation or some combination of these which is brought about by a stimulus.” (Putchik 1991). There are other researchers who beyond enumerating the various terms, are also qualifying them. Längle distinguishes primary emotions from integrated emotions. Therefore primary emotions reflect the reaction towards a certain perception, they represent the impression which a situation gives to an individual. It can be defined as a spontaneous reaction, or impulse, for example the sentiment of joy while receiving good news (Längle 1993). Integrated emotions instead are emotions detached from first impressions and reactions. He futher states that integrated emotions are stable and have an influence on the individual’s personality (Längle 1993).

Branding has to propose today, stimuli which generate emotions. Consumers have to be more than aware of a product, they have to be involved with it. Only an involved customer, who feels addressed by a product will express an emotion (Ulich 1989). In order to generate the right stimuli companies and brands have to create a dialogue and a relationship with the consumers. They have to address to them on all sensorial levels and at every point of the purchasing process (Gobé 2001).

Building consumer relationships

First of all building a strong brand begins with the creation of a dominant brand position and presence. This denotes that the brand has to be easily recognized, easy memorable and has to become the first to come in mind at the point of sale (Aaker/Joachimsthaler 2001). In order to emotionally attach with the consumer, the brand has to build a profound relationship with its consumers and become an element of their lives.

There are different types of consumer relationships, the provider based relationship, the process based relationship, the product based relationship and the consumer brand relationship. In this relationship the interaction is rather low, because brands, unlike products, are only mind constructs of the consumer. There is no possibility of direct interaction with a brand and the basic element of a relationship between two parties, the reciprocity, is missing.

Other researchers argument that the providers or their employees are acting for brands in order to be able to create a relationship. Companies build relationships through interactive experiences which support the dialogue between consumers and brands (Aaker/Joachimsthaler 2001). On the contrary Fournier states that a brand is not a passive object but a lively partner in a relationship. Therefore brands have to become animated, humanized partners with a personality in order to interact with the consumer (Fournier 1998). Basing on his research Fournier developed a brand relationship model which comprises the key determinants love and passion for a brand, the commitment to the brand, the intimacy in the relationship between brands and consumers, as well as the interdependence in means of habitual interactions with the brand (Fournier 1998). In business to business relationships the social link counts, because there are a lot of agents involved and the effected transactions are fairly large. Financial links can requite the continuous acquisition of a product or the utilization of a service (Duncan/Moriarty 1997). Following the most important terms in the context of brand consumer relationships will be examined and linked to each other.

Brand awareness as an important choice criterion

Creating brand awareness is an important object in marketing in order to be part of the consumer's consideration set (Macdonald/Sharp 2000). In many cases in the consumer goods industry, the consumer is seen as a passive audience, who has little time for choosing a product. Nevertheless the case for durable consumer goods might be a little different, even in this ambit consumers partly relay their decision on advertising, brand symbols and brand names as well. These names and symbols, overall reassign the brand to a certain product category, encourage the brand's position and help to preserve the brand equity (McInnis et al.

1991). Returning to brand awareness as a choice criterion Brown and Hoyer state that brand awareness is particularly important in case of inexperienced consumers (Hoyer/Brown 1990). Consumers who have the choice between a well known high priced product and an unknown lower priced product will often choose the well known product (McInnis et al. 2000). However the phenomenon that consumers tend to choose basing on brand awareness declines from purchase to purchase. Another important hypothesis of Hoyer and Brown is, that if consumers are not familiar with any of the brands available, they will try out more brands and easily discover quality differences (Hoyer/Brown 1990). From this statement results the third hypothesis, which affirms that consumers will always tend to choose the high quality brand with no well known brand available, which could not be confirmed by a study of Macdonald and Sharp (2000).

Creating brand personality

“Brand personality is defined formally here as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker 1997). The function of brand personality is to differentiate a brand from others, develop emotional aspects and create additional value (Aaker/Fournier 1995). Brand personality is one of the dimensions of brand image, it is the sum of associations a brand is able to generate.

Creating brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is an important marketing construct, because the success of a brand depends a lot on the attachment of the consumer to the brand. The development of brand loyalty is a gradual process (Kapferer/Disch 1967). In principle there are two categories of brand loyal consumers. On the one hand there is the spurious or inertia loyalty, which is defined as repeated purchase behavior (Day 1969). On the other hand, there is the true brand loyalty, which also explains the behavioral relationship between the consumer and the brand” (Amine 1998). Brand loyalty is influenced by diverse direct and indirect factors In the context of emotional branding especially direct influence factors on brand loyalty have to be highlighted. They are alternative choices, brand sensitivity, perceived risk and brand attachment. The insecurity and complexity of the purchase decision decrease with a rising brand loyalty and so does the perceived risk. A consumer who is especially sensitive to a brand is also highly involved and is also more likely to be brand loyal. Brand attachment expresses the consumers emotional feelings towards a brand (Amine 1998). The positive effects of consumer loyalty are various. Revenues will rise and in the same way the costs for attracting new consumers

will decline. Nevertheless it becomes easier to reach new consumers, because satisfied and loyal consumers will spread the word of the positive attributes of the brand. Loyalty has also the function of a barrier of entry for other companies (Aaker 1992). Another effect regards the loyalty of the employees, which reciprocally has an influence on brand loyalty, because the employees' job satisfaction and their increased knowledge and experience will improve the manufacturing of the product and the service to the customer. Furthermore hiring and training costs will decrease and consumers are able to build a bond not only to the brand but also to the employee who represents it (Reichheld 1993). In order to extend the relationship between the consumer and the company that represents the brand, the consumer has to be treated carefully in sense of a prosperous and positive exchange. Groups of employees could meet with some selected consumers, so they can discuss some important issues and in this way the company is able to create closeness and increase the contact rate with the consumer.

