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The Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers is essential reading for brand strategist in both private and public sector organisations, and academics in universities and business schools.

The papers are written by master student groups and follow an international journal format. The student groups selected the topics of their papers and provided updated and relevant insights into the strategic management of brands.

The mission of Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers is to “present and develop useful tools and theories for the application in practice of managing brands, and to forward the academic field of strategic brand management.”

The intent of the series is to bridges the gap between academic teaching and research.

The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers in the course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21 – 7.5 University Credit Points; 8 weeks 50% study time), part of the master program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The published papers represent the result of the intellectual work of students under supervision of the heads of course. The content of the papers is to be read as student reports albeit the journal format. The papers are free to download and should be cited following international conventions.

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WHAT ARE THE INTERNAL REASONS FOR BRAND IDENTITY EROSION?

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To explore why brands lose control over their identity due to internal actions or lack of actions when needed. The paper examines the key elements brands should focus on internally to prevent brand identity erosion which can negatively impact brand performance.

Methodology: This paper explains the relevance of brand identity by a literature review and further builds on fundamental causes for brand identity erosion by assessing case studies of brands identity declines with the scope of creating a general pattern.

Findings: The findings of this paper point out the critical elements that the Brand Manager should take into account when considering identity and the general patterns to be avoided to prevent identity erosion.

Original/ Value: Existing research is focused on elements of the brand building process. This paper is taking brand building in reverse, starting from case studies linked to key internal reasons. The goal is to analyze the consequences of the internal actions or lack of actions.

Keywords: Brand, brand identity, internal branding, brand identity erosion

Paper type: Research paper.

Introduction

Over the recent years, many companies have been focusing on building and maintaining their brand identity as they realized that a strong brand identity is the company's biggest asset. Strong brand identity will help the company define a purposeful and creative business strategy. In order to build a strong brand identity, the company needs to have a clear purpose, committed to its shared values, and be able to impart its competitive advantages.

Consider Johnson & Johnson's credo, which is carved in stone at the entrance of the company's headquarters and is a constant reminder of what J&J's top priorities are (or should be). It describes J&J's ethos of putting the needs of patients (and their caregivers) first, how it will serve them by providing high quality at a reasonable cost, and a work environment

based on dignity, safety, and fairness. (Greyser & Urde, 2019).

However, many companies failed to establish their prominent brand identity and neglected their DNA or their roots. In most cases, the company fails to maintain its core value and purpose or is not faithful to the same spirit. Thus, the company is unable to encourage a strong sense of the company's identity to all its employees.

As technology becomes much more sophisticated, consumers have more access to find more information about a brand before making their purchase decisions. If the company is seen to have inconsistencies in maintaining its brand identity or fails to stay true to its brand promise, consumers are more likely to abandon the brand and seek an alternative brand that aligns with their values.

There are many types of research that have been conducted to describe how to build a strong brand identity and maintain a company's core value. However, there is very little information or literature regarding how the company could erode its identity due to internal factors.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify internal factors that could affect brand identity erosion. This paper provides an analysis of a case study in which brand identity was eroded due to internal factors and how this finding could help further research.

Literature Review

Brand

A brand can be thought of as a 'sign' that is intended to acquire and communicate meaning. The management of brands can thus be regarded as the management of the meaning of signs. A sign, or representation, is something that stands for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign (Urde, 2013).

In the context of this study, a brand is a sign or set of signs certifying the origin of a product or service and differentiating it from the competition (Kapferer, 2012). The brand is fundamentally a system that integrates and differentiates. A brand is first a tool of integration: it is a tool of coherence, by bringing together under its name a range of products and services, each of which must carry the central brand values. These values are necessary because they help internally decide whether a decision, action, product, or service is to be put on the market to face the competition (Kapferer, 2012).

