

TRICKS OF BRAND ECO-POSITIONING



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Permanent environmental deterioration and following changes in customer perceptions, expectations and advantages make companies to modify their strategic view and business strategies. In order to ensure sustainable development companies are to become "green" thus to gain competitive advantages and customer preferences brands are to be perceived as "green". "Green" marketing becomes a key business strategy providing for the achievement of both of the goals by finding for businesses the answers to the questions "how to be green" and "how to seem green". A lot of theoretical substantiations of "green" marketing potential successfulness are presented in literature; however the practice is not so optimistic. Consumers become more and more demanding and innovative marketing tools are to be applied to gain their confidence and loyalty. The paper concerns the problems of insufficient instrumentality of contemporary "green" marketing and aims at overcoming of this problem by developing the efficient techniques of "green" marketing realization based on so called "marketing tricks". Marketing tricks are defined as standardized successful marketing decisions in form of certain actions towards certain objects of marketing complex. Generalization of "green" practices of successful world brands made it possible to identify such tricks in the sphere of "green" marketing. Analysis of the distinguished tricks enabled to divide them into several groups different in methods, aims and results. Key findings of this investigation concern the tricks aiming at creation and support of the ecologically attractive image of brand value constituents for which a term "eco-positioning tricks" was proposed. These tricks were classified by an object and means of eco-positioning; for several objects such as product, process and brand name the developed tricks are presented. Identified marketing tricks adapted to the specificity of business can help companies to succeed in profitable implementation of green marketing principles in everyday business practices, save time for development of appropriate marketing decisions with gain in efficiency.

Keywords: *marketing tricks, green branding, sustainable development, eco-positioning.*

Introduction

Permanent intensifying of global ecological problems brings more and more people to realize consequences of these problems as personal risk, threat to own existence. Hereupon businesses have to consider the ecological dimensions of their activities presenting as more and more "green" to increase the consumer value of their proposal and gain customer preferences. Effective realization of such changes in business image and real activity requires reformation of traditional complex of marketing what seems impossible without bringing into picture innovative marketing instruments including marketing techniques ("marketing tricks" [1]) being in fact nothing else than certain specific means of achievement some specified aims of enterprise by execution of certain typical actions towards certain typical

objects.

1. Green Marketing: State-of-Art and Problems to be solved

"Green" marketing is defined as "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way" [2]. "Green" marketing has arisen up in response to ecological problems sharpening and growth of environmental consciousness of society and passed in its development several stages, from ecological marketing concentrated on compensation of ecological harm up to sustainable marketing including all types of activities supporting sustainable development and sustainable consumption [3]. Realizing the environmental shift of consumer preferences business attempts to capitalize on it to ensure sustainable growth

and applies the corresponding concepts in its strategies. "Green" marketing is viewed both as a type of marketing concerned with marketing of green products and a marketing philosophy espousing the view that business should aim not only in satisfying its customers but in realizing the ecological interests of the society as a whole [2]. As "greenness" becomes a significant constituent of brand value "green" marketing becomes the means of this constituent value increase. "Green" marketing is based on a classic paradigm a few P (4P, 5P or more P depending on branch) [3], however its successful implementation requires innovative instruments able to provide the adequate perception of ecological efforts of the brand and advantages of its products. Demand for such instruments is evident, however the studies peculiarly miss their description, interpretation and ways of application confining to odd examples of successful experience of some enterprises. Hereupon the identification, analysis and systematization of "green" marketing instruments in form of marketing tricks (i.e. in form of certain repetitive actions towards certain objects of marketing complex) intended for achieving the "green" marketing purposes seems to be expedient.

2. Objectives and Methodology

The aim of this work was to reveal effective techniques used in business practice to position company as "green" and to present them in a generalized form of "eco-positioning" tricks.

Publications concerning "green" marketing activities of organizations, local and global "green" scores of companies, web sites of leading "green" corporations were used as an empiric base of the study undertaken. A survey of Interbrand Report 2013 [4] on Best Global Green Brands was conducted to evaluate efficiency of tools used by companies in their "green" brand positioning.