Consumer behavior

For a long time consumers were associated with the image of rational buyers, who made their decisions basing on clearly defined information and therewith maximized their benefits. Today the consumers are influenced by various external factors and face the problem of information overflow. Therefore it is important for the companies to really understand the consumers' behavior. Assael (1990) proposes a relatively simple model of consumer behavior. On the first step the company collects information about the desires, needs and responses of its target group and then offers its performance to the consumer. The consumer will then make his or her decision influenced by the psychological set, which consists of needs, perceptions and attitudes. Furthermore consumer's characteristics like lifestyle, demographics and personality are an important factor regarding the decision process. At last the decisions are affected by environmental factors like culture, social class or reference groups.

The consumer behavior has several characteristics. It has always a purpose, foremost satisfying a need or a desire. Consumer behavior consists of diverse activities, beginning with information seeking up to use and disposal, therefore it has a process character. These processes can be divided into affective and cognitive processes. Furthermore consumer behavior affects processes for goods, services, rights or financial values and is influenced by external factors (Kuß/Tomczak 2000). Those external influence factors for consumer behavior are according to Assael (1990) the psychological set, the consumer characteristics and the environmental influences. The third factor are the environmental influences (e.g. culture,

social class reference group etc.) (Elliot 1998). Another important influence factor which nowadays gains more and more attention is emotion. Emotions are basic determinants for decision processes. Elliott (1998) found out that decisions based on emotions are not linear and choices are made faster and holistically. Emotions are also very important in case of extensive decisions where the decision process is very complex and important. Weinberg actually states that emotions are absolutely necessary in order to successfully cope with complex and important decision situations (Weinberg 1981). There is also evidence that choices essentially based on rational factors can be less satisfying and lead to suboptimal choices (Elliot 1998).

Involvement

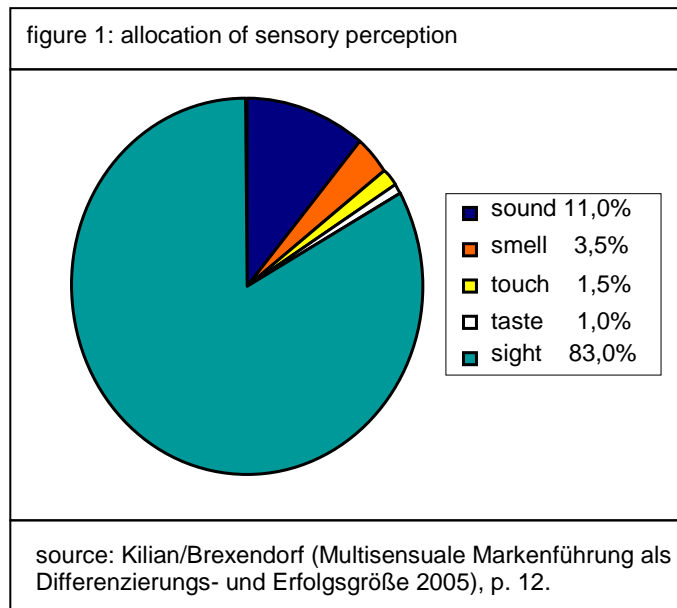
The term involvement has its roots in social psychology research and determines the level of personal affect. For marketing it is one of the most important schemes for explaining, forecasting and influencing consumer behavior (Trommsdorff 1995).

There are different levels of involvement, the two extreme occurrences being low and high involvement. In the context of the multidimensional approach of involvement it is possible to build a causally determined model influenced by the following determinants: product involvement, personal involvement, media and message involvement and situational involvement (Trommsdorff 1995).

Today conventional instruments, as e.g product differentiation, innovations, repeated advertisements etc, may not be enough. Increasing advertising pressure, product homogeneity and decreasing information interest make of once highly involved consumers resigned consumers as well. It is the goal of advertising to gain the consumer's attention in new ways. Generating emotions through multisensual consumer approach may be an alternative.

Multisensual brand design

Individuals experience and understand their environment with all the five senses. Senses are linked to memory and generate emotions. Nevertheless most branding and advertising strategies are based on only two senses, sight and sound. In this manner in the age of information overflow companies give away an important opportunity to create a strong and loyal relationship between the consumer and the brand. The figure beyond shows how individuals perceive the single external stimuli.



Obviously, because of the character of a product or service it will not be possible to include all five senses in a strategy, but it is nearly always possible to integrate three of them (Lindstrom 2005). Sight is the most enticing sense and it is able to deceive an individual's perception against all logic. Sound is strongly related to the individual's mood and generates feelings and emotions. Smell is the most direct and basic sense, but not always easy to integrate in a marketing strategy for many products. Taste is strongly affected by smell and vice versa. Touch also generates strong feelings and emotions, as individuals development depends in large parts on physical contacts¹ In the following paragraphs the single senses and their application in a branding strategy will be examined closely.

Sight

It is becoming more difficult to reach consumers with verbal and informational messages because the involvement level is decreasing in many situations and for many products. Visual communication may be an alternative which allows to attract the consumer's advertence and to generate emotions (Weinberg/Diehl 2005). Pictures for example are superior to only verbal communication messages. They have an activating effect, because they are detected before the verbal part of a message and therefore they are suitable for the first contact (Weinberg 1992). They also have a storage and memory effect. A visual message is codified twice in memory and therefore easily to be recalled and it has also a longer memory effect over time. A verbally based message may be used when the consumers are motivated to actively process the information (Childers/Houston 1984). Visual stimuli are easily processed as well. The physical presence and low involvement are sufficient for processing the stimulus, whereas a

¹ See ibid, p. 20-30.

verbal stimulus has to be classified first in context to the already existing knowledge and then for an eventual storage. Therefore a high involvement level is necessary (Leven 1992). Also information storage is more complex for verbal stimuli, as they have to be memorized twice, which means that, after the first process of memorizing, the memorized information has to be linked to the already existing information. Conditions for the second process are high involvement and the fact that the individual classifies the information as useful (Leven 1991). These affirmations are not only valid for advertising but also for the creation of a brand logo and corporate identity. They provide a stimulus to the memory and enforce the presence of the brand in the consumer's mind. These pictures have to be easy learnable, the visual part has to be recognized also without the verbal part and vice versa and the pictures have to be distinguishable from other commonly used pictures (Kroeber-Riel 1993). Another possibility for including a picture to the branding strategy is a key frame. A key frame is the basic visual theme for the brand's or company's public presentation and should intensify the emotional and factual attributes (Kroeber-Riel 1993).

