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MANAGEMENT OF BRANDS: CAN NEW TYPE OF BRAND EXIST?

Abstract: *If green brands can successfully exist by addressing environmental issues in developed countries where environmental consciousness is high, is there a potential for the existence of a newly created CSR brand that aims to deliver socio-economic benefits in the developing countries? The current paper examined the potential of newly created CSR brand that aims to provide socio-economic benefit in the societies where socio-economic problems prevail over environmental. New CSR Brand potential was evaluated by metrics developed by GFK research agency – Brand Potential Index. Within-subjects experiment was utilized in evaluating newly created CSR brand against a regular brand. Anonymous 273 responses were received in an online setting. Developed hypotheses were tested in the scope of one-way ANOVA, independent t-test and frequency scores. Results indicate an overall sound potential for the new CSR brand type to exist in developing countries successfully. Further findings suggest some significant differences between the new CSR brand in comparison to regular. Additionally, gender, income and concept clarity level was identified to significantly affect the preference of the new brand type, as opposed to age and education, where no significant impact was found. As there is no name for the new CSR brand type, it is suggested to name it a yellow brand – as yellow is the color for positive emotions and hope. Current study findings will be beneficial for business people and brand managers who are searching for differentiated brand positioning ideas for consumer products in developing countries that can make a difference in people's lives.*

Key words: management of brands, yellow brand, CSR brand, CSR, brand positioning, develops new brand.

Language: English

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Introduction

Exploration of CSR benefits and brand development practices had led to an insight that new, authentic and potentially sustainable brands can be created in developing countries as a result of integrating *socio-economic benefit*¹ of CSR into the main brand values. Possibly, this new type of CSR brand may sustain in the market by addressing some *socio-economic issues*, thereby doing good to the society. *CSR in developed countries*. CSR has emerged in developed countries² where issues related to environment protection, human rights and others global problems have gathered large public attention.

Companies were blamed to be the primary means that cause above-mentioned problems, as cars/factories polluted air, plastic harmed the earth, unsatisfactory working conditions violated human right laws, etc. As a result, companies have recognized importance of taking initiatives in solving global problems and acting responsible for their business operations. Interestingly, companies saw the payback of acting responsible and doing good to the society, which in turn extended reasons for adopting CSR by companies. Moreover, CSR was identified to grant better sustainability to the business in the long run. Thereafter, CSR and sustainability has become

¹Under assumption that CSR delivers three type of benefits: economic, social, environmental

²US, Western Europe and Australia mainly

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synonymous. Nowadays many companies have been integrating CSR into their business models as well as brands. Moreover, it is worth noting that a research carried out by Neff (2010) has revealed that even though environmental consciousness has increased, purchase of green (environmentally products) has declined (UK market only) Furthermore, another research has found that during economic downturns consumers forget about environmental issues and switch instead to socio-economic (Schneider,2010). Based on above research facts it can be concluded that “green brands” have the highest potential to be sold in developed countries where environmental consciousness is high, and where insignificant socio-economic issues exist. *CSR in developing countries:* Businesses in developing countries try to maximize profit, while paying little attention to CSR (Okafor et al. 2008). Whereas, the amount and type of CSR carried out highly depends on the circumstances of the country, which are influenced by social, economic, political as well as legal factors (Pohl, M. and Tolhurst, N., 2010). Role of CSR in developing countries can be significantly larger since government as well as regulatory frameworks are weak (ibid). Therefore, majority of companies perceive CSR as corporate philanthropy, which addresses socio-economic issues that exist in the country (Amaeshi et al. 2006). Similarly to the findings of Amaeshi et al. 2006, it can be stated that in Uzbekistan, CSR is perceived as corporate philanthropy as well. For example, British American Tobacco in Uzbekistan supports the local communities by launching social investment projects (BAT.uz, 2016). Whereas, large oil company – Lukoil, does charity and sponsorship in sports, education, and culture related fields. There is no company that actively communicates its CSR activities and tries to make company image greener. Moreover, general research shows that environmental consciousness is quite low among population. Therefore, it is evident that in Uzbekistan, local companies have no sound rational to develop green brands that aim to benefit the environment. Instead, potential is becoming evident for brands, which might benefit population socially as well as economically. In other words, new brand type may deliver socio-economic benefit to consumers, and society in general. If “green brand” can be successfully sold in developed countries, an idea emerged of integrating socio-economic benefits of CSR into brand values and creating new type of a brand. This potential new brand type is proposed to be named “yellow brand”, which to be evaluated empirically in current study. Figure 1 above summarizes main ideas of CSR benefits in developed and developing countries. Moreover, it shows the path of creation of green as well as yellow brands. Current study aims to test new brand type in context of Uzbekistan. Literature review: Care for society can be deployed through various CSR practices. There is great number of researches carried