3. Research results and discussion

3.1. Eco-positioning Tricks

According to models and experiences reported by J.Ottman [5] any marketing techniques aiming at creation and support of the ecologically attractive image of brand value constituents can be considered as eco-

positioning techniques. Study of successful marketing decisions [2-4] revealed several kinds of such techniques more or less frequently applied by leading "green" companies. Analysis of the cases resulted in techniques generalization and formulation of appropriate eco-positioning tricks. These tricks were divided after the means of positioning into the tricks of forming the "green" image of brand through: 1) eco-friendliness of value proposal (eco-positioning of product); 2) eco-friendliness of method of value proposal creation (eco-positioning of manufacturing); 3) "greenness" of workspaces of value proposal creation or sail (eco-positioning of place); 4) "greenness" of methods of proposition and consumption of value proposals (eco-positioning of method); 5) appraisal of the brand as "greener" in comparison to others after results of ratings, contests etc.; 6) keeping customers aware of ecological orientation of business; 7) demonstration of environmental consciousness by participation in socially / environmentally attractive initiatives; 8) bringing the business partners in the ecologically responsible way of doing business; 9) influence on consumer perception of brand ecological initiatives; 10) bringing consumers in green initiatives; 11) strengthening the impact of tricks of previous groups on consumer. Every group contains several tricks; some of them can be simultaneously referred to different groups: for example, the "trick of green sub-brand" can be examined both as a trick of keeping customers aware of ecological orientation of business and as a trick of eco-positioning of method of promotion of the value proposition.

The revealed tricks differ both in frequency of application and in efficiency; most common of the tricks of first four groups are set below.

3.2. Tricks of Value Proposal Eco-positioning

These tricks exploit the techniques of rational green branding and are based mainly on real functional environmental product benefits, converting them into a basic difference and competitive advantage. They aim to build "green" brand image by delivering lots of convincing and easy perceivable data about product environmental advantages. The examples of tricks of the group are given below.

“Particularly “green” commodity” trick.

Proposal of a product positioned as particularly eco-friendly and eco-attractive due to its composition, origin, technology of production or exploitation. E.g., Samsung proposes ecological models of mobile telephones (W510, F268) in corps from a bioplastic missing details from heavy metals usually used at making of mobile devices.

“The “greenest” product” trick. Proposal of a product positioned as the most eco-friendly and eco-attractive due to best functional environmental characteristics in its commodity group or subgroup. E.g., Volkswagen brings to market Eco Up! vehicle hailed as “the most efficient natural gas car in Germany” by AutoEvolution.com because of using only 0,1 pounds of compressed natural gas per mile.

“Green product line” trick. Creation and proposal of a whole product line of eco-friendly products. E.g., H&M proposes eco-chic Conscious Collection from certified organic cotton, Xerox offers Eco, Renaissance and Green Line devices assembled from trade-in details of former models.

“Green assortment” trick. Development and promotion of lots of ecologically attractive modifications of the products in ecologically attractive packing. E.g., LG Electronics presented "ecological variants" for all models of its mobile telephones using paint on soy-bean basis and packing made out of secondary paper.

“Planned growth of “green” assortment” trick. Permanently announced planned expansion of brand "green assortment". E.g., Samsung has doubled in 2013 the number of eco-friendly products within its product lines. Ford plans to increase the number of models with EcoBoost engine from 5 to 10 by 2015.

“Totally “green” assortment” trick. Strengthening the green brand image through the gain in environmental characteristics of all brand products. E.g., today all parts of Nokia phones are recyclable, and every model has an eco-passport.

“Planned growth of “green” product share” trick. Permanently announced planned growth of "green" product share in total assortment. In 2013 Philips’ “green” product sales grew up to 45% of its total sales from 39 % in 2011; a target of 50 % is planned to be reached in 2015.

Tricks of “local” or “total refusal of harmful substances”. Hyped-up removal of certain harmful substances from materials used in all or some products of brand. E.g., since 2009 not a single Apple’s product contains such toxic substances, as PVC, arsenic and mercury. ZARA promised to eliminate all hazardous chemicals from their supply chain and products by 2020.

“Green passport” trick. Providing the products with data proving their environmental attributes. Every Nokia model has an “Eco” profile, with “Eco Hero” devices indicating its greenest products.

“Green packaging” trick. Emphasizing the brand “greenness” through the use of packing from natural materials missing harmful substances. Dell pilots a mushroom-derived product as a packaging material for its servers. It functions like Styrofoam but is organic, biodegradable and compostable.