Independently from the context in which the picture will be used, whether in advertising or as the brand logo, an integration in form and content between the different media is indispensable. The motive once chosen has to be used permanently, even if little weight out variations or updates are possible. It is important to transmit only one message and idea, so that it is easier for the consumer to associate a stable picture with the brand (Ruge 1999).

It is possible that durable consumer goods are not able to implement all the possibilities that offers the sense sight, for example the product design based on the different effects of colors is not deployable for the durable consumer goods described in this thesis. Nevertheless there remain various options in advertising and the creation of a corporate identity.

Sound

Along with sight sound is one of the two senses which is often integrated in marketing strategies. Sound is a powerful device to generate emotions, influence the mood and even purchase decisions. The impact of the fit and integration of music to a brand strategy regarding different involvement levels was also a research topic for Esch/Roth (2005) in their article "Der Beitrag akustischer Reize zur integrierten Markenkommunikation". They stated that an acoustic stimulus can even have a negative effect on involvement if it does not fit to the message or the brand. There are different possibilities to include sound in the branding and communication strategy. Exclusive music which is only used inside the company has the goal of increasing employee identification. It is also possible to create a musical version of a

brand. Therefore sound logos, which consist of short concise and easy memorable motives, can be designed. Another possibility of adding sound to a brand are jingles. By contrast brand songs are independent songs which are composed or licensed only for one brand. It is their assignment to emphasize the uniqueness of the brand and build a personality. Background music has a similar purpose, but it is primarily exerted to stimulate mood at the point of sale. Advertising with music stars is similar to advertising with testimonials, in the sense that the music star's personality traits may be associated with the brand (Kilian 2007).

Just like sight, it will not be possible to integrate sound at every point of a durable consumer goods brand strategy. Hence it is even more important to exploit the possibilities which brand songs, jingles or sound logos offer in order to build a bridge between the consumer and the brand, to animate the pictures and to create a unique brand position.

Smell

Scents evoke images, sensations, memories, associations and emotions. There are 400.000 recognized fragrances in the world and this offers an enormous potential for branding and advertising strategies as well as for brand design (Roberts 2004). The goal of using scents is to attract the consumer to a product on an emotional level and to increase activation in order to address to the consumer's latent desires. A scent should also reassure the consumer of the quality of some hidden product attributes by evoking feelings and emotions which are associated with these product attributes (Knoblich 1993). Nevertheless it is necessary to consider some constraints before applying a scent based strategy. Odors have to be chosen wisely depending on gender and cultural factors, moreover the effect of odors is strongly related to very personal experiences and characteristics, which creates some difficulties for the appliance of one scent to a large target group (Kilian 2007). The examples above have shown that scent may be an adequate instrument for many durable consumer goods as well, especially for the car industry which invests a lot to give the interior of the car the smell consumers prefer.

Taste

Smell and taste are called the chemical senses and they are strongly interlinked, because most of the cognition of flavors is effected by the nose. Nevertheless taste does not have the same characteristics as smell and does not work on the long distance evoking memories from the past (Lindstrom 2005). Apart from touch, taste is the only sense which can be controlled by an individual, it is therefore possible to neglect a stimulus, which is impossible for sight,

sound and smell (Kilian 2007). Taste is not only related to smell, but texture, temperature and color play an important role as well. Nevertheless colors and flavors have a limited impact on consumer choice, depending on the situation and cognitive load. Miller/Kahn showed in an experiment with Jelly Beans that test persons with a low cognitive load chose more beans with untypical, unspecific names like Mississippi brown and Cookie monster blue than with common descriptive names like cherry red or chocolate brown (Miller/Kahn 2005). Despite existing possibilities it has to be stated that taste has a very limited applicability which is nearly exclusively reserved to the food and beverage industry.

Touch

Brand recognition is declining and it is very difficult for many consumers to distinguish between various brands. Therefore customers often would like to touch a product in order to be able to evaluate it. The sense of touch or haptics consists of two elements. The sensory subsystem has cutaneous, thermal and kinesthetic sensors (Lederman/Klatzky 1987). These sensors are able to recognize diverse frequency ranges and to notice stimuli like pressure, warmth, cold and pain (Linxweiler 1999). The motor subsystem “[...] is used to actively grasp and manipulate objects (Lederman/Klatzky 1987). With these two sensors and by touching the product the consumer is able to gain knowledge about the texture, hardness, weight, value, volume and shape of the object. The shape of a product is the reification of a product idea and is associated with the consumer’s values. The shape of a product is fundamental, because it is also linked to the sense sight and is compared to other product shapes in sense of elegance, beauty and functionality (Kapferer/Disch 1967). The sense touch is applicable mainly for the design of a product, for example in the automotive industry, where the shape and interior design of the product are strongly related to a brand. Another option of utilizing haptics is offered by print advertising, where the surface or the thickness of paper can be related to special product attributes (Kilian 2007). Apart from product design and advertising, it may be reasonable to positively influence the consumer at the point of sale through the store design, or by giving the consumer the opportunity to try out products before they buy them. Furthermore it is possible to trademark a touch brand, for example a special packaging, as well as a brand sound or brand smell. Unusual, noticeable and original concepts will thereby enjoy a greater extent of protection (Lewalter/Schrader 2005). A disadvantage of the sense touch is the fact that by touching it is not possible to get a complete impression of an object or a scene, whereas with sight the whole object or scene can be observed immediately. The positive aspect about the sense touch is that it is also applicable and

absolutely necessary for many durable consumer goods, like cars, domestic and electric appliances.

Generally it can be summarized that not all senses will be applicable for durable consumer goods, but it is recommended not to shy at new options for sustaining a brand and to literally get in touch with the consumer as often and through as many senses as possible. However it is indispensable to develop a clear brand sense strategy, so that the single senses fit to the brand's personality and target group and support each other in order to increase the combined effect.

