Corporate Branding

Areas, arenas and approaches

Edited by T C Melewar and S F Syed Alwi



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Typeset in Bembo by Out of House Publishing To my father, Tunku Laksamana Nasir T C Melewar

> To my husband, Jailani S F Syed Alwi

FIGURES

| 4.1 | Sustainable development and nation branding | 65 |
|-----|---|-----|
| 5.1 | Dimensionalities of corporate brand experience | 90 |
| 5.2 | Procedure employed in exploring measurement scale for CBE | 93 |
| 7.1 | Balancing corporate reputation and internal congruence | 138 |
| 9.1 | Measurement model | 178 |
| 0.1 | Chart used in survey feedback session | 203 |
| 1.1 | Interaction effect of corporate brand endorsement and | |
| | information valence on attitude toward the product | 221 |
| 1.2 | Simplified research model adapted from Berens et al. (2005) | 223 |

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TABLES

| 1.1 | Top ten most valuable corporate brands in Europe (2013) | 20 |
|------|---|-----|
| 2.1 | BrandZ most valuable USA corporate brands | 34 |
| 2.2 | Interbrand Best Global USA corporate brands | 35 |
| 5.1 | Definition of the domain of corporate brand experience | 94 |
| 5.2 | Profile of respondents | 95 |
| 5.3 | A summary of EFA for corporate brand experience constructs | 97 |
| 5.4 | New reliability test result for CBE construct | 98 |
| 7.1 | Corporate reputation in PSFs | 142 |
| 8.1 | Comparison of product/service, corporate, destination and place | |
| | branding | 154 |
| 8.2 | A co-creative approach to place branding: key principles | 160 |
| 9.1 | Characteristics of the respondent sample | 177 |
| 9.2 | Constructs and item loadings | 180 |
| 9.3 | Correlations, internal consistency and square root of AVEs | 181 |
| | Results of hypotheses testing | 181 |
| 11.1 | Experimental design by Gürhan-Canli and Batra (2004), | |
| | experiment 2 | 210 |
| 12.1 | Dimensions of corporate identity (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, | |
| | 2006) and related external experts to interview | 240 |

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xvi Contributors

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xviii Contributors

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FOREWORD

It is highly fitting that the publication of *Corporate Branding: Areas, Areas and Approaches*, capably edited by two prominent (and British-based) Malaysian scholars working in the corporate marketing field, Professor T C Melewar and Dr S F Syed Alwi, comes on the twentieth anniversary of the first article on corporate brand management, 'Corporate branding and connoisseurship' (Balmer, 1995).

Adopting distinctive and innovative approaches to the field, this book usefully examines corporate brands from a variety of current and novel perspectives.

As quondam Professor of Corporate Brand/Identity Management at Bradford University School of Management and as someone who has written on, researched and taught corporate brand management since the early 1990s, this contemporary, distinctive and inimitable anthology represents a welcome addition to the corporate brand management opus. I have no doubt this collection anthology will be appreciated by many corporate marketing scholars and, more specifically, by researchers, managers and teachers of corporate brand management.

This book provides much food for thought for the aforementioned since it provides a variety of innovative and thought- provoking perspectives on corporate brands. I have no doubt its pages will be well-thumbed by them.

The remainder of my foreword begins by deliberating on the innovative and distinguishing features of this book; a book which, agreeably, focusses on contemporaneous issues relating to corporate brands and their management.

Building on this, and for the sake of equilibrium, I go on to reflect on the extant and foundational literature on this territory. As such, I have taken the liberty of reflecting on, and marshalling, my own perspectives on the area. In so doing, my aim is to complement the important territory covered in this collection. Such a personal retrospective provides, I hope, a useful counterpoint to the progressive insights adroitly examined in this ably edited collection. I then briefly detail the

importance and opportunities which the field represents and conclude by providing final reflections on the merits of this publication.

So, what is distinctive about this book and what are its strengths?

The first of these strengths are the expertise and experiences of the editors. Both have published empirical research on corporate brands and their management. Moreover, both are respected teachers in the field and Professor Melewar has taught on, for instance, the ground-breaking MSc in Corporate Brand Management and MSc in Applied Corporate Brand Management degree programmes at Brunel University London. Significantly both courses are the first of their kind. Professor Melewar took the lead in designing the first masters degree and I subsequently conceived the applied version of the course. I have no doubt this anthology will be used on this and other, analogous, degrees and taught courses.

