

Project: Brand Repositioning, Revitalization and Rebranding (Fournier)

TAGS: brand positioning, brand repositioning

Description:

Brand management is a long-term process that involves awareness of the unique challenges that confront the brand as it progresses across the different stages of its life. In other classes we consider how to “birth” resonant brands, how to nurture promising brands, and how to leverage brands for growth into adulthood, but what do we do with brands that have passed “middle age”? As brands mature, they can lose vitality and resonance that translates to declining share and sales. Mature brands can attract new users that dilute the very meanings that gave the brand life. Brands are often brought to profit by riding a trend only to find that they later are abandoned by it. If motivated, consumers can reposition our brands for us and take them into challenging new directions. The forces of culture are forever misaligning our brands, zapping brand meanings of their resonance, and making our brand positionings stale. Mountain Dew, Old Spice, J&B, Chrysler, Dove, Burberry’s, Accenture, BMW, Samsung, JC Penney’s, Macy’s, Talbots, Ducati, Canadian Tire, Northeastern University, the Republican Party, Phillip Morris, and China: in almost every product category we can point to once prominent and admired brands that fell into (and sometimes recovered from) this state.

For obvious reasons, managers generally prefer to fix stagnant brands than introduce new ones and brand stewards draw from a portfolio of strategies to turn stale brands around. Sometimes management tweaks the marketing mix or brand elements in make-overs that breathe new life into stagnant brands. Sometimes, they attempt a radical repositioning, fundamentally changing the target audience, product, competitive set, and the very meanings of the brand. Sometimes a total rebranding is enacted and the old brand is abandoned. Brand revitalization may be chosen over brand repositioning or rebranding, with updated interpretations of the brand’s central meanings and new cultural strategies to reinvigorate the brand. Whatever the “flavor”, repositioning addresses a challenging and complex problem that risks diluting hard-won brand equity and alienating or perhaps losing core users in the chase for new opportunities for the brand. Brands often get embedded in a particular generation that eventually ages out of the franchise, and as managers at Harley-Davidson, Eileen Fischer, or J&B would tell you, courting two generations is “tough.”

In this exercise, you will identify and present a case study in which a mature brand was repositioned (successfully or unsuccessfully) and in the telling and critique of the story of this brand at the cross-roads, deduct lessons and take-aways about revitalizing and repositioning brands. Why was the brand revitalized, repositioned or rebranded; what problem was management trying to solve? What was the repositioning strategy; what tactics brought the new brand alive? Was the effort sound and successful; why or why not? What lessons and take-ways does your case offer for repositioning brands?

The case analyses are due and presented in class on October 6. Cases should be prepared and presented in PowerPoint, with your presentations uploaded before class to the Course Resources folder, “Team Assignment: Brand Repositioning, Revitalization and Rebranding.” Visual material should be leveraged to bring your case alive. Teams will have 17 minutes to present; the class will engage 8 minutes of

questions with each team. Strict time limits apply. To ensure executability within the allotted time frame, teams should plan on 10-12 slides for the presentation. Final reports can contain additional slides up to a 20-slide limit. Teams may also include associated notes pages to amplify the points in and logic behind slides. Supplemental analytic tables or appendices are accepted provided these are interpreted in and have inferences for the analysis presented in the report.

Readings that may support your assignment are referenced below:

Aaker, David (1996), "Resisting Temptations to Change a Brand Position/Execution," *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol 3, 251-258

Jacobs, Harrison (2014), "11 Major Rebranding Disasters and What You Can Learn from Them," *Business Insider*, April 4, <http://www.businessinsider.com/rebranding-disasters-and-what-you-can-learn-from-them-2014-4>

Keller, Kevin (2013), "Chapter 13: Managing Brands Over Time," *Strategic Brand Management*, NY: Prentice Hall

Wansink, Brian (2001), "Revitalizing Mature Packaged Goods," *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 19 (4), 228-242.