Phases of contact

Following the possibility of the integration of emotions in the single phases of contact: advertising, point of sale and after sale will be shortly highlighted.

Advertising

Advertising often represents the first contact with a new brand and offers the brand the possibility of reaching a broader audience than in any other contact phase. The handicap of advertising is the increasing information competition, the commutability and the insisting on only informational advertising. These factors lead to an decreasing advertising efficiency (Kroeber-Riel 1985). Therefore, in order to increase advertising efficiency and to build a unique brand, it is important to integrate emotions in the advertising concept.

Emotional advertising focuses on the positive effect which the ad may have on the consumer and which may also be transferred to the consumer's attitude towards a brand. Another effect emotional advertising tries to achieve is that the consumers associate positive feelings with the utilization of a brand (Mattenklott 2002). However the consumer does not make a purchase decision only for emotional reasons, but looks for a rational justification as well. Therefore, pieces of information should be included into emotional advertising (Bosch et al. 2006). Zeitlin/Westwood (1986) observe three functions of emotions in advertising: emotions as benefits, emotions which communicate benefits and emotions which influence the consumers' attitudes. The mechanism which relates the characteristics to the brand is classical conditioning, one of the four possibilities to create an emotional bond between emotions and a brand, introduced by Mattenklott(2002). But not every emotional stimulus will have the same effect on every consumer, the effect often depends on the consumer's personal cognition and processing of a stimulus (Bekmeier-Feuerhahn 2004). Another possible bond between

emotions and the brand is created by the transfer of positive feelings or sympathy from the ad to the brand. In general that means that the attitude towards an ad influences the attitude towards brand attributes. Mitchell/Olson proved these presumptions by exposing the test persons to advertising for facial tissues, whereby the test persons had to express their opinion about the softness of the tissues (Bekmeier-Feuerhahn 1981). The transfer of positive attitudes towards an ad is especially valuable for new brands, because they have not build a strong brand image yet. The transfer effect is also greater for durable consumer goods than for fast moving consumer goods, because for durable consumer goods the bonds between emotions and attitudes for an ad are stronger than the emotions and attributes for a brand (Mattenklott 2002). Emotional bonding with transformational advertising can be explained by the fact that consumers should experience the same feelings as the characters in the ads, while using the product. After a repeated utilization the consumer will create a bond with the brand (Mattenklott 2002). The two conditions for a well performing transformational ad are authenticity and empathy. The scenes shown in the ad have to be realistic and comprehensible, otherwise the consumer will not sense the feelings the advertising wants to generate. Empathy is created when the viewer is able to sympathize with the emotional state of the protagonist of an ad. A third point which has to be regarded is the compliance between the consumer and the brand. The consumer has to associate himself with the brand, otherwise a transformation will not be possible (Mattenklott 2002). The fourth way to create a bond with the consumer is to interpret feelings as motivators. Generating positive emotions or avoiding negative emotions may be a motive to buy a brand, if it is probable that with the purchase of the brand the consumer will achieve these positive emotions (Mattenklott 2002). All four possibilities have their advantages and disadvantages, but generally the success of all four methods depends on the type of brand, because not all brands are equally able to generate emotions. Furthermore the versatility of the concepts is limited by the cultural peculiarities, because if brands do not adopt certain cultural peculiarities in their advertising campaigns they are at risk to be misunderstood or rejected (Mattenklott 2002). However the positive effects of emotional advertising outweigh the negative, because it is proven that emotional messages have a favorable impact on long term memory of advertising and this results also in a more positive judgment for the message (Friestad/Thorson 1986). The positive effects of emotional messages can be enhanced by the integration of multisensual stimuli. Thereby the same message is received various times through different sensory organs and the message will be amplified (Bekmeier-Feuerhahn 2004).

Point of Sale

Only a little part of the purchase situation is controlled by cognitive processes, therefore emotional reactions are extremely important during the purchase process (Bosch 2006). There are various possibilities to generate consumers' emotions at the point of sale. The exterior and interior store design can already generate positive or negative emotions. The architecture of the building, the parking lot, as well as the shop window are one of the first stimuli to which a consumer is exposed at the point of sale. The interior design includes the way in which the consumer is guided through the store and the allocation of the single departments. Furthermore the presentation and accessibility influence the consumers' emotions as well (Stöhr 1998). Another very important influence at the point of sale is the store atmosphere, which is generally defined as "[...] the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler 1973). The atmosphere of the store is experienced through sense. Therefore it is important to integrate a concept which addresses the various senses in the atmosphere arrangement. Depending on the effects an atmosphere concept would like to achieve it is possible to use scents, music, colors and light effects in order to stimulate the consumers (Weinberg 1992). Furthermore the store design has to be adapted to different cultural particularities and to the target group. The composition of a point of sale also does not have the same significance for all store types and market situations. Kotler (1973) suggests that atmosphere design is more relevant for retailers than for manufacturers or wholesalers, because manufacturers and wholesalers may have little influence on the atmosphere of the store where their final goods are sold. Atmospherics become also more important in the case of increasing retail competition, decreasing price and product differences, because it will help to distinguish the various retail establishments. Regarding the concept of branding the design of the point of sale has a different significance for the various brands as well. For the brand discussed in this paper it is also difficult to influence the emotions generated at the point of sale, which does not depend on the product category but on the way in which the product is distributed. The third contact phase, the after sale, may offer a better possibility for the brand observed in this thesis to relate with the consumer.

After sale

In the after sale phase the individual consumes or uses the brand, namely, the product and therefore has a close contact and may develop a relationship with the brand (Bosch et al.

