

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF BRANDING

G.L. Terekhova

Tambov State Technical University, Tambov

Represented by Doctor of Philosophy, Professor A.I. Yudin

Key words and phrases: brand; branding and culture interaction; brand hijack; brand mythology; consumer; fashion; neuromarketing concept; postmodern age; sign; symbol.

Abstract: The paper deals with philosophical aspects of branding, focusing on the moral aspect and high level of specialization. It is based on such concepts as neuromarketing, brand hijack, etc.

The present-day life is called the postmodern age. It is a common knowledge that this period of time is characterized by the effects of scientific and technical progress. Thanks to the latter, a lot of new products are launched every year. The aspiration to seize the market, to draw the consumers' attention to the goods has led to such a phenomenon, as "branding".

The American association of marketing considers that the brand is a name, a sign, a symbol or a design, and also their combination which are intended for identification of the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and for their difference from the goods or services of the competitors. Some experts define a "brand as a thing, which is in the person's mind and heart, and has some relation to the goods" [4, p. 45]. The brand, using the sign system, is a formal designation which transfers the meaning of the other subject. It is a mental image of the goods and services.

A well-known advertisement maker David Ogilvy also considers, that the brand is an image in the consumer's consciousness: "The brand is an intangible sum of properties of a product: its name, packing and price, its history, reputation and a way of advertising. The brand is also a combination of the impression, which it makes on consumers, and the result of their experience in the brand using" [4, p. 31]. As we see, in any of these definitions it is not said that the brand is the goods. It is something that promises the goods and that we wish to receive from it.

A well-known American expert in the problems of business Bryan Tracy, whose viewpoint comes from the mentality of his country, considers that branding is one of the most important concepts of our life. "I have found out,

Терехова Г.Л. – доцент кафедры «История и философия», e-mail: hist@nnn.tstu.ru, ТамбГТУ, г. Тамбов.

that people accept decisions to buy something emotionally, but not on the basis of logic judgments. In other words, people make an instant emotional jump, and it is a patrimonial human feature – to make the decision quickly and sometimes on the basis of apparently insignificant details. We look at the person, who is well-dressed, and we consider that he is also clever, and if he is clever then he is a competent person. And if a person is clever and competent, then he is the right person to do business with, it is easy to get on with him and it is pleasant even to buy something from him” [8, p. 8]. Obviously this statement arises many questions: world viewpoint, psychological, philosophical and even the logic ones. The Russian proverb “Never judge a book by its cover” very wisely answers the question, whether a person, who is well-dressed always clever. Another question which needs considering is what an emotional jump means; is it a patrimonial human feature? We have the right to ask a question about the way people feel when making this jump, whether this action is made consciously or not and if they don’t how do we differ from animals? There are a lot of questions which need detailed examination in the future works.

In our article we would like to talk about positive and negative processes, which accompany the brand formation and its development. As we have already noticed, present-day researchers of culture call the time in which we live, the postmodern age. A.V. Gulyga defines the postmodern age in the following way: it is the time, which “differs from the present in such a way, that people look at the past not as at the precondition (the present: mine), but as at their direct component. This link connects the present and the past” [7, p. 6]. For example, the postmodern architecture uses all previous styles. How much is it aesthetic? Does it correspond to harmony laws, comfort of the modern person? It is a philosophical question. The present-day fashion has also become postmodern. We can come across women wearing long skirts and classical blouses, and at the same time we can see a half-naked pierced girl; we can see the women wearing male leggings of the XIX century, people in a loincloth of Africans on the European beaches, leather cowboy’s clothes and an elegant suit; on modern roads there are cars in a retro style and modern ones like “Toyota”, “Ford”. What is it: the mix of styles, the synthesis of the far and recent past time? Or is it something else? Is it, maybe, the impossibility to find the modern niche, or possibility to feel freedom? Not everybody asks this question themselves. But the supply is motivated by the demand.

Certainly, it is not only a branding question. It is a question of the philosophical, anthropological, psychological and religious type. These are questions of freedom, dignity, honesty, love, and also the social problems of the present time about our wish to keep an originality of the national cultures or to completely assimilate in a mass culture person. Modern brands play an important role in this process. We all perfectly know that it is dominated by the development of the western industrial civilization.

