

BRANDING FOR HUMANITY

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Summary: *Building a brand is important for businesses to stand out in the crowded marketplace, but it is not an easy task. The article describes the pros and cons of building a brand, such as credibility, customer loyalty, and the association of a brand with a certain product. It also emphasizes the importance of a brand being client-oriented and the need for a clear message that resonates with the audience. The text suggests that building a brand is about creating an experience and becoming a part of the customers' story.*

Keywords: *Customer, Experience, Message, Improvement, Market.*

Although “brand” is a familiar concept for most people and the awareness about its importance is quite high, not everyone realizes the interdependence between client-oriented management, the image of a company and the importance of not only building, but also maintaining such a complex structure. In this article will be described the pros and cons of “building a brand” and how a certain image can influence the object it is applied to.

Brand Power

The American Marketing Association defines a brand 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.”[1] Although this explanation is vague, it generates the following idea: A brand is a term applied not only to a certain physical product (clothes, computer etc.) or service (car washing), but also towards people (Elon Musk), places (Las Vegas- “What Happens Here, Stays Here”) or even ideas (Black Lives Matter). Despite the fact that those categories are divergent, all of them fall under the branding label, which has its advantages and disadvantages.

- **Credibility** A goal that most marketers aim for is so that the product sells itself. The technological era we live in helps a lot with familiarizing consumers with the products, but once the credibility rises, it is crucial to preserve this image. Even though it increases the expectations for the further projects, it also helps with the concurrence, as when the customer makes the choice, he usually goes for the product with a “name”, the one he heard about [2].

- **Customer loyalty** A trustworthy brand sets a standard for the outcome; therefore, the client returns to experience the same level of satisfaction he got from the results. Even if other brands recreate the design and the operation procedures, they cannot recreate the previous experience given by the quality product and cannot abolish it.

- **Associating a brand with a certain product** When a brand becomes world known, it can encounter the following problem: people can address to a category of product by addressing to it as the name of the company. In this way, in many countries, Moldova included, when a person buys a diaper, they call it a “Pampers”, not necessarily meaning the company itself, but the product.

- **New branches** Usually companies are associated with a product group. In case the desire to expand the company and create new articles appears, they can combat the problem of being stuck with its role on the market. It can have 2 outcomes. In the first case, the doubt of the success for such a release will cause a lot of interest and the quality of product will satisfy the customer and its needs, which will be beneficial for the corporation. In the second case, the same interest or the association with this same brand, can become detrimental and the sales of the main product can decrease. Both

effects will generate intrigue around the product. In most known examples both upshots do not land up as long-term projects. For instance, in 2018 a brand known for the production of wax crayons-“Crayola” introduced to the market make up products. At first it caused a groundswell of interest, considering that this product has been selling crayons since 1903, but in the long run, we can observe that it did not withstand the concurrence neither made up to the high expectations of customers. This strategy was fruitless, because “Crayola” is marketed as a brand for kids and make up is a product targeted towards other audience.

The secret weapon that helps with building a brand

Building a brand is essential for any business that wants to stand out in today's crowded marketplace. A strong brand can create loyalty among customers, build trust with stakeholders, and set a business apart from its competitors. However, building a brand is not an easy task, considering how many brands from Nike to Apple already resonate with their customers. Many businesses struggle to establish a strong identity and that's where the secret weapon comes in.

This is not a tool, or an instrument used by brands to strike a chord with clients. It is a strategy, a model that prioritizes the consumers' needs, in order to offer a superior customer experience.

For the purpose of creating a connection with the audience, despite the fact that it is critical to know exactly, who the customers are and what are their main interests, it is essential to formulate a precise and clear message, that would be understood by everyone. It is important to keep in mind that a “brand” is in the first place an experience. With the aim of achieving a certain goal the firm should identify the customers' story and intervene into it, become a part of their clients' plot.

“Nobody can look away from a good story. In fact, neuroscientists claim the average human being spends more than 30 percent of their time daydreaming... unless they're reading, listening to, or watching a story unfold. Why? Because when we are engaged in a story, the story does the daydreaming for us.” [3]

That is why when we come to analyze the market tendencies over the past few decades, we will come to see the differences, that have occurred. For example, how much the key-factors that control the decision-making process have changed or the new organizational type with a higher precedence etc.