2002). There are four variables which have a substantial influence on after purchase behavior: consumer's satisfaction, complaining behavior, word-of-mouth recommendation and repurchase planning (Westbrook 1987). Thereby satisfaction is the consumer's comparison of the product quality, service and other outcomes with the pre-purchase expectations (Westbrook/Oliver 1991). Complaint actions are the consumers' initiated actions to the manufacturer or their retailers in order to fix or to retribute the acquired product.. Word-of-mouth recommendation is the consumer's informal transmission of his product or brand opinion to other consumers (Westbrook 1987). These variables can arouse different emotions. Consumption emotions are defined as "[...] the set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences, as described either by the distinctive categories of emotional experience or by the structural dimensions underlying emotional categories"(Westbrook/Oliver 1991). Therefore some researches propose the emotional categorization of Mehrabian/Russell of pleasure, arousal and dominance, or the eight basic emotions developed by Plutchik (Havlena/Holbrook 1986). But to link the emotions to satisfaction another approach is needed. Westbrook/Oliver showed in their study that the most satisfied consumers experienced the emotions happy/content and felt positively surprised, whereas less satisfied consumers experienced unpleasant surprises and felt angry or upset (Westbrook/Oliver 1991). The positive emotions generated by a high satisfaction level positively influence the word-of-mouth recommendation, repurchase planning and cross selling potentials (Bosch et al. 2002). With respect to the brand treated in this paper another variable can be added. After sales services and especially the regular maintenance of the product are directly related to customer satisfaction, therefore arouse emotions and influence repetitive buying behavior and word of mouth transmission (van Birgelen et al. 2002). In conclusion it can be stated that the positive emotions generated by consumer satisfaction raise the possibility of repurchase and brand loyalty and therefore the likeliness that the brand will gain an important position in the consumer's life.

Branding emotions on the web

In the last few years branding on the internet has gained more and more attention. The changes in competition and consumer expectations and the ever increasing number of users made branding on the internet a relevant issue for nearly every company. The lack of a web presentation of an established company may even lead to the damage of the company's image (Meffert/Bongartz 2002). The internet may be able to respond to the consumers' increased pretensions tailoring the message to the consumers and interacting with them.

Types of brands on the internet

Branding on the web can be classified into three categories: offline brands, hybrid brands and online brands. Offline brands use the internet only as accompanying activities and the main goal is to create customer retention. The online presentation is a part of the overall communication and has to be formally integrated. Hybrid brands instead are brands which are already known from offline activities and which use the internet not only for communication but also as a distribution channel. Hybrid brands may be able to transfer their brand awareness as well as some of their competencies to the internet. In order to coordinate the online and offline channels of the brand it is necessary to respect the three following dimensions which will be discussed further on: brand figuration, brand integration and brand coordination. The third category are online brands, also called virtual or e-brands, as they focus their branding activity on the internet. Most of the online brands were created with the rise of the internet and therefore are not able to base their strategy on former offline activities, thus it is very important for them to quickly gain brand awareness and brand trust (Sabel 2007). The focus of this chapter will be the observation of hybrid brands.

Brand figuration

The first dimension of a hybrid brand is the brand figuration, which comprises all the online activities which are relevant to strengthen the brand, at which the website is the core of the internet based brand figuration.

There are some important components in order to design a successful website. First the website has to be information orientated and offer the consumer product and company information, as well as transmit the brand message and idea. Furthermore the website has to be frequently updated and it has to be easily navigable (Brymer 2001). The website should also be entertainment orientated, with descriptions of the entertaining activities which help to stimulate the reception of brand related information. Thereby the consumer is motivated to interact with the website and becomes also more involved with the brand (Meffert/Bongartz 2002). Other possibilities to activate the consumer's emotions and interests are the consumer's involvement by addressing the consumer in a multisensual way. With today's technical possibilities it is quite easy to use visual or aural stimuli. Apart from stimulating the consumer's emotions, the figuration of the website has to enable a dialogue between the user and the company. The website has to support individual communication and be only influenced by the single user and the company. This will help to satisfy the user's individual

necessities and create a relationship between the user and the brand (Meffert/Bongartz 2002). At last the website has to be also transaction orientated, which characterizes the use of the website as an additional distribution channel. Another possibility of supporting the brand on the web is advertising or sponsorship. Advertising on the internet can transmit information which can not be found on the website or announce new products. Sponsorships on other websites offer the possibility of transferring the positive associations with an event to the brand.² Another important part of the brand figuration is the intranet, which internally transmits the brand idea and message and informs the employees about the latest developments not only in branding but in the whole company. Intranet enhances the employees' identification with the brand, strengthens the brand identity and the employees are able to present their positive brand associations to the environment. Extranet expands the idea of the intranet. It opens parts of the intranet to the consumer, so that he or she really seems to be a part of the organization.. In order to underline the interactive status of the internet it is important to contact the consumers and to be contacted by them. Emails can create a bond, remind the consumer of the brand and create a relationship. The company has to be cautious not to exaggerate with their messages to the consumers and to give importance to every email sent to the consumer. Public relations on the internet contain overall chat rooms or discussion forums. These virtual brand communities are a possibility of creating an additional value for the consumer, they are able to create a bond and are a psychological and emotional instrument to influence the consumer (Aaker/Joachimsthaler 2001).

Brand integration

Online brand figuration discusses the choice and the arrangement of the online activities, whereas online brand integration assures the linkage and coordination of the single activities. Formal integration has to achieve a consistent appearance of the brand, especially a uniform presentation of the brand logo across all communication media, as well as the consistent utilization of the brand characteristic colors and forms in order to increase the value of brand recognition. As regards content, integration describes the thematic connection across the various communication media for creating a unique brand position without contradictions. Visual or linguistic key stimuli combined with a core message and brand content facilitate reaching this goal. Instrumental integration describes the continuous reference to the online presence in other communication channels. The internet presence can be mentioned on TV or radio advertising, sponsorships, brochures and packaging. As a result consumers will

² See *ibid.*, p.266-268.

remember the brand and the probability of visiting the website will increase (Meffert/Bongartz 2002).

Brand coordination

The different activities also have to be coordinated and this is basically an internal company process. A technocratic bureaucratic coordination is characterized by strong rules and limits and offers only few creative freedom for the employees who are engaged to coordinate the various online activities. The employee-oriented, decentralized coordination is described by the involvement of the brand managers in the planning and decision making process, whereby there is a strong interaction between all the employees involved and the online activities are based on group decisions. The non structural coordination is based on the common beliefs and ideas of the brand managers involved and there are no organizational regulations or restrictions (Meffert/Bongartz 2002).

