

МАРКЕТИНГ ♦ MARKETING

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SCIENTIFIC JUSTIFICATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING IN STRATEGIC MARKETING

Abstract. In the contemporary landscape of global economic development, branding has evolved into one of the most critical strategic tools for ensuring long-term competitiveness. A brand no longer serves merely as a symbolic identifier but has become a key intangible asset capable of generating sustained market advantages, influencing consumer behavior, and increasing corporate value. The hypothesis that “brands are born, not raised” remains relevant within modern marketing theory, as it suggests that successful brands emerge from deliberate strategic planning rather than spontaneous growth. This article examines the theoretical foundations of brand formation, demonstrating that strong brands result from systematic management, long-term vision, and coherent strategic marketing planning. Drawing on classical and contemporary branding theories – from Aaker and Keller to Kapferer and co-creation models – this research highlights the transformation of branding from a tactical instrument into a central component of corporate strategy. The article also emphasizes the role of branding in building brand equity, shaping consumer trust, and consolidating competitive positions. By analyzing empirical observations, recent academic studies, and the evolution of branding practices in regional and global markets, the research justifies branding as a crucial element of strategic marketing management and identifies its potential for developing new scientific hypotheses relevant for the future of marketing science. In competitive markets, brands serve as the leading trademarks – the vanguard of a company’s forces. Additionally, the paper outlines practical implications for organizations seeking to strengthen their strategic brand architecture, illustrating how effective branding enhances organizational adaptability, supports innovation, and reinforces long-term stakeholder relationships.

Keywords: *Brand, Branding, Brand-Management, Strategic Marketing, Trade Mark.*

JEL Classifications: M31; M37; M11.

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Introduction. In the modern context of business development, it is crucial to possess the most advanced – sometimes even revolutionary – knowledge, rather than rely solely on conventional approaches.

Object of research is strategic brand management as a component of strategic marketing planning. Subject of research

is theoretical foundations, mechanisms, and tools of branding that shape long-term corporate competitiveness. This is important for many reasons: science does not stand still, but is subject to rapid progress. Over the past two centuries, economic theories have been constantly evolving, and therefore it is essential to remain relevant. Those who

base their business activities exclusively on outdated postulates and ignore innovations or new research risk being outperformed by better-informed competitors.

In this regard, it becomes important to explore new ideas – even those that may not yet be reflected in the latest works of reputable economists. To capture emerging developments most effectively, one must identify new directions in current economic processes and formulate new theories; in doing so, new hypotheses naturally come to the forefront.

Research tasks are:

- 1) to examine the evolution of branding within marketing theory and practice;
- 2) to analyze classical and contemporary approaches to brand management;
- 3) to substantiate the hypothesis that strong brands originate from strategic planning rather than spontaneous development;
- 4) to identify the role of branding in forming brand equity and long-term corporate value;
- 5) to integrate theoretical and practical findings into a conceptual framework of strategic brand management.

In this article, we aim to demonstrate the importance of theoretical research in branding and marketing. Even within marketing – as a constituent part of economic theory – it is both possible and necessary to propose new scientific hypotheses. Marketing has always been at the forefront of innovation and change, as it is the most responsive part of business to shifts in customer preferences, external economic environments, and the psychological factors influencing both consumers and employees.

More specifically, strategic branding remains the cornerstone of strong marketing and the foundation for its emerging scientific hypotheses. One of the most effective methods for creating a company's distinctive characteristics and added value for customers is branding. Thirty years ago, we knew almost nothing about brand management; however, today, in our rapidly changing world, it is impossible to succeed without practical knowledge in this field. Are brands “born or raised”?

We propose the hypothesis that brands are “born,” not “raised.” In the following section, we will attempt to substantiate this assumption. This hypothesis remains an open question, as it has not yet been disproven, and its full confirmation will require time – it must be validated through the analysis of both existing and defunct companies and brands.

Literature Review. The development of brand management theory has undergone a profound transformation over the past three decades, evolving from a tactical marketing tool into a cornerstone of strategic corporate management. In the classical marketing literature, several foundational approaches have shaped the modern understanding of branding and its role in long-term competitiveness.

One of the earliest and most influential theories was proposed by David Aaker (1996; 2008), who introduced the concept of *brand equity* as a key intangible asset determining a company's market value. Aaker argued that the brand's strength lies in the consumer's awareness, perceived quality, loyalty, and associations. His model placed emphasis on measurable brand assets, treating the brand as a financial and strategic investment rather than merely a marketing symbol.

In contrast, Jean-Noël Kapferer (2016) developed the *Brand Identity Prism*, which views the brand as a multidimensional identity system. According to Kapferer, a brand must achieve internal coherence between its physical appearance, personality, culture, relationship with consumers, reflection, and self-image. While Aaker focused on value perception and metrics, Kapferer stressed the coherence of brand identity and communication consistency across all stakeholder interactions.