All of these modifications have a reason behind them, and this reason is: the shift from market and customer driven organization to product and sales driven. This change has a lot of benefits that meet the requirements for constructing a “brand”, but it also demands a lot of research, so as to perceive the shopper demands and implement adjustments to qualitative and quantitative aspects [4].

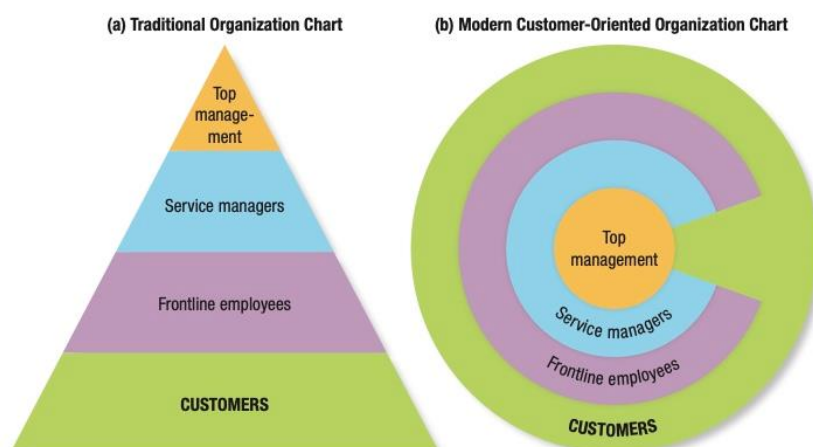


Figure 1. Traditional Organization versus Modern Customer-Oriented Company Organization[5]

In the Fig.1 (a) the hierarchy goes the following way: the top management on the pike, lower are placed the service managers, then the frontline employees and at the bottom line are found the customers. Taking into consideration the new realities, the structure that most companies are following, nowadays, has the shape of a circle (Fig. 1(b)), instead of a pyramid. This emphasizes that

the customers occupy the biggest area and hold this structure together, instead of being the base in a chain of command. The next by importance are the frontline employees, as they have the closest connection with the latest step and get to do the biggest amount of work. Then the service managers are presented and only in the last place the top managers, that fulfill the function of hiring and controlling the other layers of this structure.

Transition from product-oriented to market-value-oriented branding

One of the key abilities of a company is its flexibility. The customer base evolves simultaneously with the company, so with the purpose of remaining demanded and growing along with its clients a company should constantly adapt to the market. Nokia's example is a very illustrative one. In the early 2000's "Nokia" was the most sought-after brand, but what have happened and why have the main roles been redistributed this dramatically?

In January 2007 the first smartphone was released by Apple Inc.. It was a revolutionary product, that had a lot of potential, but being new to the market, still had not gained its place on it. The "Nokia" being the biggest player at that time (Fig 2), had not taken into consideration how promising this product was, what became the biggest mistake and made them forfeit their position. Their sales had dropped more than 2 times and it gradually became less and less demanded.