The companies which offer an amplified range of online activities have to consider that their online presence connotes an international presence of their company and brand. Therefore the online activities and their contents shall be preferably standardized and internationally deployable. Furthermore the topicality, the realistic implementation of the online activities and the interaction with the users are premises for an important online brand strategy. Only in this way the consumer will build a relationship with the brand and brand loyalty may be achieved. The internet plays an important role for shaping and building a brand. It is part of people's lifestyle and only brands which are online will be able to be a part of people's lifestyle and build a connection with them. Brands which will not discover the huge possibilities of a strategic online presence will soon be seen as yesterday's brands (Burwick 2001).

Suggestions for the emotional branding strategy of the surveyed company

After discussing the theoretical conditions for an emotional branding strategy, it will be explained how the previous findings can be implemented in the business to consumer branding strategy of a company which operates in the automotive industry for components and alternative automotive fuel systems.

The analyzed brand

The surveyed company has grown organically and has been close to its original business until today. The company can be defined as a corporate brand as it has held its market position for many years.

Corporate branding allows the surveyed company to extend its business throughout the complete range of products and leads to the advantage that all of the company's goods are associated with reputation and quality which offers the possibility to sell at premium prices (Laforet/Saunders 1999).

The company is associated with a long term ownership of the brand and reflects strong beliefs and values. For the surveyed company the corporate name is more than a label, because the company still bears the family name. The corporate identity reflects some of the important values and beliefs and is also formally integrated across all media communication, like for example brochure, advertising in professional journals or gadgets.

The corporate and brand values of the surveyed company are to provide clean energy, ecological driving solutions for the freedom of circulation, as well as the possibility of saving costs. Furthermore the advanced technology and quality of its products are rooted in the corporate philosophy. Along with developments in technology there has also been a development of the way in which the consumers experience the offered components and alternative automotive fuel systems and a change of the target group. In the past alternative automotive fuel systems were only related to the aspect of saving money and the members of the target group were mostly 50-60 year-old men. Today the aspect of saving money is still a current topic for most consumers but other aspects have been added. The ecological sensibility and the fight against environmental pollution have given a new image to the industry and augmented the target group to all those individuals who are sensible for environmental issues, regardless of age and sex.

It can be stated that brand personality of the the analysed company can be described as reliable, confident, down-to-earth and open-minded. These attributes are supported by the quality of the goods, the tradition of the brand and the company, related to its territory and the individuals, as well as by the technological avant-garde which is already preparing for future challenges.

A brand relationship is defined by a sequence of reciprocal transactions and the important factors are customer satisfaction, customer attachment, the quality of the performance and the customer value. The company offers high quality products and the certified network

guarantees not only the customers' satisfaction at the point of sale, but in any phase of the product life cycle.

The company shares the values of its target group and expresses them in its communication campaign and corporate identity. It is working hard on gaining also the consumers' attachment by showing the consumers that the industry, its products and overall the company itself are changing and that the brand is willing to become a trustworthy friend in the consumer drivers lives. The company focuses on the relationship with its consumers to become a life long friend.. Although a high loyalty can be found, it can still be increased by creating not only satisfaction, but also enthusiasm for the brand.

The present state of the company's branding activities

Until two years ago its branding strategy was focused on business to business communication and it did not explicitly address to final consumers. Starting from 2007 the brand managers realized an increasing pressure coming from the OEM and with the stock exchange quotation in June 2007 it became important to communicate the brand also to the final consumer. Another reason why the company created a new branding strategy lays in the market structure. The market for gas systems is continuously growing and the rising gasoline prices as well as the increasing environmental consciousness have enhanced the consumers' interests for this industry and its brands. They were no longer satisfied with the judgment of one single workshop, but they actively started to look for information about the brands. For these reasons the company started a new branding campaign. The management realized that the consumer is overstrained by the amount of advertising messages, therefore they decided to base their strategy on the values and reputation of the company and to create a 360° campaign in order to gain brand awareness and emotionally connect with the consumer.

The first step was to create brand awareness. Therefore the company capitalized its OEM partnerships and started a co-branding campaign with leading German and French automotive OEMs. Co-branding denotes the marking of at least two brands. The marking must be perceivable for a third party and brands still have to act independently from one another. This alliance is possible either on the horizontal or vertical level. From the point of view of the OEM partnerships the brand of the company is an ingredient brand and industrial goods, whereas it is durable consumer goods for the final consumer and it is directly sold at the workshops. In the ambit of the co-branding campaign the company's brand logo was shown both on national and local television and in the print advertising of the main national newspapers in the context of one of the OEMs Italian-wide campaign meant to promote

alternative automotive fuel systems. The second co-branding campaign was conducted with a French OEM, which offered a free alternative automotive fuel system when buying a new car of the OEM. In the ambit of these two campaigns, apart from the long term OEM partnership, the company was able to present its brand to a broad audience and both partners were able to position themselves as a brand which knows consumers' economic needs and which is sensible to environmental issues.

Another approach to increase brand awareness and to transmit to the consumer the company's value of sustainable energy was the use of a modified car for advertising purposes. This car is endowed with a alternative automotive fuel engine and decorated with a specific lacquering, which became also part of the corporate identity and was first presented at exhibitions and manifestations in Italy. It was immediately positively perceived by the consumers as well as by the press. Therefore the company decided to benefit from this popularity and use it for a nationwide advertising campaign. Therefore, 24 modified cars were handed out to selected dealers in order to increase the brand awareness throughout the Italy and to address to the modified target group. The modified car also became protagonist on the company's website as well as in the video created in occasion of the sponsorship of a music tour. The new car represents a car loved by the Italians years ago and now, reinvented it has become popular and trendy. Simultaneously a new branding strategy was implemented.

