

THE SECRETS OF WINNING BRANDS

Brands are arguably the greatest assets of any organization. Organizations that have strong brands can deliver higher shareholder value, through the cash flows that are generated.

The million dollar question often asked is, What makes a winning brand? Do successful brands have certain characteristics that are distinctly different to other not so successful brands.

IMM organized a ONE-day seminar entitled "The Secrets of Winning Brands" by Marketing Guru Prasanna Perera from Sri Lanka for the benefit of its members and others in the marketing fraternity.

In this brief article, Prasanna endeavours to share the secrets of successful brands, based on frequently asked questions.

1. Can you provide examples of winning global brands?

There are many examples. However, brands such as Coca Cola, HP, Microsoft, Gillette, Apple, Google, Amazon, Malaysian Airlines and Tiger Beer come readily to mind.

2. In your opinion has Asia been successful in building strong global brands?

Unfortunately Asia lags behind the Americas and Europe in brand building. The problem with Asian brand owners is that they are reluctant to invest in

branding building and consider brand building as a tactical activity. There are of course exceptions. Asia has produced strong brands such as Malaysian Airlines, (MH), Singapore Airlines (SIA), Air Asia, Tiger, Proton, Tata, Maruti Suzuki, Sony, Panasonic, LG, Samsung, China Mobile, Toyota, Canon, Nissan, Honda, Titan and Sharp.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



PRASANNA PERERA

Prasanna started his marketing career in 1983 with the Browns Group. Thereafter, he held several Senior Management appointments in Marketing, at Darley

Butler & Company, Singer Sri Lanka Ltd., Hemas Group, John Keells Holdings and Tetra Pak Sri Lanka, spanning a period of over 20 years.

Prasanna is a Fellow Member and Chartered Marketer of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, U.K. a Director of the Canadian Institute of Marketing, a Member of the Singapore Institute of Management, Marketing Institute of Singapore, Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing and the Sri Lanka Institute of Directors.

He holds a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the Postgraduate Institute of Management, a Postgraduate Diploma in Finance and Business Administration from the Institute of Chartered Accountants Sri Lanka and a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from

the Chartered Institute of Marketing in the U.K. He is also a Doctoral Student in Business Administration at the University of South Australia.

Prasanna is also a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing and is on the visiting faculty of several Universities and Professional Institutes, both for Postgraduate and Undergraduate degree programmes. He is also the Chief Examiner for Marketing at the Institute of Bankers Sri Lanka and Certified Management Accountants (CMA), Sri Lanka.

Further, Prasanna is a Senior Marketing Consultant for several organizations and a much sought after Marketing and Sales Trainer. He won the "Marketer of the Year" Award in 2001.



3. What are the characteristics of winning brands?

Continuous investment in brand equity building, together with astute positioning. Further, efforts are made to keep the brand relevant to consumers changing needs. Brand extensions are carried out after careful evaluation, to ensure that the brand values are maintained. Top management commitment towards brand building is a requirement. The CEO should be the key brand ambassador / brand champion. (Examples would be Richard Branson, Michael Dell, Steve Jobs, Tony Fernandes, Bill Gates, Indra Nooyi, Jeff Bezos and Jack Welsh).

4. Who should be responsible for brand building?

Ideally the CEO should be the key driver. At an operational level, Brand Managers would be the custodians of brands. A Brand Manager needs to nurture the brand, through carefully crafted strategies.

5. How can brands overcome the discount mania of cash trapped customers?

Strong brands never need to be discounted, since consumers have faith and trust the brand. When disposable income of consumers are limited, they tend to rely on the established brands,

rather than experiment with the unknown. (Available at lower prices). My advise to brand builders is not to discount prices, but to carry out VAM (value added marketing). Examples of VAM would be loyalty programmes, competitions, extended warranties etc.,

6. Are there more successful consumer brands rather than industrial (B2B) brands?

In fact there are many successful industrial brands. For example, Komatsu, Caterpillar, Makita, Bosch, Black and Decker, Intel, GE, Xerox, Siemens, Terasaki, BP, and Shell. However, the glamour is in consumer brands. Hence, the frequent mention of strong consumer brands.

7. Has Malaysia branded itself in the correct manner?

Definitely YES. Malaysia has positioned itself based on the slogan "Truly Asia." In fact "MH" is also clever branding from a tourism standpoint. Positioning Malaysia is one aspect ; delivering is another. Truly Asia is really reflected through the cuisine, fashion, culture and lifestyle of Malaysia.

8. Any excellent branding examples from your country (Sri Lanka)?

Dilmah is a good example of a strong brand, with origins in Sri Lanka. Dilmah is truly a global brand and a leading player in the value added tea industry. Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) is another good example, specially in cricket playing countries. "Sri Lankan Airlines" is also a reasonably strong brand.

9. Any advise to up and coming Brand Managers and Brand Champions?

Believe in your brand to deliver long-term shareholder value. Be patient and remember that brand building is a long term activity and not a quick fix. Carry out continuous market research and modify the brand accordingly. Brand extensions should be carried out after careful evaluation, or else brand values may be destroyed.



Seminar participants with the speaker Prasanna Perera (centre).