out on importance and benefits of CSR (Porter and Kramer, 2006; Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Garriga and Melé, 2013). In general, there are two opposing views. First, implies that CSR has **positive** impact on company reputation (Ellen et al. 2006 ,Peloza, 2006; McWilliams, 2006; Lai, 2010) as well as brand equity (Becker-Olsen, 2006; Lai, 2010; Torres, et al., 2012). Second view has proven **negative** impact of CSR, as some empirical researches have shown that CSR activities do not necessarily result in good reputation (Yoon et al., 2006; Kang, et al. 2010) and do not directly impact on purchase intention (Öberseder, 2011). Taken collectively empirical researches, it was determined that “**altruistic and strategic**” motivation of company has resulted in positive impact, whereas, **egoistic and reactive** approach had resulted in negative impact on customers (Baumgarth and Binckebanck, 2015). Moreover, Sen and Bhattacharya (2004) have identified that there is significant **heterogeneity** in consumer reactions to CSR, as “one size does not fit all”. Additionally, the authors, have identified that purchase intention increases when the quality of the product is high, and when the consumer is not paying extra for socially responsible brand. Thus, quality of the product will be highlighted as primary functional benefit in brand concept of the current research. Moreover, consumers who support environmental causes and CSR activities in general, were found to be impacted more by CSR activities in their decision making process (Mohr and Webb 2005). It can be concluded that the impact of CSR on customer purchase intention depends on number of factors such as whether customer **supports the CSR cause** or not, whether the product is of an acceptable **quality**, whether consumer perceives **price** CSR brand to be extra charged. Nevertheless, it seems to be hard to fully generalize CSR findings due to its **heterogeneity**.

Impact of CSR and CSR approach seemed to be influenced by culture (Jamali and Mirshak, 2006). For example, Italian public/customers are very skeptic about CSR. Whereas, Hungarian small firms, Finish, Cypriot, as well as Spanish business mainly implement CSR for profit-maximization purposes (Fulop et al. 2000, Juholin 2004, Pappasolomou-Doukadis et al. 2005, de la Cruz Deniz and Cabrera Suarez, 2005). Whereas, a study carried out among Korean consumers has revealed that corporate contribution to local community has significant impact on consumers’ purchase intention while, activities aimed at environmental protection and contribution, have no impact on consumers’ purchase intention (Lee and Shin 2010).. It can be assumed that in context of Uzbekistan similar scenario will take place, as Uzbek people care about local community, and are not concerned much about environmental problems. It can be concluded that impact of CSR depends on many