“Green certification” trick. Emphasizing the brand “greenness” through eco-certification of its products. Samsung smartphone Galaxy S4 became the first to achieve TCO certification, an international standard for environmental design and socially responsible manufacturing

3.3. Eco-positioning of Manufacturing Processes

This group contains a lot of tricks of functional green branding based on the real ecological benefits of brand productive processes as well as tricks of emotional green branding that exploit emotional attractiveness of certain processes or actions for consumers. In addition to obvious tricks of reduction of emissions, resource saving, use of secondary materials, refusal of harmful substances etc. we’ve distinguished the below listed tricks.

“Self-recycling” trick. Acceptance to processing and utilization of own commodities after expiration date. E.g., Apple annually accepts more than 10 000 tone of electronic garbage (telephones, notebooks etc.) on processing. A positive effect of the trick increases due to the gain from conscious participation of a consumer in the process.

“Hyped-up recycling” trick. Emphasizing of “greenness” of products as a result of secondary raw materials use. E.g., since 2008 on Nokia USB plugs it is written: "I’m made from

processed plastic" or "Before I was ... a spare".

"Component reutilization" trick. Attracting attention to the reuse of used components in new products. Xerox widely reuses parts of out of date and out of service copiers and promotes assembled from them models as Renaissance line under the slogan "Time-proved".

"Trade-in" trick. Selling new commodities in return for old ones with a discount.

"Totally secondary packing" trick. Producing or use of packing exceptionally from secondary raw materials. 36 % of consumers are ready to change food brand using recycled carton as a packing [2].

"Multiuse packing" trick. Emphasizing of resource saving effect of reuse of package or tare. Toyota kept millions of pounds of cardboard and wood by using reusable metal containers for shipping and distribution.

"Tare elimination" trick. Elimination of retail containers on the intermediate stages of production. Coca-Cola's pumping syrup directly from tank instead of plastic saves 68 million pound per year.

"The greenest manufacturer" trick. Positioning of brand as the "greenest" producer with minimal consumption of resources and harmful wastes in technological processes. Volkswagen factory in Tennessee is reported as a "greenest car factory" in the world; Intel tops the EPA's list of firms dedicated to renewable energy use and generation.

3.4. *"Green brand" image building by public appraisal of the brand as "greener" than others*

The tricks are based on the joint use of rational and emotional grounds for perception of brand as "green" and actively exploit the techniques of marketing influence on consumer opinions, forming his tastes and preferences. The typical representatives of such tricks are stated below.

"Green brand" trick. Positioning of company or brand as particularly ecologically attractive and responsible. British Petroleum advertises itself as a "company of green energy", but not as petroleum company; LG Electronics comes forward as a company of electronic "green" goods.

"The greenest brand" trick. Positioning of

brand as the "greenest" in the branch with confirmation of it by rating. After Greenpeace ratings Sony is the world most eco-friendly producer of electronics.

Trick of brand self-positioning as a "green leader". Forming in consumer mind an image of leading eco-friendly company by complex use of the system of marketing communications and public relations. Dell declares itself as "the planet most eco-friendly technological company", confirming it by permanent realization of measures on reduction of CO₂ emissions due to the use of energy saving equipment and green electric power, promotion of forest-saving campaign "Plant a Tree for Me" etc.

"Local "green" leadership" trick. Creation of the image of the most eco-friendly company within certain area or certain aspects of eco-activities. Nokia has set up the world's biggest voluntary recycling network—with 5,000 collection points in 100 countries—and aims to lead the mobile industry both in the removal of harmful compounds from handsets and the introduction of biomaterials.

"Local eco-rating" trick. Trick aims at influencing the customer's opinion by evaluation of brand activity after certain eco-indices within certain area and/or sphere of activity. E.g., in Los-Angeles ecological initiatives of 23 fast food networks were appraised by criteria of ecological accounting, deliveries, processing of garbage, eco-friendliness of premises, reception of used package and introduction of eco-friendly commodities.

"Global eco-rating" trick. Creation of the image of the eco-friendly company by comparison with others by the set of indexes taking into account both functional achievements in sustainable development and perception of these efforts by consumers, with establishing the place in rating, e.g., rating "Best Global Green Brands" [4], EPA etc.

"Own green mark" trick. Development of brand's own means of eco-labeling and informing of consumers about environmental benefits of brand products. E.g., Timberland worked out special "Green index" labels for its products. They expose the environmental harm of manufacturing, composition and recyclability of the product.