One of the major points of formation of a brand is mythologisation. In the book “Mythology” Rolan Bart gives his own representation of this process: “Materials from which the mythical statement (the language itself, the photo, the painting, the poster, the ceremony, the thing etc.) can be initially different, but, getting into the myth possession, they come to the empty sign function: for a myth all of them are only the raw materials ...” [4, p. 49]. Therefore the

expert who uses any fragments of the culture as raw materials changes the initial values created by the goods. The message built in the product conveyed through its consumption is changed and becomes less important. Undoubtedly this process is rather challenging.

The brand creates its own values on the basis of the product and its environment. Automobile brands offer validity, the owner's security, pleasure from driving. The symbolical advantage is the basis of each product. People would rather buy the vital force than just fruits and vegetables, the warmth than the batteries, the feeling of freshness and the youth than the cream and perfume and so on. Unique advertising campaigns of "Apple", giving to the modern person the new techniques, actually involve him into the absolutely new world and force him not only to stand out against something, not only to find freedom, but also at a subconscious level to feel tragedy of a modern mass culture. The influence of the "Apple's", "1984" and "Lemmings" advertising on the consciousness of the mass consumer is very strong. The "1984" advertisement was officially shown only once when the third quarter of a match in the Supercup was broadcast on January 22, 1984. Here the Orwell's anti-utopia, which symbolized hegemony of the IBM in the world, and the girl with a Macintosh hammer were used. Having pursued by the guards she rushed into the hall and hit it on the screen, which was featuring the Big Brother show, narrating about anti-personal achievements of the regime. Recently the chain of Wendy's fast food has released a parody to a spot, featuring people powerlessly falling in a precipice, with one person refusing to do it.

Brand mythology, as we already have seen, can be connected both with the language, image, sound and action. But the hidden message of the used signs is not known not only to consumers, but sometimes to the producers of goods and services trademarks. Modern business of services offers to our young people a tattoo and piercing, which are becoming more and more fashionable. On the beach one can often see girls with tattooed dragons on the hips, in addition with the Chinese hieroglyphs and the Scandinavian fleeces. And on a cold winter day some girls go outside with naked stomachs and rings, sticking out of a navel. Modern tattoo-salons offer a variety of pictures and inscriptions and sometimes they don't always know what they mean and symbolize. The fact is that many of these pictures and inscriptions are simply copied from various books, but they are far from their neutral character. Earlier each tattoo symbolized the belonging to any clan, society; each inscription had a protective or aggressive spell. The dragons' images, which many girls are fond of, is an emblem of malicious power, horror in the classical West European heraldry and in Russia they symbolized completely dark power. The spider is a symbol of a demon, spinning a web for guilty souls and also a symbol of the avarice and bloodsucking. The hare is a symbol of the cowardice and promiscuity. This list is very long.

Perhaps, the symbolical image used by the famous world brand Mercedes Bens has been a success. The Dramar's sons suggested using a star as a logo of the company. Three beams mean three areas of the motorization - on the earth, in the water and in the air. The creators of the symbol consider that "the symbolical meaning of a star image has been existent since ancient times and means the constancy, superiority, protection, and aspiration to an ideal" [1].

Besides the spiritual harm this fashion causes various physical illnesses. The doctors are puzzled by the fact, that young people show their interest to tattoos. Evgeniy Goncharov in his book "Protection of our children" informs, that "this category of persons became a new source of the replenishment of the virus hepatitis's branches in the city hospitals. At first sight, this harmless tattoo in the field of a navel or a hole for an ear ring, may cause cirrhosis or a primary cancer of a liver" [3, p. 197–198]. The modern person, on the average, watches about 86500 advertisements a year. It shows that people are overloaded with visual and audio information. The author of the book "Psychology in Marketing" Lebedev-Lubimov points out that people lose the ability to perceive the information through their sense organs, at the age 25 or 45 their feelings are not as sharp as at 12, in the youth the sense organs work by 200 % better than 10–15 years later" [5, p. 90]. Consequently, the influence of the advertising on the young consumers occurs at the deeper subconscious level. Besides, this age group is subjected to a very strong influence of mass-media. Those who are engaged in advertising activity as well as those who form a product and service market for teenagers and youth bear the greatest responsibility.