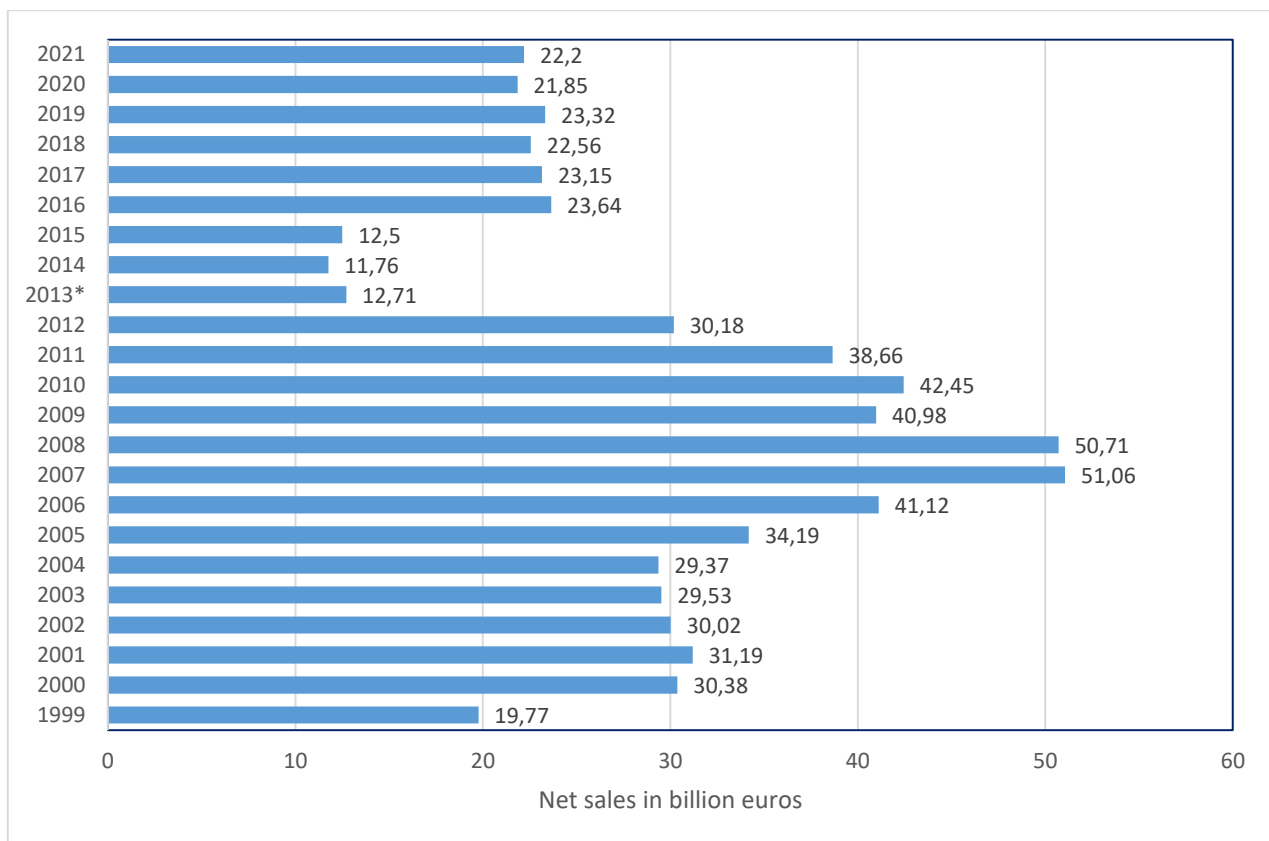


Figure 2. Nokia net sales worldwide from 1999 to 2021(in billion euros) [6]

Adapting to the market, does not always imply the modification of some external mechanisms, but also the internal ones. As already mentioned, one of the most important parts of a successful brand is distinctly communicating the transmitted message. Without a clear understanding of what the product is and what it is designed to do, customers may be hesitant to make a purchase or may misunderstand the gains that the product can provide. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the message is conveyed in a way that is both clear and persuasive, in order to maximize the product's appeal and its potential to meet the needs of the target market. It is similar to distinguishing "sound", from "noise", although those two words have a similar meaning, they are far from synonyms, so it is important to place both of them in the right context to obtain the wanted effect.

For the past years the companies have taken the same approach towards their marketing and branding strategies. A lot of companies transitioned from product-oriented to market-value-oriented business. First of all, what is the meaning behind those two concepts?

The product-oriented concept implies an organization that takes actions based on their range of products. It focuses on the quality of a product, considering that the increase of this aspect will lead towards higher sales, because the customer themselves are in constant search of a better product. It is partially true; clients continuously try to optimize most of the processes in their life and finding the products that live up to these standards has become an ultimate goal. Although the innovations dictate a new rule: you cannot be seen, unless you make yourself visible.

The market-value-oriented organization, on the other side, takes into calculation the over-saturated market and is in constant search of new marketing strategies, that will improve such aspects as design, in an effort to satisfy the buyer. By these means company acknowledges all the newly introduced factors and works on them.

In the Tab. 1 by means of slogans is presented how differently those two structures can be perceived and how rather than product, the human is centered.

Table 1

Product-Oriented versus Market-Value-Oriented-Definitions of a Business [7]

Company	Product Definition	Market-Value Definition
Union Pacific Railroad	We run a railroad.	We move people and goods.
Xerox	We make copying equipment.	We help improve office productivity.
Hess Corporation	We sell gasoline.	We supply energy.
Paramount Pictures	We make movies.	We market entertainment.
Encyclopedia Britannica	We sell encyclopedias online.	We distribute information.
Carrier	We make air conditioners and furnaces.	We provide climate control in the home.

In conclusion, I would like to say that although branding has a lot of benefits it is not mandatory. Much more important is having a connection with your target audience and keeping a positive image on the market, keeping in mind the constant improvement.

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