Brands have financial value because they have created assets in the minds and hearts of customers, distributors, prescribers, opinion leaders. According to Keller (1998), a brand is a set of mental associations held by the consumer, which adds to the perceived value of a product or service' (Keller, 1998). These associations should be unique (exclusivity), strong (saliency), and positive (desirable) (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand Identity

Identity is on the sender's side. The purpose, in this case, is to specify the brand's meaning, aim, and self-image. Image is both the result and interpretation thereof. In terms of brand management, identity precedes image. Before projecting an image to the public, we must know exactly what we want to project. Before it is received, we must know what to send and how to send it. (Kapferer, 2012).

Forming the foundation of corporate brand identity is the firm's mission and vision (which engages and inspires its people), culture (which reveals their work ethic and attitudes), and competencies (its distinctive capabilities). These things are rooted in the organization's values and operational realities (Greyser & Urde, 2019).

The organizational values answer, in principle, the questions of what we, as an organization, stand for and what makes us who we are. These internal values are an essential point of departure for the core values, which summarise the brand's identity (Urde, 2001).

A clear corporate brand identity provides direction and purpose, enhances the standing of products, aids in recruiting and retention, and helps protect a firm's reputation in times of trouble. Nevertheless, many companies struggle to define their brands (Greyser & Urde, 2019).

Internal Branding

The brand's central values must be known internally and by everyone who must set the brand in the process (Kapferer, 2012).

Internal branding is a concept describing the activities an organization is taking to ensure that the employees are enacting and delivering the brand promise (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). The brand promise reflects the brand values, which is a precursor to customer expectation. Internal branding is, therefore, essential in an organization's objective of fulfilling customer satisfaction, the pinnacle of marketing (Fahy & Jobber, 2012).

The importance of internal communication was, therefore, absolutely crucial if feelings of loss of identity were to be avoided and all thoughts of disappearance kept at bay (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand Identity Erosion

Many companies have forgotten the fundamental purpose of their brands. A great deal of attention is devoted to the marketing activity itself, which involves designers, graphic artists, packaging, and advertising agencies. This activity thus becomes an end, receiving most of the attention. In doing so, we forget that it is just a means (Kapferer, 2012).

Too often, a limited, tactical perspective inhibits strategists from building a strong brand even when the potential exists. To achieve maximum brand strength, the scope of brand identity should be broad rather than narrow, the thrust should be strategic rather than tactical, and there should be an internal as well as external focus to brand creation (Aaker, 1996).

A serious practical management problem is the lack of a widely agreed framework that can define corporate brand identity and also align its different elements so that they come together as an entity (Abratt and Kleyn, 2011). This dislocation between theory and practice is not only frustrating for those in charge of corporate brands but, worse, may derail the brand-building process and ultimately jeopardize the overall strategy (Aaker, 2004).

According to the literature, there are four vital aspects of corporate brand identity. Those aspects are corporate vision, mission, core values, and corporate culture. The four aspects need to works in conjunction and align with one another. If the company neglects one of the essential aspects, there might be the risk of them losing their brand identity.

Qualitative Method

With regards to both the literature review and the research proposal of the paper, we have designed an empirical investigation based on a qualitative approach.

We have chosen a qualitative approach in order to support our arguments as we wanted to improve the link between the personal experience of professionals associated with the topic and the academic research already developed.

This correlation is made by exploiting narrative answers from Human Resources managers as key stakeholders for corporate brand identity. In a traditional

sense, brand identity is not a prerequisite on the priorities list of human resources management. This is the reason why we wanted to understand how internal branding is starting to become a key element in employee engagement practices.

The qualitative method for this study was preferred over quantitative as our purpose was to gain some specific insights on a model that takes internal brand building in reverse, as opposed to a simple trend with respect to our research proposal.