“Green standards” trick. Permanent informing of consumer about adherence to and exceeding of the environmental standards, as it is done by LG, Dell or Intel. If production, premises or products are ecologically certified, the trick transforms to a **“green certification”** trick.

“Green pioneer” trick. Self-positioning of the brand as a pioneer in being environmentally responsible by initialization of novel eco-activities or being first in achieving some green standards. Dell was the first to ban e-waste export, while Apple usually stresses its leadership in many sustainable practices. E.g., Apple is the only company in the tech industry whose entire product line exceeds US Energy Star standard.

3.5. Keeping customers aware of ecological orientation of business

The tricks are mainly based on psychological influence on perception of the brand sustainable activities and aim at overcoming of a gap between real effectiveness of these activities and consumer perception of them.

“Planned environmental responsibility” trick. Producing an image of "firm fighter for sustainability" by permanent informing of society not only about present but also about planned achievements. The trick acquires form of **"long-, middle- or short-term aims"** and **“key planned achievements”** tricks depending on object of planning. Sony declares to be on the Road to Zero – its long-term goal of achieving a zero environmental footprint throughout the lifecycle of its consumer electronics by 2050. The milestones of the Road include developing eco-friendly bio-batteries; developing plastic that contains more than 99 percent recycled materials etc.

“Greenness visualization” trick. Providing the consumers both with data proving brand commitment to “green” principles and with means to test the “greenness” of brand products. Caterpillar has disclosed the life cycle assessment in product design; Canon tries to affect every aspect of the product lifecycle with developments like the Ecology Information Plug-in, which makes environmental impact during product use “visible”.

“Total eco-responsibility” trick. Introduction of internal eco-accounts in all

departments of company. Microsoft has achieved its carbon neutral goal by charging a carbon fee, making each of Microsoft’s 14 business divisions across 110 countries responsible for their carbon emissions from energy consumption and business air travel.

“Green mission” trick. Including of environmentally significant aims in mission and strategy of company development. “Living and working together for the common good,” or “Kyosei,” has been Canon’s corporate philosophy since 1988; Danone’s goal is “bringing healthy food to as many people as possible”.

“Green design paradigm” trick. Embedding the principles of sustainable development on the earliest stages of new product development and manufacturing. E.g., today Ford is building only eco-conscious vehicles [4].

“Green business strategy” trick. Declaring the strategy of sustainable development as a constituent or grounds of brand business strategy. Ford permanently emphasizes sustainability as part of its business strategy; EfficientDynamics is declared to be a backdrop to BMW’s future.

“Making up for ecological harm” trick. Conducting of ecological measures aiming at indemnity for environmental harm of brand activities. Dell compensates 20% of its carbon

“Business eco-friendliness monitoring” trick. Permanent public tracking of environmental performance of the company with doing necessary amendments. Xerox strives to take the “excess waste” out of all products and services, and all internal and external activities using a digital sustainable dashboard that highlights the company’s performance across the board, from workplace to customers, and from communities to businesses.

“New green sub-brand” trick. Creation of new brand, new trade mark for promoting the “green” goods in order to overcome the consumers mistrust to “greenness” of products of well-known brands. Researches show that active “green” consumers (“green shoppers”) demonstrate less loyalty to the old brands and are more loyal to new "green" brands [4], e.g. Green Mama perfumery.

“Brand’s green umbrella” trick. The trick

consists in obligatory introduction of a "green" constituent to brand advertising campaigns in order to create in consumer mind an idea that the company's is caring for environment. In 2009 Kia launched EcoDynamics brand to represent its eco- friendly technology of Active Eco System. That was effective in leaving a lasting impression in the minds of consumers and simplified selection of eco-friendly vehicles. Today, Kia's entire line-up of electric vehicles and hybrids is marketed under the EcoDynamics umbrella.

Conclusion

Sustainability has created immense opportunities for business but realization of these opportunities needs to overcome the discrepancy between declarative adherence to

sustainable development principles and procedural inability of their efficient implementation. The green branding strategies of leading world brands seem to be rather similar in spite of great difference in ways and successfulness of their implementation which depend to great extent on applied innovative marketing techniques. On the basis of findings of this study, companies can succeed in implementation of basic principles of "green" marketing in their everyday business practices achieving appropriate economic effect. Identified marketing tricks adapted to the specificity of business are to become an integral part of marketing tools of any company. Further investigations aiming at identification of other tricks and way of their implementation are advisable.

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