In advertising as a part of the branding strategy, the company focuses on its nomination in articles or print advertising in professional journals as well as nationwide newspapers. Furthermore the brand introduced perimeter boards in Italian football stadiums on occasion of national and international matches, in order to reach a broad audience from different social groups and age levels. The company also installed billboards next to a highly frequented highway. Advertising in a location where the consumer is involved in using a product of the advertised category has a substantial impact on the awareness for the advertising. In this case that means the consumer is driving his car and consuming gasoline and becomes aware of the company's advertising which proposes a cheaper alternative to gasoline, with a lower environmental impact. The advertising concept introduced by the company basically focuses only on the sense sight. In the future the advertising will still work with only two senses, sight and sound, because the management is convinced that no other senses have an impact on the product choice and that in the durable consumer goods industry it is not possible to integrate the other senses as it might be possible in the fast moving consumer goods industry.

The company is also present with its own stand or in cooperation with its OEM partners at national and international exhibitions which concern on the one hand the automobile industry

and on the other hand are linked to alternative energy and to the sustainable development of alternative solutions. Last year's edition of two important fairs focused both on the problem of global warming and on how the automotive industry is able to offer alternative and sustainable solutions. Therefore the company was able to present its stand as a point of reference for professionals, press and also for the public audience

By its presentation at important exhibitions in the automotive industry and in the ambit of alternative energy the company is able to show its competence in these sectors to the final consumer and is able to connect with the consumer at its stand. Furthermore exhibitions are also one more occasion to be nominated in articles of professional journals and regional magazines. The stand of the company is formally integrated in the communication strategy of the company, while it is using the brand logo as well as the corporate identity and in several occasions even the car itself.

The company is involved in various sponsorships which always have the goal to represent the company's social responsibility towards the individuals and the territory and which fit with the brand values. In this paper only a few sponsorships will be exemplarily presented. In the ambit of sports the company is one of the sponsors of the worldwide known sport event. It is an event which helps to increase the brand awareness as it is a highly estimated national event. The company has also the goal to be associated with the values it shares with this event: commitment, dynamics and professionalism. The company is also the main sponsor of a team which participated in last year's edition of the Shell Eco Marathon. This competition would like to stimulate the work of young engineers and the development of ideas and innovations. The company shares the values of this competition and is also involved in a continuous development of innovations and ideas for a sustainable mobility.

Another very important commitment is the sponsorship of a concert tour of an famous singer and songwriter. The company and the singer share the value of respecting the environment and therefore the music tour is effected true to the motto of ZERO Emissions. This means that the environmental impact of one concert is calculated and compensated by an afforestation project in the provinces where the concerts took place. The company was present at every concert with a short animated video which can be seen on the big screen for one hour before the concerts begin. The message of the shown video was that the car does not necessarily have a negative influence on flora and fauna but it may be in balance with the environment according to the company brand statement; which is also referred to in the introduction of the website. The sponsorship of the concert tour offers the company the possibility of presenting its brand in a new and refreshing way by using both the sense sound and overall sight for

addressing to a new target group. The video is integrated in form and content in the communication and branding strategy.

Starting from last year the company also revised its online presence. The website addresses mostly to the final consumer and offers information about the company, its products, the convenience of converting a car to an alternative automotive fuel system, the dealer network and the latest events, exhibitions and sponsorships. The website is available in Italian, English and German. The layout is very simple and clean, uses basically the colors of the brand logo, whereas the corporate identity is only featured in the introduction. For the dealer network as well as for the workshops there is a password protected area where they can enter the orders, find application forms, gadgets and other useful information. Online advertising will start from next year on. Web public relation, regards mainly the online forums as well as the presence in online journals. The company offers also the possibility of subscribing to a newsletter, which offers news and information about the company's product range. Furthermore there is also the option to contact the company by e-mail.

The next step in the branding strategy is the point of sale. The company distributes its products through dealers and workshops. The concept should guarantee that the quality promised by the company is not only valid for the product but also for the installation. This is extremely important in this industry, because there is a high percentage of consumers who is convinced that the quality of the installation is as important as the brand of the system itself. In the theoretical part of this paper it was mentioned that creating and influencing the store atmosphere and design is a quite difficult challenge in this industry. The company tries to make its workshops recognizable by posters, inside and outside advertising signs and working clothes with the company brand logo. It can be stated that the point of sale the company has been mainly focused on their quality network and not to the same extent on the store atmosphere.

The situation is similar for the after sale, because the service and guarantee activities are accomplished by the dealers and workshops. The satisfaction with the product is heavily influenced by the quality of the installation and possible complaints are also mostly addressed to the workshops and not directly to the company. As stated above the word-of-mouth recommendation is very important for the brand, because the consumers are the company's most important advertising campaign. The offered alternative automotive fuel systems are highly involving durable consumer goods, because they are linked to an important investment. The repurchase planning is not only related to the company's brand but also to the workshop

where it was installed. Therefore the company strongly depends on the quality of its workshop network as well as on all the workshops installing its products.

The formal integration of the branding strategy is ensured by the continuous utilization of the brand logo and corporate identity throughout all branding activities. Apart from the website and the point of sale where the corporate identity may be used more consequently, the formal integration was basically maintained. The integration in contents is spanned across all branding activities. The values of ecology, sustainability, freedom of circulation and innovation are reflected in the company's exhibition participations, sponsorships, events and brochures.

In principle the company will follow up the branding and communication strategy which was constructed over the last two years

Further actions

The company was the first competitor in the industry which reacted to the modified market situation and the consumers' new expectations with a branding and communication strategy. However, further activities could support the communication strategy.

One of the most important aspects of emotional branding is to build a long term relationship with the consumer. The relationship is characterized by reciprocal transactions and habitual interactions which may lead to the fact that the brand becomes a part of the consumers' lives. The company complies three of the four influencing factors for relationships, satisfaction, quality and consumer value, whereas for brand attachment still exists a potential to be increased. At the point of sale and after the acquisition the consumer is still in contact with the workshop, which ensures the consumers' satisfaction and the quality of the installation, but does not have a direct contact with the brand. The consumer will use the product probably every day, but as long as it is perfectly working, the consumer may experience the system as a part of the car and easily forget about the brand. There will be no habitual interactions and the consumers' attachment to the brand may decrease. The company is creating brand awareness by its media and exhibition presence and has also developed a brand personality. The goal is to create brand loyalty which is influenced by the alternative choices, the perceived risk, brand sensitivity and brand attachment. In a growing market there are obviously alternative choices, but the company was able to position itself as the world leader in its industry. The sold products are durable consumer goods which normally imply a high involvement in the decision making process and guarantee a basic brand sensitivity. For brand loyalty as well as for a long term relationship the brand attachment has to increase.