Description of interview structure and sample:

As explained above, this section aims to tap into the social experience of human resources managers to understand their views better. We have reached out to multiple human resources professionals, and we have managed to obtain an interview session with a Senior Human Resources manager with more than six years of experience in the role of one of the biggest FMCG companies globally (Procter & Gamble). We believe the perspective is highly relevant for a case in point as P&G, with a history of over 180 years, has a very well-established internal brand identity, and we wanted to understand the key elements that drive it. We have designed a short set of questions in order to explore the practical implications of our literature review and further perspective on our chosen case study.

We have structured the interview session into three parts: focus on the general importance of the internal brand identity for a company, what are the potential mistakes a company can make that can cause brand identity erosion, and exploring why companies might be at risk if brand identity is not well thought out and how this can be assessed.

The questionnaire structure was established to cover both external and internal points of view with regard to the corporate brand identity. In the following sections, we will provide a summary of the points discussed.

Section 1:

In this section, we wanted to set the base to understand an expert's opinion and inside definition on the general importance of a well-established corporate brand identity.

Human Resources Senior Manager:

"Internal brand identity represents the foundation of assessing the healthiness of the company but also the basis for all people and talent management processes that define the company. Talent management is a direct determinant of employee engagement. Brand identity becomes a crucial part of recruiting and sourcing, which represents the foundation of the talent pipeline. Having clear values and principles ensures that candidates are a fit for the company culture, and in this way, the company can be built further. It continues with career management, potential, and performance assessment. Understanding the core of their employer makes employees feel an important part of the growth. Our internal data has proven that motivation has been increasingly higher due to clear transparency and active communication of our internal brand identity, dictated by clearly stated purposes, values, and principles. Having the identity in mind and resonating with that identity drives employee engagement."

Section 2:

In the second section, we wanted to explore potential mistakes that a company can make at the corporate level that can cause erosion of the brand identity.

Human Resources Senior Manager:

"Breaking it down, two of the biggest potential root causes for this are lack of communication and inefficient sourcing. First of all, the corporate brand identity has to reflect on the daily business, and there has to be a clear link defined to

what it supports as part of the business model. Employees can often get stuck in specific business processes without having a clear overview of the identity of the company and how it can be used to ensure success and consistency. Providing this type of understanding and awareness makes the brand identity prevalent in day-to-day business and involves the workforce in better understanding and defining success. For example, Amazon has managed to become such a crucial player due to the fact that top-down, it keeps the same principles in mind: consumer-centricity and innovation. Everyone knows that these are the things they should keep in mind and follow when it comes to business decisions and not only. Even if these values would be very present at a leadership level, without properly cascading these principles within the organization, the brand's identity can easily be eroded. Human Resources has started to play a vital role in driving a strategic partnership to support the companies' leadership in cascading down the values and providing business understanding on it. Second of all, mistakes in talent management at all levels can negatively affect internal brand identity. The identity of the company exists as long as it is understood and acknowledged by its employees. Using clear principles in sourcing both entry-level positions and top management gives consistency in terms of alignment between the values of the candidate and the values of the company. On top, creating clear expectations and defining the match will enable the company to attract top talents who will be able to further build on its identity, starting from a solid basis."

Section 3:

In the final section of the interview, we wanted to understand how companies assess the risk of brand identity erosion, building on the case study used as a reference in the paper, Blockbuster versus Netflix.

Human Resources Senior Manager:

"When companies want to assess risk from an identity point of view, there are two key elements to be kept in mind. The first one refers to principle-based decision-making evaluation Following principles that are highly ingrained in the company's culture and identity ensures that the approach will, in most cases, be consistent and not derail from the business objectives. The second relates more to the degree of agility and understanding current realities. This element is very relevant for the Blockbuster versus Netflix presented case. Having a clearly defined identity should not exclude integrating innovation and adapting to what the business needs. The purpose of the elements comprising the identity and their role have to be well understood as a mindset to serve business performance."