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external factors. Furthermore, **internal factors** have influence as well. For instance, integration of CSR and Marketing practices have been highlighted as important aspect which might influence on the success of the company and brand (Piercy, 1991, Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001, Luo and Bhattacharya, 2009, Piercy and Lane, 2009, Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010, Hollensen, 2015). Also, it was identified that CSR and brand management in right combination can build sustainable path to competitive advantage (Werther, and Chandler, 2005, Greening and Turban, 2000, Markley and Davis, 2007, Saeidi et al. 2015, Herrera, M.E.B., 2015). Literature discussing CSR matters have also highly debated over the models that help to integrate CSR and brands management. Majority of the models were found to emphasize importance **synergy** between brand and CSR values (Baumgarth and Binckebanck, 2016). Some studies have identified that involvement of **corporate unit** as well as **top management** plays vital role in gaining positive customer impact (Middlemiss 2003, Morsing 2006). **Corporate culture**, which reflected in employee behavior as well as attitude were found also as important element of models that help to integrate CSR in to company or brand values. Above mentioned authors solely concentrated on **internal** business operations. On contrary, Blomqvist and Posner (2004) have identified three approaches that companies can take in integrating CSR and brand marketing. The approaches are chosen based on **external** market research, which identifies CSR benefit and fit between CSR and brand. Moreover, the authors state that in case of little or no integration between CSR and strategic marketing, companies loose potential benefit that could be acquired. Therefore, construct of CSR brand can be considered as fragile due to dependency of many factors such as company corporate culture, adequate support from top management, employee attitude, but most importantly fit of CSR and brand values. Even though CSR is one of the widely discussed and research topics of 21st century, its opportunities and practices in context of **developing countries** are largely under-researched. Integration of CSR is largely carried out on company level, with few examples on brand levels. Consequently, studies examining interrelationship of CSR and brand, from brand positioning perspective have large gap to be researched further. Moreover, as CSR is a relatively new term in developing countries, it is interesting to study the fit between CSR brand and innovation adoption theory of Rogers. Furthermore, heterogeneous nature of CSR brand makes it worthwhile exploring possible factors that might impact on preference of yellow brand. Based on identified research gap, current research aims to

contribute as follows: (1) widen research knowledge of CSR in developing countries, and specifically – Uzbekistan, (2) evaluate new approach of integrating CSR and brand, (3) identify impact significance of factors that might influence on “yellow brand” preference, (4) identify possible areas of competitive advantage of yellow brand in comparison to regular brand for local companies in developing countries where socio-economic issues may be addressed by a brand.

Methodology³: Brand potential success to be measured using metrics developed by GFK⁴, which has been confirmed to be a “*leading indicator of future brand success*” (Robertshaw W., 2011). In order to test “yellow brand” idea, a concept was created which reflected insight, functional, emotional benefits as well as possible reason to believe of the brand. Current study aims to evaluate potential success of “yellow brand” in comparison to “regular brand”. Therefore it is sound to utilize **within subjects design** which is an *experiment in which the same group of subjects (respondents) serves in more than one treatment*” (Greenwald, 2012). In other words all respondents (same subjects) evaluate both concepts, each consisting of 10 repeated measures (see figure 5 bellow for visual illustration). . In total 273 responses were received, in process of data cleaning 8 responses were deleted, 265 responses were used as input in analysis.

³Saunders, et al. 2003. Research Methods for Business Students. 3rded

⁴For more details on metrics please refer to appendix 1

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Results: Yellow brand potential was compared against hypothetically created regular brand. The assessment of the two brand concept have produced results, which can be grouped into three facets: rational, emotional as well as action-oriented and visualized by frequency charts. Rational facet: quality perception, uniqueness, popularity. According to the survey results, 59% of the respondents perceive quality of yellow brand to be good⁵ (see figure 7). Whereas, approximately 1/3 have doubt about the quality. It is considered to be normal (Engström, 2013) due to the fact that the respondents have evaluated the brand positioning based on description, without seeing or trying the product. Interestingly, on quality dimension, both yellow and regular brand concepts have scored similar results, which might indicate that (1) functional benefit of products was perceived equally by respondents despite difference in emotional benefits; (2) reasons to be believe of both brands had similar positive impact of quality perception. Nevertheless, in case of product launch, current quality perception scores are considered to be unsatisfactory⁶. Therefore, require further exploration through qualitative research in order to reveal underlying reasons for hesitations in potential product quality. Afterwards, product and concept test can be re-run. “Yellow brand” idea scored higher on uniqueness dimension in comparison to regular brand (see figure 8). Moderate scores of “regular brand” on this dimension can be explained by the fact that no companies producing water, concentrate on “enjoyment of life” (emotional benefit) and no one uses “TianShian” mountains (as reason to be believe) in brand positioning. However, because the concept of regular brand communicated quality mountain⁷ water and improvement of life, 33% of respondents could not agree with the fact that the concept is unique. Nevertheless, considerably high scores on uniqueness dimension, opens up opportunity for this new type of “yellow brand” to be investigated further, as uniqueness, is one the main elements of competitive advantage (Chaharbaghi, K. and Lynch, R., 1999).