Today the Russian experts in marketing are interested in the concept of the neuromarketing of the American Professor Gerald Zaltman from Harvard. The basis of this concept is the cognitive psychology and neuropsychology, and its main aim is the management of the decision-making process of consumers. The similar concept also causes fears as the management process should occur at the level of the subliminal advertising. We have nothing to do but to rely on honesty and decency of advertisers.

Using semiotics language Dominin calls a brand a connotation superstructure over the sign system of goods. If the denotation meaning is the basis, which defines the set of the subjects' meanings, connotation meaning is an image, a condition, like coziness of the house, which is communicated through the successful combination of such groups of goods as furniture, curtains, blinds, indoor plants, etc. The brand suggests looking at the situation more widely, than the relationship between the goods and the consumer. The connotation meaning is an associatively-shaped, emotional, estimated or valuable one. The attitude of the speaker to the subject dominates in it. Therefore, creating this superstructure, the expert should operate with the literary part of human language, be in the harmony with such spheres of human culture as the art and scientific literature, music, religion, painting, and rely on its better examples. "The connotation superstructures are not the fragment or the citation; it is the new text, which uses the initial text and its value for the transferring of its own values" [4 more likely, p. 50]. Coming back to the Japanese brand "Toyota", it should be mentioned that its connotation superstructure creates in the consciousness of a person the certain space filled with confidence, comfort and well-being. The Japanese hieroglyph "Toyota" means the speed and consists of the eight strokes. Number eight for the Japanese is the number of prosperity and success. From the point of view of the western person, this word is convenient for pronunciation and is attractive because of its senselessness.

One of the important aspects of the brand's formation is its interaction with the culture. Regarding this the concept of customer engagement is of great interest. Alex Wipperfurth believes that marketing managers no longer turn the

consumers' requirements' into goods or services. "Now it is done by consumers. Millions of acute keen and creative people all over the world help to improve and support the revolutionary goods and services, sometimes without the financial participation of the corporations ...let's call it customer engagement" [2, p. 18]. He does not refuse the traditional marketing model of "the big explosion" which still works for some people, and maybe for many goods and services (e.g. modifying of the existing commodity offer). "However, it is necessary to cooperate with consumers to make the brand function and have a significant impact on the culture", reflects the supporter of the new marketing concept [2, p. 18].

The model of "brand hijack" has been created by brands of different types – Palm's minicomputers Palm, Dr. Martens' boots, an experimental medical product "Viagra" (initially it was created for the quinsy treatment). The fact of the formation of a book brand is a very remarkable one. Some years ago in the Soviet era people would dream about sitting in some creative cafe, socializing with interesting people and reading a book. Now in some Russian cities the chain of the bookshops like the St. Petersburg's "Bukvoed" offers to its visitors comfortable atmosphere with a cup of coffee; "Biblio-globe" in Moscow has opened a literary-musical room. The American chain "Barns and Noble" is the book centre of leisure (a coffee house, children's rooms, sections of toys and the big departments of multimedia production). And the company Starbucks has not only created the new chain of coffee houses in the USA, but it has also imparted to Americans a simple belief that nobody should simply drink coffee.

"Brand Hijack" is involvement of the consumers (and other interested persons) in building of the brand's meaning and its communication to other consumers. It is the marketing tool to develop true brand allegiance, which has nothing to do with the brand loyalty. ... It is applied to the new model of the product launch and a complex combination of actions and, the most important thing, the readiness to cooperate with people, with whom we are not used to cooperating, that is with consumers», – to such conclusion comes the author of the book Alex Wipperfurth Brand Hijack. Marketing Without Marketing [2, p 18].

Undoubtedly the author is absolutely right focusing on the well-thought actions. In our opinion, these actions should be based on some principles, the most important of them are moral principles and specialization principles. The morals assumes honesty, care of consumers, love of people, quality of the goods or service, while specialization principles are based on the fact that the goods are created by the most informed and skilled experts. And it is important not only to cooperate with consumers but to build true values such as the positive content of the book, the quality of a fabric which is not harmless for the mammary glands of a woman (today in the Russian market, perhaps, the Byelorussian goods meet these requirements), modern computer technologies able to protect our sight etc. Therefore the cooperation should be not with consumers who are capable of generating ideas, creating social stability and spiritual health.