Kevin Keller (2020) complemented these views with his *Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model*, emphasizing that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, and experienced about it. Keller's model highlights that brand equity arises from cumulative consumer knowledge and associations, thus linking branding more directly with consumer psychology.

Meanwhile, Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller (2012) placed branding within the broader framework of strategic marketing management, positioning it as an essential element of long-term differentiation and value creation. Their approach connects brand strategy with corporate mission, innovation, and customer relationship management, bridging operational and strategic perspectives.

Comparatively, Aaker's approach treats the brand as an *economic resource*, Kapferer as a *symbolic system*, and Keller as a *psychological construct*. All three, however, converge on the conclusion that sustainable competitive advantage is inseparable from effective brand management. The synthesis of these theories forms the methodological basis

for strategic branding – a process through which companies can systematically build, manage, and renew their intangible capital.

Recent research has expanded these classical theories into new domains shaped by digitalization and globalization. For instance, Iglesias, Ind, and Alfaro (2019) proposed the *co-creation model* of brand value, in which consumers actively participate in building and transforming brand meaning. This represents a shift from company-controlled branding to a collaborative process involving multiple stakeholders. Similarly, Parguel, Benoit-Moreau, and Larceneux (2020) explored how sustainability ratings influence consumer perceptions, concluding that ecological and ethical dimensions increasingly determine brand trust and loyalty. Gensler et al. (2021) examined brand perception in social media, revealing that interactive digital environments significantly alter how customers evaluate authenticity and reputation. At the same time, regional studies such as Belostecinic (2019) have focused on digital branding in emerging markets, highlighting both opportunities and challenges of brand adaptation in virtual ecosystems.

A comparative analysis of these modern works reveals a paradigm shift: branding is no longer limited to communication or visual identity – it has become a platform for *value co-creation* and *strategic stakeholder engagement*. However, despite notable progress, most recent studies continue to focus on tactical, communicative, or digital aspects of branding, while the strategic dimension – particularly its integration into corporate planning – remains underexplored. This gap underscores the relevance of the present study, which aims to justify branding as a key instrument of strategic marketing management.

Research Methodology. The methodological basis of this research is grounded in the principles of modern strategic marketing and brand management, combining theoretical analysis with empirical observations. The study was conducted by Igor Belostecinic (ASEM, UTM, Chisinau) in 2016-2025 as part of ongoing research on the development of branding concepts in strategic marketing planning. The analysis is based on both secondary and primary sources, including academic publications, case studies, and empirical data from global and regional brand development practices.

The methodological approach integrates comparative analysis, content analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The comparative analysis was used to evaluate various

theoretical models of brand management proposed by leading scholars such as Aaker, Kapferer, Keller, and Kotler. Content analysis of recent academic works (2019-2024) was performed to identify current trends in branding research, especially in areas of digital transformation and value co-creation. Empirical data were drawn from open databases, corporate reports of international companies, and analytical publications concerning brand capitalization and consumer perception.

For the empirical component, the study also considered observational data from Moldovan, Ukrainian and European markets, focusing on the evolution of national and corporate brands. These data covered the period 2019-2024, reflecting post-pandemic trends in strategic marketing. The data were systematized using descriptive and analytical methods, ensuring the reliability and comparability of conclusions.

The analytical phase involved the use of qualitative synthesis and interpretive analysis to identify the relationship between branding practices and long-term strategic marketing goals. Correlations between brand strength and market competitiveness were examined through cross-case comparison, which allowed the identification of recurring patterns in successful brand strategies.

Among the positive methodological aspects is the combination of classical theoretical models with up-to-date empirical data, which enhances the validity of conclusions.

However, certain limitations should be noted: the absence of large-scale field surveys and the reliance on secondary data sources restrict the possibility of broad quantitative generalization. Nevertheless, the applied methodological framework ensures the internal consistency and theoretical rigor of the study, allowing for a comprehensive justification of branding as a strategic instrument in modern marketing management.

Main Results.

Critical analysis of the theoretical foundations of brand management: from long ago people satisfy their needs and necessities by means of some commodities, goods. Commodity – is any market offer capable of satisfying a need or necessity and taking form of material goods (physical products), services, experience, events, persons, geographical territories, property organizations, information and ideas.

