

5

Branding and Brand Communications

Ross Curran and Babak Taheri

Brands

Brands have been used as an effective method of marking craftsmen's output from at least the Middle Ages. Brands are defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) (1960) in their widely used definition as:

"...a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors."

Following the AMA definition, a brand consists of various elements, which could include combinations of names, signs, terms, symbols, URLs, and even employees (DuBois et al., 2014). In more recent times, developing technology and increasingly competitive markets have ensured that brands have evolved from basic marks of quality, to conduits of values, ideas, and sophisticated personalities (Aaker, 1997) allowing marketers new ways to connect with their customers, and stand out from the competition. It should be noted that products and brands are not necessarily the same thing. While products can refer to anything that may satisfy needs or wants, and can include things such as laptops, banking services, or charitable assistance; a brand is the addition to the product of elements that make it stand out from competition, or differentiate it. For example, an Apple or Dell logo conjure up very different perceptions of the laptop product, its typical users, and the tasks it can be used for. Likewise, although one type of car manufacturer (e.g., Volvo) is functionally very similar to another (e.g., Ford), the brand, or logo adorning it, influences the perceptions consumers subsequently hold (often Volvo is strongly associated with safety). Consequently, branding affects consumers' perceptions of a product or service and allows them to associate products with certain attributes (e.g., trust, reliability, safety and fun).