

CORPORATE BRAND CULTURES

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Статья обобщает точки зрения, рассматривающие бренды организаций – как культурные объединения. Также в статье на примерах известных брендов показывается неотъемлемость брендов от повседневной жизни общества.

Brands, in their various guises, are integral to our everyday existence. As argued by the anthropologist John Sherry, the corporate landscape has become a brandscape (1998). John M. T. Balmer, Professor of Corporate Identity at Bradford School of Management argued that it has increasingly become a corporate brandscape. Consider our most favorite brands or look at the brand valuation lists produced by organizations such as Interbrand and we are likely to discover that they are *corporate* rather than product brands. Increasingly, many of the world's biggest companies - Coca-Cola, Microsoft and IBM - are seen as corporate brands rather than corporate entities (Davies 2004); corporate brands are increasingly being viewed as a vital competent for organizational success and survival.

Of course, a world without brands would be almost unthinkable, as would a world devoid of cultural associations. As marketing scholars have realized for some time the spheres of culture and of branding are inextricably linked. Culture can help us to comprehend brands whereas brands can provide a powerful lens by which to comprehend organizational-related cultures. This helps to explain the utility of the phrase 'brand culture'. It is a notion that is of considerable value to brand managers and scholars alike. As such, brand culture provides a window through which some of the quintessential attributes of brands may be discerned. No more so is this the case than with corporate brands where brand culture is three-dimensional in that it is found not only within and outside the organization but also across organizations.

Corporate brand culture is important in several regards: it needs to underpin the communicated corporate brand values, its covenant and, importantly, its activities and behavior. Adherents to a corporate brand, whether they are customers, employers, investors, etc. are, de facto, members of a brand community or network: a community that encapsulates the values of a brand and a community whose actions also help to define a brand community.

Culture in context. The notion of a single company culture is a very attractive one. It is based on the notion that organizational members have a similar comprehension of the organization's mission and ethos (Deshpande and Webster 1989). However, there is a growing realization that organizations consist of multiple subcultures. Such subcultures may be corporate but may also be professional or 'national'. They can be in the ascendant, descendant and may be moribund (Balmer and Wilson 1998). Just as issues of complexity and

multiplicity characterize the identity literature the same appears to be true for issues associated with brand culture as the following section illustrates.

Examples of corporate brand communities:

The power of brand communities is expressed in a multiplicity of ways. A key aspect of brand culture and community is that it transcends the traditional internal/external divide of organizations and may even span groups of organizations. Brand culture is therefore not only a relevant notion for customers but also employees, prospective employees, investors, business partners and may also accommodate governments and the media good example of this is Marks & Spencer which, until quite recently, eschewed advertising: it did not need to. Not only were customers and employees proud advocates of the corporate brand but so were its suppliers and a former British Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher). A similar phenomenon can be found in relation to the Harley Davidson brand in the USA. Clearly, an organization such as Marks & Spencer derived real benefit from having such a strong brand culture which manifested itself not only in terms of loyalty from customers and staff but also resulted in considerable savings in terms of marketing and corporate communications. Amazingly, the company did not accept credit cards and thereby saved on the commission paid to companies such as Visa and MasterCard; for many years this did not seem to concern customers.

One important aspect of corporate brand culture is how it has a value to multiple stakeholder groups. This can be seen with regard to a number of well-known British corporate brands that were built on philanthropic and Quaker foundations such as Cadbury and Rowntree. The wholesome family values of these brands not only had meaning to customers in terms of product brand messages built around health and goodness but also to employees with such corporations emphasizing worker welfare and education, health and temperance (Pavitt 2000) [Brand culture / 2006 / p. 44].

Consider, Coca-Cola's corporate brand, which is as much about Americana as it is about fun refreshing beverages and, even, Christmas. It is a mix of corporate as well as national cultures. The Danish monarchy (as a corporate brand) would appear to be a fusion of national culture as well as the generic (and international) identity of royalty. The Virgin brand is a fusion not only of contemporary and youthful notions of British identity but also is imbued with the identity of its founder, whereas British Airways appears to draw on more traditional and timeless notions of Britishness.