Nowadays there is no doubt in the fact that a trademark is one of the company's

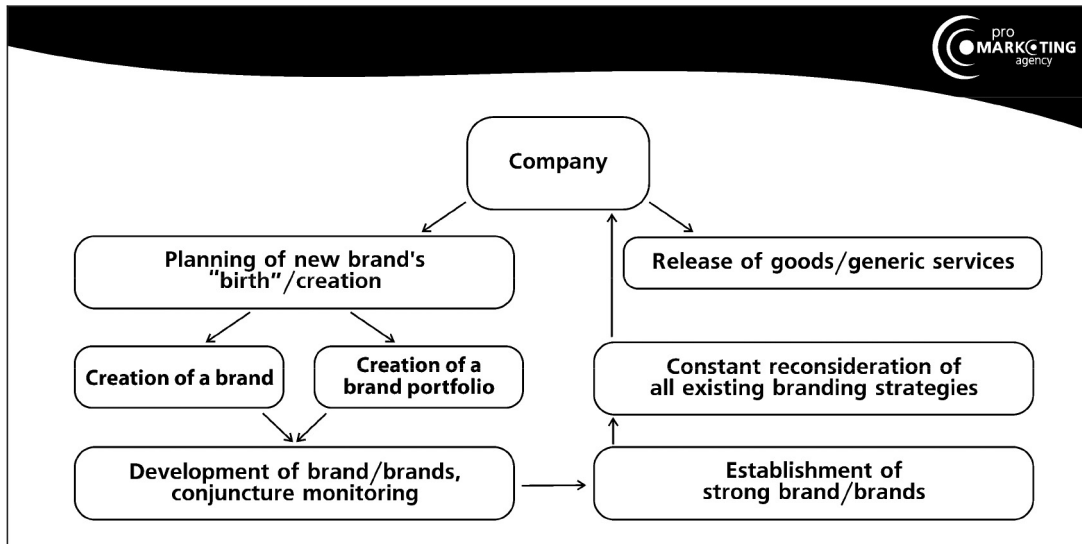


Fig. 1. Generalized diagram of strategic brand management

most valuable assets. However, creation and “nurturance” of an effective trademark takes a lot of time and effort. The word “brand” originates from Scandinavian “brandr”, which means “burn, fire.” So was called the mark the cattle owners used to mark their animals (Aaker, 1996, p. 26).

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, trademark is a distinctive sign which identifies certain goods or services as those produced or provided by a specific person or enterprise (Keller, 2020). It allows the customer to easily and fast decide in favor of tried-and-true products, provided by reputable entrepreneurs.

David Aaker – the leading world expert in effective brands’ building – gives an illustrative comparison: “Each brand is like a separate football player, while design and advertising are like trainings destined for improvement of shape and effectiveness of such player. Brand architecture – senior coach, who has to put players on their places and make a winning team out of them, not just a star collection.” (Kapferer, 2016, p. 105). The most important component of brand architecture creation is company’s brand portfolio structuring. This task consists of the selection of architectural option, selection of company’s brand grouping principle and decision on possible depth and width of spin-off.

Good brand management doesn’t come out of the blue, but rather is a result of accurate planning and correctly chosen development path. There are lots of examples of little-known or weak brands becoming strong and successful ones, and vice versa, of well-known and reputable brands falling, vanishing or going into deep crisis (e.g. *Polaroid*, *Kodak*,

Xerox, etc.) Major, old-established brands become symbols, designating not only corporations, but even entire cultures. *Coca-Cola* has not only the most recognizable logo in the world, but the logo itself became the symbol of western lifestyle.

Scientific and methodological basis for substantiation of the thesis that “brands are born to become brands, not raised”, besides practical observations and experiments, are the works of renowned managers, businessmen and economic science authorities in the domains of marketing and management, data gathered during field and office studies. As scientific novelty of the hypothesis can mostly be deemed author’s attempt to formulate the overall concept of “strategic brand management.” It is made by means of direct comparison of content of such hypotheses with the virtually observed state of things and of establishment of identical relation (or its absence) between facts stated in the hypothesis and facts proved by the results of observations and experiments.

Should one produce nameless and unremarkable goods and render ordinary generic services, or show some bright brands on the market? **As per Figure 1 the author proposes to create brands and use strategic brand management on a long-term basis!** Strategic brand management shall be performed in such a way, so that your brand becomes a “star”, which not only shines, but also brings joy and satisfaction, and, what’s more important – profit, to you and your clients. The strongest one wins. The one who will be capable of building the entire brand management strategy in his own team.

In our case it will take time to prove the validity of the hypothesis that the brands are born as brands, that a brand cannot “grow” out of nothing, or by uncontrolled chance. It is much harder to verify the validity of general empirical hypotheses, let alone theoretical ones, especially those underlying scientific theories, being their axioms. Such verification can only be indirect, by means of drawing conclusions from general hypotheses, establishment of identity or difference in the content of the latter with the state of things being observed, and, finally by means of assumption of the subject of scientific cognition as a decision about sufficient number of verified consequences from the general hypothesis for making a judgment about its validity or invalidity (in a particular case, falsity). The process of taking a decision by scientific community about validity of scientific hypotheses often takes a lot of time, and at that it is never final. Certain hypotheses and truths are relative, dialectical, mobile categories in the real dynamics of scientific knowledge.