The second strength of the book includes the range of topics covered and its distinctive tripartite structure with Part I examining a variety of continental (Asia and Europe) and national (New Zealand and the USA) perspectives; Part II scrutinising different facets of corporate brands including the online environment, business-to-business brands, professional services brands and place branding; and Part III exploring how different methodological approaches (structural equation modelling, case studies, expert interviews and experimental studies) can be marshalled in furthering our understanding of corporate brands.

The contributors represent the final differentiator of this collection. International in scope, all the contributors are known for their work in the domain and include scholars of considerable repute including Russell Abratt, Wim J.L. Elving, Nicholas Ind, Bill Merrilees, Vincent-Wayne Mitchell, Md Nor Othman and Rui Vinhas da Silva to name but a few.

Foundational articles

Now, taking very much a personal perspective, let me reflect on the foundational articles — and what I believe are some of the key verities of corporate brands and their management - which first appeared from the mid 1990s onwards.

Clearly, Professor Melewar and Dr Alwi have advanced our discernment of the corporate brand domain by assembling an impressive group of scholars who provide contemporary perspectives on the domain. It is right to reflect on these advances. However, since the publication coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the first article on corporate brands this foreword allows me the distinct privilege to revisit and reflect on my own work on the territory.

Seemingly, it was my 1995 Journal of General Management article entitled 'Corporate brand and connoisseurship' which both launched and heralded the

corporate brand/corporate brand management as a new field on scholarship and management. In this article I reasoned that corporate brands are of considerable strategic importance and corporate brands are meaningful not only to customers but also to stakeholders and are multidisciplinary in scope. Significantly, the paper argued that employees are of fundamental importance and noted that the corporate brand manager is not the traditional brand manager but is none other than the Chief Executive Officer.

A key theme of my foundational and more recent articles on corporate brands explains the differences between corporate and product brands (Balmer, 2001; Balmer and Gray, 2003) and notes the institutional importance of corporate brands: many corporate brands are highly significant strategic assets and, importantly, they need to be managed as such (Balmer, 2012, 2013). In particular, where organisations follow a corporate brand orientation the corporate brand serves as a centripetal force: a force that both guides and informs an institution's purposes, activities, culture and ethos (Balmer, 2013).

In our research on British Airways we provided a reminder that whereas *legal* ownership of a corporate brand resides with the organisation, the real strength of a corporate brand comes from its emotional ownership by corporate brand stakeholders (Balmer et al., 2009).

Corporate brands: importance and opportunities

A key tenor of this book is the burnishing of the notion that corporate brands are of vital importance and Professor Melewar and Dr Alwi share my evangelical zeal in this regard. Unquestionably, within the corporate marketing domain, corporate brand management has become an increasingly central senior management and organisational-wide concern. This book is testimony of this fact. Certainly, many of the world's most valuable, favourable and influential brands are corporate brands: from Coca Cola to the Catholic Church. Undoubtedly, corporate brands can be an organisation's most precious strategic resource and valued asset. The above being noted, confusion and ambiguity abounds within the territory. Sometimes, for instance, product/service brand analytical frameworks, theories, and strategies are applied to corporate brands which, for me, are rather naive to say the least. Sometimes, too, scholars and management corporate identity management with corporate brand management.

As is to be expected with a nascent area of inquiry – especially an area having a strong marketing pedigree – the focus tends to be on instrumental rather than theoretical imperatives. For this reason, more attention needs to be given to the theoretical foundations of corporate brands (Mukherjee and Balmer, 2006). Certainly, there is scope for the application of well-homed theories from social science. For instance, social identity theory has been applied to corporate brands (Balmer and Liao, 2007), and this resulted in the introduction of the 'corporate brand identification' notion. Notably, this book accommodates and advances both theoretical and instrumental traditions of the area.

Final reflections

This book is well-timed since it comes on the twentieth anniversary of the first article on corporate brands. Corporate Branding: Areas, Areas and Approaches not only provides current standpoints on the territory but also reminds us of the progress and developments within corporate brand scholarship since 1995. The book is testimony of the importance corporate marketing scholars from all parts of the globe now accord to corporate brands and the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches through which corporate brands are studied.

Readers of this book will welcome the insights from leading corporate marketing scholars; the international perspectives proffered; and the diverse methodological standpoints marshalled. Moreover, case study insights ensure that an eye is kept on the needs of managers and students on taught courses. As such, Professor Melewar and Dr Alwi are to be congratulated in bringing this meaningful publication initiative to fruition.

This book is a timely reminder for all of us fortunate enough to research, manage and study in the critically important domain of corporate brand management not only to digest assimilate contemporary advances but also and to re-assimilate and revisit the core precepts of corporate brands. Again, my Malaysian colleagues are to be warmly thanked in designing and delivering a book which is of singular interest.

Read on and enjoy.

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