The company has adapted its branding actions to the modified consumer behavior. The company is aware of the amplified target group and demographical changes and profits from the cultural influences and lifestyle values which give the evidence of an increased awareness for environmental issues and alternative energy solutions. From the point of multisensual brand design, until now the company has used two senses. The challenge is to propose some ideas for increasing the brand attachment in advertising, at the point of sale, after sale and on the web. Furthermore the possibilities of multisensual brand design will be revised for the single phases and some ideas for the information and involvement of the employees will be proposed, in order to enhance the relationship between the consumer and the brand.

Until now the company has done classical advertising in journals and with billboards on highways and in football stadiums. The animation video created may offer the possibility to present an emotional ad to the broad audience of television viewers. The video is likely to activate positive feelings towards the brand during the ad, but also during the use of the product, because the consumer will be convinced to respect the environment by driving with a alternative automotive fuel system. Another possibility is to create a transformational advertising, with the goal that the consumers experience the same feelings using the product as the individual in the ad. Until now only the sense sight has been employed, but there exists the possibility of creating a brand song, which can be used for the ad, for company presentations and also for the telephone on hold lines. The already existing partnership with the famous singer offers the possibility to create a brand song, written and sang by a famous artist, who shares the company's values. The proposals for a complemented advertising campaign should increase the positive emotional response to the brand, because it focuses on visual stimuli, it tributes to the amplified target group and enhances the brand personality.

The company is selling its products through workshops which are spread all over Italy. The company does not sell directly to the final consumer or possesses its own shops. At the point of sale the company has to rely on the behavior of the sales personnel and the quality of the workshops' installations. According to the findings in the theoretical part the workshop which installs its systems has to be related as close as possible to the company's brand. At the beginning this may not be possible for every workshop, but it is possible to closely involve the workshops which are already part of the company's quality network. It may not be reasonable to influence the workshops' atmosphere with light effects or scents, but the interior design of the workshops' offices can be adapted to the company's corporate identity and standardized for the whole network. It is possible to integrate the sense touch by exposing a complete alternative automotive fuel system, which the consumers may also touch and the

sales personnel is able to explain in detail. Furthermore in order to support an early brand experience test drives with cars converted to a alternative automotive fuel system may be offered to the consumers. Another idea meant to support the relation between the brand the company, the workshop and its consumers is to give away gadgets at the first counseling session. The company already offers technical trainings for its workshops, but it is possible to offer a training or include some lessons in the already existing trainings which offer information about how to create a personal and positive point of sale atmosphere and how to transmit the company's brand values and corporate identity to the final consumers

The after sale phase is characterized by the consumers' satisfaction, possible complaining behavior, word-of-mouth recommendation and repurchase planning. The consumers' satisfaction is guaranteed by the quality of the product and installation. Complaints, if any, are managed by the workshops, which remain in contact with the consumer for regular car inspections. Therefore the goal of is to increase brand attachment and enhance the relationship between the consumer and the brand. In this context it is possible to ask the consumer about his satisfaction with the brand, his opinions or ideas and to update the consumer about brand related events and product innovations. The word-of-mouth recommendation and repurchase planning can be influenced by introducing a bonus or loyalty program with gifts or useful coupons, for example for fuel stations, if one consumer has successfully recommended the brand or has already acquired another of its products. The best way to manage the activities is offered by the web.

The brand name is already present in various articles in professional journals and newspapers and from next year on the company will start with online advertising. The company has set up an extranet where the dealers and workshops can enter the orders, find application forms, gadgets and other useful information. The website design is very clean and information orientated but there is a lack of interaction and entertainment offers. The website has to be adapted to the durable consumer goods industry and needs to offer information about the exigent products. Nevertheless the website could offer some entertainment and stimulate interaction, for example it could offer a quiz about environment related themes or the company itself. There are also further possibilities to integrate the corporate identity in the website. Some music, for example a brand song, can be added to the introduction in order to address to a second sense and not only to sight. The online presence already offers the possibility of requesting the newsletter and the consumers can also write to the company by addressing their emails, but there is also the possibility that the company, namely the brand

contacts the final consumer. The emails remind the consumer of the brand, enhance a habitual interaction and may help to stay in contact with the consumers in the after sale phase

The company might set up, in addition, a forum on its website. In this way the final consumers can stay in contact with each other and build a real community. The final consumers are able to compare their problems and opinions and the posts in this forum may also be helpful for future customers. In this way the consumers stay in contact with the brand before and during the usage of the product and will regularly visit the website. There is the possibility to moderate the forum or to offer a weekly question time with its technicians, who normally do not deal directly with the final consumers. Intranet is closely related to the issue of internal branding, strengthens the employees' identification with the brand and positively influences their presentation to the environment. The company offers an intranet service which still has potential for improvements. The intranet should inform the employees about the branding activities, give them the understanding of the brand values related to the corporate identity and update them about the latest developments for example in the form of an intranet newsletter. It is necessary for the employees to understand the economic goals of the branding activities and for the management to try to create a vivid image and vision, which is easily understandable for all employees.

Conclusion

Many companies rely only on the technological superiority of their products, but they have to invest in their brands' emotional appeal as well, otherwise they will not be able to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Until now the company is the only company in its industry which has started to extend its brand relationships with the consumers. The company has integrated emotional elements in its branding strategy and to build a relationship in every contact phase. Nevertheless there are still some scope of duties and risks the company may confront.

Emotional branding is, however, not a universal remedy. To become brand leaders, companies have to focus on quality and innovation as well, but the emotional level of values, personality, sensuality and social commitment will make the brand a loyal partner for the consumers and offer it an outstanding position in consumers' lives, unheeded of brand parity and informational overflow.

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