Lebedev-Lubimov points out that "... in psychology it is very difficult to understand whether we deal with the fixed requirement, or with the regulative mechanisms of the sphere of requirements and motivations" [5, p. 19]. He believes that in the marketing psychology the concept of requirement is used

incorrectly. In fact the term “requirement” can be applied to the description of any type of an individual’s behavior; for example, it is possible to use it as the universal construct, denying other concepts (purpose, motive, stereotype, desire, prompting, interest, etc.). Therefore not the requirements, but the imparted stereotypes, purposes, promptings of the unripe or unhealthy person, which in their basis cannot be realized, are often served. Apparently, for spiritual and physical health of the society, it is not necessary to satisfy the painful requirements in the form of goods, but to find means for treatment of people.

Obviously the cultural point of view doesn’t take into consideration the moral aspect of brand building, but for the marketing expert the philosophically psychological approach gives the chance to understand what true requirements people have and why they are implemented in this or that form. Nevertheless, it is impossible to reject the traditional marketing approach to the solution to this problem; market research implies various techniques to interrogate people about their needs and requirements. And all individual’s requirements reflected in their behavior can be considered as a product of socialization within the limits of the concrete culture, or even the subculture.

The basic vital values of Americans ranked by the percentage of the investigated audience are: honesty, love, responsibility, open-mindedness, sympathy, ambition, cheerfulness, helpfulness, independence and abilities. According to the data organized by the Fund “Public opinion”, the basic vital values of Russians are (we will arrange them with decrease): safety (it is possible to understand, considering our history), piece, family, prosperity, justice, law, order, human rights, stability, work, spirituality, freedom, success, honour, patriotism, religion, tolerance, strong will, power, solidarity. I.Y. Rozhkov and V.G. Kismereshkin believe that it is impossible to ignore the negative attitude of the Russian population to advertising as the feature of the mass consciousness typical of the Russian mentality and deepened by many decades of existence in the former USSR of a totalitarian regime and distributive system [7]. The population of Russia is heterogeneous and has the original system of values. The latter have the thousand-year spiritual history and are not always realized by the modern consumer. They are extensive enough, and deliver to the modern Russian customer deep, unconscious requirements. The problem consists in revealing these requirements and in arranging them in a certain order, giving a priority to the higher requirements, which will become a major factor of the modern brands development.

References

1. Полная энциклопедия символов, эмблем и знаков / В.В. Алексеенко [и др.]. – Ростов н/Д. : Владис ; М. : РИПОЛ Классик, 2008. – 640 с.
2. Випперфюрт, А. Вовлечение в брэнд. Как заставить покупателя работать на компанию / А. Випперфюрт : пер. с англ. А. Кириченко. – М. : Коммерсант ; СПб. : Питер, 2007. – 384 с.
3. Гончаров, Е. Защити своих детей / Е. Гончаров. – Воронеж : Изд-во Борисова, 2008. – 208 с.
4. Домнин, В.Н. Брэнддинг: новые технологии в России / В.Н. Домнин. – СПб. : Питер, 2004. – 381 с.

5. Лебедев-Любимов А.Н. Психология в маркетинге. COOL-BRAND-стратегия / А.Н. Лебедев-Любимов. – СПб. : Питер, 2008. – 192 с.
 6. Рожков, И.Я. От брендинга к брэнд-билдингу / И.Я. Рожков, В.Г. Кисмерешкин. – М. : Гелла-принт, 2004. – 320 с.
 7. Русская идея: сборник произведений русских мыслителей / сост. Е.А. Васильев ; предисл. А. В. Гулыги. – М. : Айрис-пресс, 2004. – 512 с.
 8. Трейси, Брайан. Сила брэнда: искусство выделяться из толпы конкурентов и доминировать на рынке / Трейси Брайан. – М. : СмартБук, 2008. – 74 с.
-

Философские аспекты брендинга

Г.Л. Терехова

ГОУ ВПО «Тамбовский государственный технический университет», Тамбов

Ключевые слова и фразы: брэнд; взаимодействие брендинга и культуры; знак; концепция нейромаркетинга; концепция похищения брэнда; мифологизация брэнда; мода; постсовременность; потребитель; символ.

Аннотация: Акцентируется внимание на философских аспектах формирования современного брэнда, особенно обращается внимание на нравственный аспект и высокий уровень специализации, а также опирается на такие концепции как нейромаркетинг, похищение брэнда и др.

© Г.Л. Терехова, 2010