Recently there came up a lot of new things in marketing economic theory, in particular – geo-cultural territory branding – as a method of development of entire territories (regions, cities, even countries), although some 25 years ago no one even made hypotheses about the possibility for the whole country or a city to become a brand.

Author’s perspective on the justification for using branding in strategic marketing planning: as understood by the author of this thesis, a **brand** – is a name of a sale object and a symbol attached to it (firm, goods, service, idea, personality, etc.), the peculiarities of which are widespread notability and stable fixation in mass consciousness. Thus, a **brand is virtually a successful trademark**. Only strong brand can generate profit on a long-term horizon; it, without relatively large investments, increases brand capital, makes a customer more loyal and less flexible in terms of price towards brand’s offer.

Brand is a successful trademark. A brand can become strong only in the course of time, any brand is weak in the beginning of its life path, and only successful marketing management – in complex and in the perspective – will make it strong. A good brand gives a range of advantages to the company and to the customers themselves, as compared to the depersonalized goods and services. In due course a strong brand allows increasing the brand capital – an intangible asset attracting clients.

Conclusion. Many authors discuss the concepts of *branding*, *strategic management*, and *brand management* separately; however, few of them focus specifically on *strategic brand management*. The author of this paper distinguishes this concept as a separate category, emphasizing the importance of applying branding not only in a company’s day-to-day operations but also from a long-term strategic perspective – in contrast to the short-term objectives typical of conventional marketing.

In modern business conditions, a brand is also perceived as a particular form of communication – a means of establishing trust-based relationships between a company and its customers. This task can be accomplished most effectively when the company takes into account the full spectrum of an individual’s connection with the surrounding world, rather than limiting itself to a single type of relationship, particularly the commodity-money exchange. Priority should be given to the *individual’s position* over the *company’s position*, where the company is viewed not only as a market entity but also as one of the elements within the human perception of the surrounding world. From this perspective, a company’s success primarily depends on how harmoniously its products fit into the overall worldview of its target audience, how well its interests align with that worldview, and how significant a place the company and its products occupy within it.

Today, brand management has become the core of a company’s strategic management, integrating key corporate strategies around it. This is largely due to the fact that many companies now aim primarily at increasing their market capitalization rather than short-term profits, and the brand is increasingly regarded as the company’s main intangible asset.

Long-term branding within the framework of strategic marketing planning shapes a coherent image that gradually forms in the minds of the target audience based on all available information about the brand owner’s activities. Moreover, the image being created must be aligned with the brand owner’s key strategic goals and contribute directly to their achievement.

Through the process of strategic brand management, company specialists can effectively control brand equity. Brands ensure maximum profitability with relatively minimal costs. In competitive markets, brands serve as the leading trademarks – the *vanguard of a company’s forces*.

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НАУКОВЕ ОБҐРУНТУВАННЯ ВАЖЛИВОСТІ БРЕНДИНГУ В СТРАТЕГІЧНОМУ МАРКЕТИНГУ

У сучасному контексті глобального економічного розвитку брендинг перетворився на один із найважливіших стратегічних інструментів забезпечення довгострокової конкурентоспроможності. Бренд більше не слугує лише символічним ідентифікатором, а став ключовим нематеріальним активом, здатним генерувати стійкі ринкові переваги, впливати на поведінку споживачів та підвищувати корпоративну вартість. Гіпотеза про те, що «бренди народжуються, а не вирощуються», залишається актуальною в сучасній маркетинговій теорії, оскільки вона передбачає, що успішні бренди з'являються в результаті цілеспрямованого стратегічного планування, а не спонтанного зростання. У цій статті розглядаються теоретичні основи формування бренду, що демонструють, що сильні бренди є результатом систематичного управління, довгострокового бачення та послідовного стратегічного маркетингового планування. Спираючись на класичні та сучасні теорії брендингу — від Аакера і Келлера до Капферера та моделей співтворчості — це дослідження підкреслює трансформацію брендингу з тактичного інструменту в центральний компонент корпоративної стратегії. У статті також підкреслюється роль брендингу в побудові брендової вартості, формуванні довіри споживачів та зміцненні конкурентних позицій. Аналізуючи емпіричні спостереження, останні наукові дослідження та еволюцію практик брендингу на регіональних і глобальних ринках, дослідження обґрунтовує брендинг як важливий елемент стратегічного маркетингового менеджменту та визначає його потенціал для розробки нових наукових гіпотез, що мають значення для майбутнього маркетингової науки. Крім того, у статті викладено практичні рекомендації для організацій, які прагнуть зміцнити свою стратегічну архітектуру бренду, проілюструвавши, як ефективний брендинг підвищує адаптивність організації, сприяє інноваціям та зміцнює довгострокові відносини із зацікавленими сторонами.

Ключові слова: бренд, брендинг, управління брендом, стратегічний маркетинг, торгова марка.

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