Brand popularity scores show that there is hesitation regarding potential popularity of both brands. Only 40% of respondents think that the “Yellow brand” will be popular if will be launched. Moderately low scores of brand popularity imply that the brand ideas are not fully in trend and actual for majority (see below figure 9). On contrary, it can be argued that “potential popularity” cannot be measured solely on the brand idea. As communication strategy together with communicated content, have also large impact on brand popularity. For example, amount of budget spend on advertisement, use of celebrities,

trendy music, and other such elements might significantly impact on level of popularity (Sharp, B., 2010).

Emotional facet: brand relevance, brand trust, brand bonding as well as empathy dimensions.

In terms of Brand relevance, the scores are moderately high as 60% of the respondents agreed that brand reflects their personal values and beliefs (see figure 10). Good scores of brand relevance makes it possible to build long-term brand-consumer relationship (Aaker, 1996). Moreover, Aaker (2012) has stated that. “*the only way to achieve real growth is to win the brand relevance competition*”⁸. However, in current case, we cannot say that brand relevance of yellow brand will grant competitive advantage, similarly to perception of uniqueness.

Brand trust scores are slightly lower for social brand in comparison to regular. The primary reason, is assumed to be unfamiliarity of the respondents with newtype of brand that aims to do good to the local community (see figure 11). Nevertheless, trust can be built through various means of communication as well as consistent quality proposition (Aaker, 1996). Current moderate scores of brand trust can contribute positively in gaining consumer loyalty (Delgado-Ballester, E. and Luis Munuera-Alemán, J., 2005).

Brand bonding shows the extent to which consumers can feel comfortable with brand in public. Thereby, current scores similarly to “brand relevance” as well as “brand popularity” scores, show that current brand ideas are not fully in trend and do not fully reflect general population’s inner beliefs and values. Nevertheless, concept ideas are not rejected by majority therefore, can be considered to be potentially successful after minor amendments (see figure 12).

“Yellow brand” concept scored slightly higher on brand empathy dimension in comparison to regular brand, as 58% of respondents consider yellow brand “worth loving”, in comparison to 54%.

Moderate scores of brand empathy suggest that socio-economic benefit of yellow brand is perceived as emotional benefit by respondents. Action-oriented facet: purchase intention, recommendation as well as acceptance of premium pricing.

Purchase intention shows excellent level of buying interest of the researched brand ideas. This means that to about 71% of respondents consider the “yellow brand” idea to be attractive enough to be purchased at least once. Regular brand” scored slightly less, as 69% of respondents agreed to purchase this water brand. Moderate scores were reached for “recommendations” dimension of “yellow brand” idea, as 59% have showed intention that would recommend this brand further. However, “regular

⁵Agree +Strongly agree score

⁶70% and higher rate will be satisfactory.

⁷mountain water brands exist in the local market, with not mentioning the name of the mountain

⁸Additional clarifications : “to develop offerings so innovative that they create new categories or subcategories making competitors irrelevant because they lack a “must have” feature or benefit”

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brand” has scored less (50%) which implies that the “regular brand” idea (functional and emotional benefits) were weighted lower in comparison to “yellow brand” (see figure 15). Moreover, majority of respondents do not consider that it is “worth paying extra” for both of the brands (see figure 16). This indicates price of the product might have significant impact on consumer behavior (i.e. purchase

intention). Thereby, setting price significantly higher vs. potential main competitors, might negatively impact on the market share for mass products. Nevertheless, yellow brand has scored higher in comparison to regular brand, thereby increasing acceptance rate of premium pricing for the new brand type.