Findings:

The findings section concludes on the empirical investigation underwent for this research paper. We can observe a growing trend of companies capitalizing on the competitive advantage obtained by ensuring a healthy brand identity culture from the qualitative response we have received. Forward-thinking and strategic planning on how identity can be defined and further used as an engagement tool becomes standard practice. By analyzing the qualitative input, we can observe a direct correlation between the strength of the brand identity and employee engagement, which most often than not stands at the core of business performance. Consequently, potential factors that could erode brand identity have to be analyzed and embedded into the strategic planning of Human resources professionals.

Case Study

Blockbuster vs Netflix

Netflix introduced video download services to Canada on September 21, and two days later, the United States-based video rental service Blockbuster declared bankruptcy (September 23). That event is a clear manifestation of the power of the creative destruction of capitalism. It also illustrates how two companies competing for the same clientele can have distinct business models based on different driving forces, with, so far at least, wildly divergent results.

The main focus of Blockbuster's business model is the presence of a large number of neighborhood stores offering passing customers the option of buying or renting videos. Potential customers come to the store with the idea of renting a movie but not necessarily knowing which one. Blockbuster's business model is entirely based on the sales method. No store, no business. It is as simple as that. This model requires investing in the store's infrastructure to ensure that customers can buy or rent videos.

However, the greater competition from other sources (online video on demand, cable video on demand, and the Netflix model, i.e., home delivery of video after ordering online) makes it the material costs of operating an overpriced video store chain.

Blockbuster also turned down not one but contracts from Netflix. First, in 2000, they decided not to acquire the platform for $ 50 million. They later also turned down Netflix's offer to run Blockbuster's online video service. It is true, with hindsight, one can reproach them for having refused these offers at that time; after all, Blockbuster was still a giant trying to cling to the top at this time.

In 1999, Blockbuster went public and launched an IPO at $ 15 a share, below the range that analysts following the industry had predicted. They failed to raise the funds they expected, making about $ 465 million. Ten years later, in July 2010, Blockbuster was taken off the New York Stock Exchange.

However, as early as the 2000s, they embarked on other life-saving operations, such as the partnership with Enron in 2004, to develop their latest video-on-demand platform, in response to what Netflix has been doing successfully for years now. Enron did most of the work, building a robust video-on-demand platform developed and tested with customers. However, soon, they realized that Blockbuster was just as determined as ever to keep once-lucrative video stores at bay and doubted they would not provide enough titles and support for the video-on-demand business. As a result, the operation was canceled, and Enron's stock subsequently collapsed.

Within a few years, Netflix and other competitors began to chip away at Blockbuster's profits, not by cutting them down but by reinventing video rentals in the digital age. So let us take a quick look at the business models and what Netflix was doing to innovate as Blockbuster moved through the new millennium with the clumsiness of an old giant.

People may have heard the sad story of Netflix's creation after its founder, Reed Hastings, was devastated at having to pay $ 40 late fees for a movie's return to Blockbuster, allegedly Apollo 13. This creation is probably a prettier anecdote, but it certainly reflects the stubbornness of Blockbuster, who clung to outdated business practices and models like those who hated late fees, while others, like Hastings, were striving to reinvent the industry.

Late fees were kind of a necessary evil to the rental business model, and Blockbuster stuck with them until the very late mid-2000s. Of course, the profits from these late fees were huge, making up a vital percentage of the company's revenue and reportedly generating revenues of up to $ 800 million at any given time, and it sounds

greedy. Furthermore, even when they tried to get rid of it, they did not. In 2005, they implemented a new policy that made the consumer pay the total price of the movie or game after eight days, which the consumer could cancel by returning the product in question and paying a restocking fee. This policy backfired against the consumer, and over 40 states have sued the company for false advertising.

On the other hand, as early as the late 90s, Netflix experimented with new ways to rent movies without depending on brick and mortar stores and launched its DVD mailing system.

