

Abstract Customer-Based Retailer Brand Equity

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Abstract

Purpose

The aim of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of the ten most reputable retailers in comparison with the ten least reputable retailers, in the Swedish consumer market 2014.

Furthermore the aim is also to conceptualize the Customer-Based Brand Equity model by Keller (1993) into a retailer corporate brand perspective.

Design/methodology/approach

The chosen framework for the study and the analysis is the corporate brand level. The data comes from a large online study in Sweden that the author carried out in beginning of 2014. 60 of the most well-known and visible consumer orientated companies was measured among the general public. 25 well-known and visible retailers were among these 60 companies. In the final set of retailers to be evaluated five bank retailers was excluded in the analysis. These means that 20 retailers were analyzed in depth. Altogether 5.134 interviews was carried out with people in the age between 18-65 years. The panelists participating in the study were recruited by telephone in order to represent the Swedish general public. The database to be used in the analysis covers more than 20.000 evaluations of these 60 companies.

All respondents taking part in the study initially described four companies that they were familiar with. In the first part of the interview these respondents ranked these 60 companies with reputation attributes. In the second part of the interview each respondent also indirectly, through a projective approach, described four companies. In the second part each respondent indirectly connected associations in five attribute groups to different companies. The attribute groups used in the study were archetypes, operations, values, feelings and animals.

The projective stimuli used in the second part were photos of men, women and animals. The respondent ascribed these photos to different companies. Each photo of men and women used in the study described a specific brand personality. The concept of brand personality is described more in depth by J. Aaker (1997). A micro-validation with personality words was used to assure the right meaning of the photos, from the respondent point of view. The reputation ranking of the retailers, mentioned in the purpose, comes from the reputation index used in the study. Nine different aspects made up the total reputation score into an index between 0-100. The above mentioned 20 retailers was then divided into two groups, high versus low reputation retailers. The criteria for selection of retailers to be analyzed in the high and low reputation groups, was their reputation score.

The field period for the study was January-February 2014.

Findings

The last eleven years, during the period 2004-2014, the author have been carrying out reputation research among the Swedish general public. The overall results shows that Swedish retailers are perceived as the most reputable of all companies in Sweden. In the study 2014 nine retailers was found among the top 15 companies in the overall reputation ranking of the 60 companies. In all reputation studies during the period 2004-2014 a retailer has been top of the Swedish reputation ranking. IKEA has been ranked as number 1 nine times, while Apoteket and Clas Ohlson has been ranked as number 1, one time each.

In the findings the author argues that emotional side of the retailer brand is important and gives a more in depth understanding of the perceptions of the retailer brand. One way to understand the emotional side of a corporate brand personality is to use projective research (Apéria, 2001, 2004, and Keller, Apéria, and Georgson, 2012). Besides using brand personalities the author also uses archetypes and animals to describe the retailer brand personality more in depth.

The author has found that the high and low reputation companies are characterized by different personalities, associations, animals and archetypes. Finally, the author proposes a Retailer perspective of the Keller Customer-Based Brand Equity Model.

Research limitations/implications

The study was carried out in Sweden where the author, during the period 2004-2014, has recognized that Swedes sees retailers as the most reputable companies. In different countries the general public has different opinions about which companies they found most reputable (Apéria, Simcic Brønn, and Schultz, 2004). One reason why Swedes sees retailers as very reputable can be the international success of retailers such as IKEA and H&M, later followed by Clas Ohlson. If the study had been carried out in another country the results might have been different.

Finally, the results might have been different if these 20 retailers, were interviewed by people from the general public in a complete retailer frame of reference, with only retailers participating in the study.

Originality/value

The study compares 60 companies regarding their reputations, personalities and associations. Those 20 retailers participating in the study was analyzed in a broad frame of reference with 60 companies.

This article also includes the, branding framework Customer-Based Brand Equity as well as, Points of Difference (POD) and Points of Parity (POP) in a projective retailer reputation context (Keller 1993, and Keller, Apéria, and Georgson, 2012). PODs are strong, favourable and unique associations for a brand. POPs on the other hand are associations that may be shared with other brands.

Keywords

Reputation, reputation ranking, reputation index, Customer-Based Retailer Brand Equity, brand personality, corporate personality, and retailer Point of Parity (POP) and Point of Difference (POD).

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