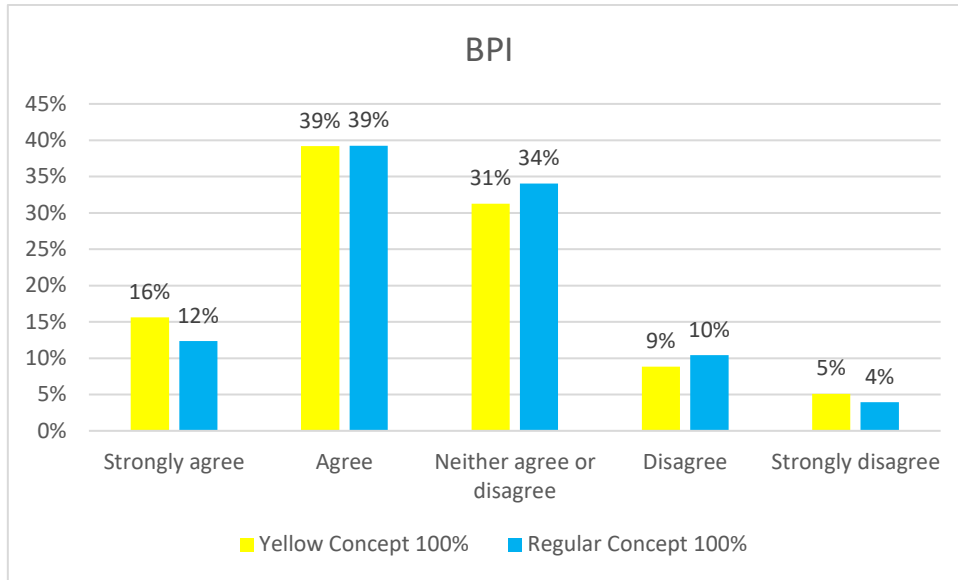


Figure 17. BPI for yellow brand in comparison to regular brand. Conclusions and practical implications

Taking into account all research findings, it can be concluded that yellow brand has sound potential to exist in developing countries. Consequently, integrating socio-economic benefit of CSR into the brand was proven possible. Therefore, yellow branding provides an additional opportunity to come up with authentic brands, and enjoy at least temporary competitive advantage. In order to extend short term competitive advantage, it is recommended to extend integration of socio-economic norms to organizational values and beliefs. Brand managers and entrepreneurs are suggested to take tailored approach in developing yellow brand positioning by highly considering the needs of the society. The functional benefit of the yellow brand should be satisfactory, so that price and quality level will be at parity. Special attention should be paid to pricing strategy, as potential consumers of yellow brand are price sensitive, therefore positioning

in economy, lower mainstream or maximum in mainstream segment is suggested. Yellow brand cannot be priced higher than best-selling mainstream brand as consumers may feel that they are paying extra for the benefits that yellow brand provides. In promoting yellow brand benefits, transparency and message clarity plays important role. Therefore, prior testing of communication material is suggested. Moreover, in order to increase potential popularity, it is important to deliver communication message in up-to-date manner. Furthermore, role of marketing research should not be underestimated, as it will be of a primary importance to carry out timely brand health checks after any yellow brand launch. In general, yellow brand is suggested to be managed just like regular brand following theoretically proven marketing principles.

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Appendices.

Appendix 1 – Description of GFK metrics

Facets	Brand potential (10) metrics	Description
Functional facets	<i>Uniqueness</i>	shows the degree to which the brand concept is perceived new, fresh, and unique to the potential consumer
	<i>Perceived quality</i>	shows the rating of quality perception of brand
	<i>Brand popularity</i>	assesses potential popularity and whether the product will be attractive in current market.
Emotional facets	<i>Identification with the brand</i>	<i>shows the degree of relevance of brand positioning to the consumer.</i>
	<i>Brand confidence</i>	shows the degree of trusts the consumer in brand overall and its messages. Additionally, it can show credibility of brand positioning.
	<i>Brand bonding</i>	- shows the extent to which it will be possible to build brand-consumer strong relationship.
	<i>Empathy with the brand</i>	shows the level of sympathy to the brand
Action-orientated facets	<i>Buying interest</i>	shows the level of purchase intention
	<i>Willingness to recommend</i>	shows the level of perceived benefit (functional +emotional) and how likely the brand will be recommended
	<i>Acceptance of premium prices</i>	shows the degree of acceptance of price, which is higher than market, average. Therefore, worth paying more.

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