

Preface

This book is about brands and their most important quality: equity. Whereas for a long time, the value of a brand was merely its trademark, today, as David Ogilvy said, a brand comprises the intangible sum of a product's attributes. In recent decades, many facets have been subsumed into this intangible sum of attributes. This book adds another: brand gender.

At a time when science and society are trying to eliminate gender differences, it seems a risky venture to introduce this construct to brands. However, excessive skepticism is inappropriate. As the reader will discover, femininity and masculinity are equal genders in this book; brands are sex-typed only so they will be perceived as strong and valuable. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, the studies in this book are the first to reveal the significance of androgynous brands and their superior brand equity.

We all have learned, and we accept, that brands are important. Scholars and practitioners tell us about the effects of strong brands. Consultants with high reputations describe the impact of brands on sales and profits. But, what can brand managers who believe in these theories do to strengthen their brands? "Their brands" means that such managers love their brands, live with them—sometimes day and night—believe in them, and benefit from them when they are successful. The mere

description of great brands in literature is not sufficient to explain how one's own brand can be improved. This book will show how the value of a brand can be increased. A chain of reasoning will present how brand characteristics can be measured, how they can be altered, and how this process can increase their most important impact: their equity. Bluntly speaking, everything explained in this book can help brand managers. However, it is not claimed that the brand gender model is the only solution. Many other ways exist to fine-tune brand perceptions. Nevertheless, the method presented in this book is intuitive, easy, and generalizable across cultures and countries, which can particularly support global brand managers.

When I first encountered a brand, it was my own. After some years studying mathematics, my partner and I founded a start-up for scientific calculators. In 1975, slide-rule calculators were still state of the art. However, we believed in the future of microprocessors, and step-by-step, they were built into the first microcomputers. Finally, our company became the biggest PC retailer in the Europe with 1000 outlets, 3000 employees, and at the end, about \$3 billion in revenue. In 1996, we sold the company.

During that time, I knew marketing solely from the battlefield. It wasn't until a decade later when I had earned a degree in economics and management that I started to understand the theoretical secrets behind brands. I learned that not only a company has a value but also, separately, its brand.

Since the importance of brand equity is widely accepted, companies use specific brand managers to preserve their brands. It is their job to uphold or increase brand equity. But how? Indirect measures such as sales figures or cross-sectoral operating numbers can be used to compare one's brand with others. But wouldn't it be easier to have a way to measure a brand's equity immediately and, more so, to know which parameters must be changed or improved to increase brand equity?

I discovered the relation between brand gender and brand equity by coincidence. This theory has been associated with many open questions. The answers, found through extensive research, are presented in this book. Chapter 1 outlines the concepts of brand personality and brand equity. In particular, it describes why the assignment of human personality traits to brands, which at first sight might appear somewhat odd,

is a means for enabling consumers to easily categorize brands and what they stand for. In Chap. 2, this ease of categorization and the positive effect of brand gender on brand equity are demonstrated. The superior role of androgynous brands is also elaborated. Through examining surveys in ten countries and on several continents, Chap. 3 shows the brand gender–brand equity model’s fit for global branding due to the universality of gender. Furthermore, the global influence of androgyny, consumers’ sex, and culture are discussed in Chap. 4. At this point, the reader may be curious what makes brands feminine or masculine. The respective brand gender designs are explained in Chap. 5. In Chap. 6, a sports shoe brand is created with an advertising campaign including visual and audible stimuli. One argument against the brand gender construct could be that it is predetermined by perceived product genders, for example, that cars are masculine and cosmetics are feminine. Chapter 7 provides evidence that brand and product gender are independent; they are not orthogonal, but within-product genders, brand genders may vary from one to the other. A closer look at product gender is provided in Chap. 8, considering the influence of form, color, and material on gender perceptions. If human gender characteristics describe brands, then should brands affect the choice of salespersons, as well? Whether salespersons’ gender should follow brand gender is analyzed in Chap. 9. Gender matching could also be favorable in forming brand alliances. This is illustrated in Chap. 10. Chapter 11 discusses personality scales in general. To make them more generalizable, particularly on a global basis, an enhanced lexical approach is demonstrated that makes stronger use of the dictionary to create a priori valid and reliable constructs. Those who have worked through the proceeding chapters may still be uncertain whether the brand gender–brand equity theory is an artifact and a fallacy. Chapter 12 seeks to clear up those doubts with a demonstration using global data from Chaps. 3 and 4. In Chap. 13, the most important findings are summarized and discussed.

Since all chapters are organized as stand-alone parts, some information is repeated and, thus, may seem redundant. However, this assists the understanding of readers who may wish to examine only single chapters.

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