Netflix is one of Blockbuster's main competitors. Its business model is based on a different driving force, more associated with distribution than sales. Instead of operating a chain of physical stores, it operates a distribution network that serves subscribers who order a list of movies through its online reservation service. Costs are more accessible to control due to the efficiency inherent in the centralized distribution network. Presentation and merchandising costs are also eliminated because no physical location is essential to attract and appeal to passing customers.

The success of Netflix is due to a mail distribution model for DVDs and Blu-ray discs. However, that is just one way to get the videos to the end-user. Online distribution is another way to do it, and there is less reason to resist adopting this model because the sunk costs of the mail-order model are not as high as those of a chain of video stores. There are also fewer employees and no franchisees to deal with. (The challenge GM has faced in reducing the number of franchisees over the years provides another illustration of the inertia such a model can present when a company wishes to change or modify its business model.) Netflix also has an added advantage since the transition to other distribution methods, which are easier to achieve, allows the introduction of alternative viewing media.

In the final analysis, Blockbuster's bankruptcy shows that its business revolved around a narrow definition of its worth. Founded in 1985, Blockbuster defined itself as a chain of video rental stores. The chain store was its raison d'être, but customers did not care about the stores, only the movies. Blockbuster experimented with more prominent locations that offered a variety of in-store entertainment experiences, but that just demonstrated that customers were not interested in spending time in overdone arcades when all they wanted was to. Rent a movie for the evening.

On the other hand, Netflix is defined by the service it provides - the ability to watch a video without leaving the sofa to order it. It is the same value proposition as cable TV's video-on-demand service. However, the customer does not need to subscribe to a cable company. Now that downloading and streaming on the Internet is possible and cost-effective, customers need to subscribe even less. They can use their existing computer and an Internet connection. Smartphones also provide another vehicle for downloading or streaming video. Netflix has chosen to enter the Canadian market with only streaming services, indicating that the outdated mail-order model. The company will likely continue to offer it in the US market for the foreseeable future, but the Internet streaming model is the future of video viewing.

Whether intentional or not, the driving force behind Netflix's distribution method gives it greater flexibility in how it delivers a viewing experience. People know what movies they want to watch. Ordering by mail is one way to do it, just like the Internet or a smartphone.

In 2007, a new commercial strategy, called Total Access, was put in place to counter Netflix. Customers who rent a DVD online through Blockbuster Online can return it to one of the stores and rent a new one for free. For the company, each free rental costs $ 2, but it hopes to attract

new customers to make up for the losses. The strategy worked well enough that Netflix felt threatened and approached Blockbuster for a proposal to buy out the online rental portion of the company. However, the intervention of a member of the Board of Directors of Blockbuster who felt that the company had lost too much money through the program led to the replacement of CEO John Antioco by James Keyes, which put an end to the Netflix proposal. On June 17, 2007, Blockbuster announced that they are embarking on the rental of Blu-Ray discs rather than HD DVDs.

In September 2010, the chain went into compulsory liquidation, converting the bulk of its debt into shares. The company then had 6,500 stores, including 4,000 in the United States.

The channel was taken over in March 2011 by the company Dish (Echostar), a satellite broadcasting operator, which intends to develop its VOD service by closing a thousand stores and announcing sellingRent satellite subscriptions in stores that will remain open.

In the summer of 2018, the last Brazilian Blockbuster store closed its doors. On March 31, 2019, the last Blockbuster store in Australia, located in Morley, and the last two stores in Alaska, closed in turn.

As of March 2019, only one Blockbuster store remains in operation in the United States, located in Bend, Oregon. However, two Blockbuster stores remain in operation in Florence, Italy, but Dish has no connection. Indeed, the owner of the two stores did business before the takeover by Dish, with a company now dissolved to use the mark.

In the end, maybe Blockbuster was meant to be what Netflix is today, given that they were the biggest brand in movie rentals and had the means to run an industrial Revolution. Furthermore, they persisted in clinging to the brick-and-mortar stores and the lucrative late fees of the old business model. They have failed to keep the business changing along with technology and new consumer behavior.

