Strategic Brand Management in SMEs for Competitive Advantage

Neeta Baporikar, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia & University of Pune, Pune, India
Rosalia Fotolela, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how SME owner-managers perceive their roles in marketing and brand management as a strategic approach to enhance their competitiveness to ensure profits, growth, and sustainability. For any organization to grow and thrive it is essential to become customers first choice and for that it is critical to communicate their brand content through effective and strategic brand management. Hence, adopting a qualitative, exploratory approach, 10 owner-managers of SMEs and entrepreneurs in Windhoek, Namibia, were interviewed using semi-structured in-depth interview protocol. Findings reflect that SME brand strategies both in modern and traditional aspects enhance company growth. The study also proposes a framework that is of practical significance for future entrepreneurs, SMEs and brand consultants to enable SMEs to create and develop their brands for better and competitive positioning in the markets. The unique contribution of this study is how SME-focused brand strategies can act as a driver and provide impetus to profits, growth, and sustainability.

KEYWORDS
Customer, Entrepreneur, Growth, Impact, Market, Owner, Profit, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Every product or service must possess an identity for customers to relate. This is what is commonly referred to as a brand. A brand brings the uniqueness, name, logo or sign of a particular product, service and the firm to be distinguished from others associated with its creators. The majority of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are aware of brands but hesitated to value their quality. According to Berthon et al. (2008), the extant marketing literature has long recognized the strategic importance of effective brand management. Reviewing its importance justifies the belief that brand is highly considered from an organizational or product viewpoint. Although, Strategic Brand Management has only been studied by a few researchers worldwide, De Chematomy et al. (2011) stated the world is full of products and services that have successful brand names. Under this system, product brands were managed by managers who acted as brand champions and were responsible for all aspects of their brand’s marketing (Hankinson, 2006).

Branding represents one of the core marketing practices that emphasizes the continuity and connectedness of the firm with its external environment of which customers are important constituents. For instance, SMEs product brand-owning highlight the link between the values of an organisation and its brands. Merriles (2007) suggested many small firms believe branding is a big business issue, with well-known international brands possessing strong brand recognition.

DOI: 10.4018/IJAMTR.2020010102
BACKGROUND

This study will emphasise the strategic brand management literature which is drawn from how SMEs manage brands for profit and to what extent brands are important to the business strategy. Corporate branding believed to be the management of the corporate brand (Bronn, 2007). Spacey (2017) defined brand management as that based on a practice of developing and sustaining a brand to build a valuable identified for products and service in a crowded market which involves planning an identity for a brand implementing marketing and operational strategies to build brand awareness and reputation. In this study, strategic brand management exercised between the maker of the product and branding the product to be distinguished from others and taken through handling in a good care, signify quality, and create barriers to new entries (Mitchell et al., 2015).

This paper explores the current studies with the main purpose of developing the present brand management conceptualizations through conducting a review of the current literature on SME’s brand management (Raki & Shakur, 2018). This study will attempt to contribute on strategic brand management in SMEs, where some best strategy identified to manage the SMEs’ brands effectively. The research may not only be looking at luxury brands but to assess brand strategies and also with their planning and management of brand extensions if any (Powell, 2017).

In Namibia, the majority of local products seem to have not been protected through property rights as legalized under the act of parliament, Act No. 8, 2016. In this study, brand management problems and their possible solutions will be researched. Research brand management problem in SMEs is both valuable and practical (Mitchell et al., 2015). This is the best way to find the strategy in terms of brand that may be seeking the aspects of brand management as tangible and intangible nature, meanwhile, many SMEs’ intangible assets if managed may overcome the top brand and lead to barrier for competitors’ brands. Therefore, brand management such as retail is compared to as a district form of branding (Mc Goldrick, 2002). In this regard, SMEs tend to overlook the importance of having engaged the staff’s input to the branding management strategies as well as testing the customers’ recommendations.

In addition, the study needs to discover whether or not many of the problems experienced by brand perspectives have been the result of a poor strategy or implementation. The theory indicates the limitations of research and literature on strategic brand management that can hinder the development of business in SMEs, so this study will explore what the strategic brand management in SMEs handled and what strategies used to manage (distribute) brand content to consumers/customers. Thus, the objectives of this paper are the following: 1) to determine the scope/role of brand management and the issues for SMEs; 2) find out how the brand can connect to SME customers and then provide strategic perspective on SMEs brand management. Strategic brand management studies have mainly used three parameters to assess the strategy, which brand, and how to manage such a brand. Therefore, the significance of a study may include the strategic brand management research work to benefit the SMEs and include how the research topic should impact others. The research may discuss what people or groups of people might benefit from reading similar topics.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

An interpretative phenomenological approach content analysis was conducted based on the semi-structured in-depth interviews of owner-managers of SMEs. The study covers a total of 10 SMEs in various locations of Katutura, Windhoek in Namibia. Data analysis was done with the use of Excel. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a questionnaire to collect data for two themes; namely, brand strategy and brand management. The focus of this paper is on the perceptions and practices of brand management from the perspective of SMEs’ owners-managers and marketing executives, including observations and secondary data analysis based on the published reports and
An Improved PID Tuning Method by Applying Single-Valued Neutrosophic Cosine, Tangent, and Exponential Measures and a Simulated Annealing Algorithm