It is debatable, and perhaps a little unfair, to say that their biggest mistake was to turn down Netflix. Looking back, we know that signing this deal would have given them the new blood to innovate in their already big business, and if that had happened, maybe the color of online streaming would not be red like that today, but rather blue and yellow.

Chick-fil-A vs. LGBTQ

Chick-fil-A is one of the American fast-food restaurants whose specialty is chicken sandwiches. S. Truett Cathy opened the doors to the first Chick-fil-A restaurant in 1967 in Atlanta, Georgia. Since then, Chick-fil-A has grown to be one of the largest privately held restaurant chains in the nation (Graves, 1999).

In 2012, Dan Cathy, Truett’s son, had an interview with the Baptist Press in which Cathy said that he believes in the “biblical definition of the family unit,” or in other words, he only believes that marriage should be between a man and a woman only.

As Chick-fil-A CEO, Dan Cathy also reported as one of the highest donors for the National Christian Charitable Foundation (NFC), known as one of the largest charities in the United States (US) and has thousands of organizations under its foundation. This foundation is one of the organizations that fight against legislation to protect LGBTQ rights and strongly disagree with the Equality Act. Even further, it also supports the attempt to ban transgender athletes from youth sports.

In the US, same-sex marriage is a highly charged social issue that is highly controversial and includes some of the most divisive concerns in society. Taking sides

on social issues is guaranteed to upset the other sides (Coombs, 2013).

According to the New York Times (2012), Small protests and their position have swelled and receded over the past couple of years, but recently the battle has spilled into the halls of city governments and the presidential campaign. Carly McGehee, a New Yorker, decided to stage a same-sex kiss-in on Aug. 3, urging gays and lesbians to show up at the company's 1,600 restaurants around the country in protest.

After getting many backlashes, Chick-fil-A tried to fix the issue through a statement published on its Facebook page. This statement then became massively viral and set off a whole new controversy. The statement is as follows:

"The Chick-fil-A culture and service tradition in our restaurants is to treat every person with honor, dignity, and respect – regardless of their belief, race, creed, sexual orientation, or gender. Our mission is simple: to serve great food, provide genuine hospitality and have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A."

In 2014, Cathy had an interview with the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and had regretted what he said. After years of facing numerous protests from the LGBTQ activists, Chick-fil-A finally decided to stop their funding to the charities in 2019.

The culture of an organization is a broad reflection of its corporate attitudes, values and beliefs, and of the ways in which it works and behaves (Urde, 2013). The problem of Chick-fil-A was that they were not behaving according to their corporate culture. The board attitudes do not reflect corporate's mission in bringing positive impact to all people related to Chick-fil-A. As Chick-fil-A's CEO, Cathy also made a fatal move for his company by doing acts that neglect the company's brand identity and commitments or promises to society.

Yahoo! vs Google

Jerry Yang and David Filo are the men behind Yahoo!. It was founded in 1994 and became one of the pioneers of the Internet. Since the launching of its Web portal, the company has overgrown and offers many other services and features such as search engine Yahoo!, Yahoo! Mail, Yahoo! News, and Yahoo! Finance, to name a few. Yahoo! succeeded in establishing its position as a complete Web portal.

As stated in Medium (2019), Yahoo! is a direct competitor of the industry leaders Lycos, Excite, and America Online. In 1998, Yahoo was the most popular starting point for web users then became the most visited site in the world during the early 2000s. In addition, Yahoo! Directory is the most popular search engine with 95 million page views per day, three times more than its main rival.

When the dot com emerged, Yahoo! 's share decreased, and Google started to develop its company. In 2001, Terry Semel became Yahoo! new CEO replacing Timothy Koogle. At the same time, Google hired Eric Schmidt, who is one of the best in the Internet world.

Under Semel's leadership Yahoo! made a few strategic mistakes. In 2002, Yahoo! refused to acquire Google, which is, in fact, the one that has been taking Yahoo! market share. When Yahoo! tried to catch up a year later, it was too late because Google had already ruled the industry.

Yahoo! had the poor tendency to miss many great opportunities throughout its history that could have changed its future (Medium, 2019). In 2006, Yahoo! had the opportunity to acquire Facebook. However, again Semel refused the offer that could change the future of Yahoo!.

As presented in Better Marketing (2020), Microsoft approached Yahoo! to acquire $44.6 billion ($53.6 billion today) in 2008. Microsoft wanted to create a synergy with Yahoo to compete with Google, a rising player in the tech business. However, Yahoo! CEO Jerry Yang rejected the offer, and the deal never happened. Yang thought the offer was under-valued, and Microsoft should have had a better offer for Yahoo!.

In 2012, Yahoo! changed its CEO four times, and the company's vision kept changing as well. There was a CEO who wanted Yahoo! to be the most prominent new media company. The other CEO wanted to make Yahoo! a mobile technology company. This lack of vision is a massive problem because there were no clear directions and prevented Yahoo! from growing.

Yahoo! tried to compete with the big players by offering more than search engines. Yahoo! tried to broaden its services by getting into social media, music, and photo and video sharing. However, in the end, their strategies never lived up to their expectations and Yahoo! lost its value very quickly.

According to Urde (2013), the corporate's mission and vision, the corporate culture, and various competencies are the bedrock of the internal component of the corporate brand identity. Therefore it is difficult for a brand to succeed if they do not have a clear vision for their future.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research paper has been designed in order to investigate if researchers and scientists have supported the purpose that brands lose control over their identity due to internal actions or lack of actions when needed. This research paper also carried out several case studies in order to confirm whether or not the erosion of the identity is due to a lack of action by the board management. The second aim of our survey was to understand how internal branding is starting to become a key element in employee engagement practices.

From the literature review, it can be understood that there are four vital aspects of corporate brand identity. Those aspects are corporate vision, mission, core values, and corporate culture. The four aspects need to work in conjunction and align with one another. If the company neglects one of the essential aspects, there might be the risk of them losing their brand identity.

Furthermore, our investigation concerning the cases study has led to the conclusion that a brand without a clear vision of its future, a brand that does not behave according to the corporate culture or an absence of decision concerning a new competitor driven a company to lose of their identity and also impacted the brand and the customers at the same time.

In the second part of our research paper, from the experience of people interviewed, we found a growing trend of companies capitalizing on the competitive advantage obtained by ensuring a healthy brand identity culture from the qualitative response we have received. Forward-thinking and strategic planning on how identity can be defined and further used as an engagement tool becomes standard practice. By analyzing the qualitative input, we can observe a direct correlation between the strength of the brand identity and employee engagement, which most often than not stands at the core of business performance. Consequently, potential factors that could erode brand identity have to be analyzed and embedded into the strategic planning of Human resources professionals.

Limitations and Further Research

Our research paper was motivated by a deep personal interest in the topic and the contribution of managers working in the Human Resource sector to understand the importance of brand identity.

However, this approach is limited by many factors that could bring more accuracy to our findings:

- The first factor of limitation is the relatively poor number of academic surveys on internal reasons for losing brand identity.
- The second limitation is related to the empirical investigation, applying a qualitative approach to our survey has certainly allowed us to confront theoretical evidence and experiences on the internal losing brand identity but weakness lies in the lack of responses that refer to the general opinion on understanding internal reasons for losing brand identity.
- The third factor is also related to our empirical investigation, adding a scientific approach would have brought more quantifiable data in order to include a comparative analysis of internal reasons for losing identity and external reasons for losing identity.

Even if our research paper is based on a qualitative approach and the sample of respondents is small, the collection of data through this method was enough to have a general opinion on the research proposals that have emerged from the literature review. We hope our work might have contributed to the research related to this topic.

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