Chapter X

Developing Brand Assets with Wireless Devices

Jari H. Helenius, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Finland

Veronica Liljander, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Finland

Abstract

Advancements of the wired Internet and mobile telecommunications offer companies new opportunities for branding but also create a need to develop the literature to incorporate the new communication channels. This chapter focuses on the mobile channel and how mobile phones can be used in branding activities. Based on a literature review and practical examples, the chapter discusses how brand managers can utilize the mobile channel to strengthen brand assets. Four mobile branding (m-
branding) techniques are proposed and their impact on brand assets discussed. Managerial implications and suggestions for further research are provided.

Introduction

The latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st will be remembered for the rapid development of consumer communication devices and self-service technologies, most notably the wired Internet, or the Web, and mobile telecommunications. Improvements in the form of faster connections, cheaper usage, and sophisticated hardware in combination with user friendliness have made the Web an increasingly important medium for consumer interaction. Consequently, leading marketing practitioners and researchers specialized in branding have pointed out the need for developing the existing branding frameworks to accommodate the online world (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). In this development, it is essential to include mobile technologies, most notably the mobile phone, that already offers marketers opportunities for branding. In the future, when the Internet and mobile technologies have fully converged, the possibilities for marketers will be even greater.

The use of mobile devices in marketing and particularly in branding is still in its infancy. Although studies of mobile services are starting to emerge (e.g., Barnes & Corbitt, 2003; Heinonen, 2004; Nordman & Liljander, 2004; Repo, Hyvönen, Panzar & Timonen, 2004), there is still a lack of literature on marketing activities enabled by mobile technology (Balasubramanian, Peterson & Jarvenpaa, 2002; Pura, 2003). Furthermore, to our knowledge, the use of mobile handsets for branding activities has not been the subject of research. In this chapter, we address this gap by discussing the possibilities for mobile branding (m-branding) that are available to marketers today. The focus is on how brand assets can be developed through the use of wireless devices, which in this chapter are limited to cover only mobile phones. At present, the mobile phone is the most ubiquitously used mobile device; it is estimated that there are one billion in use worldwide.

Marketing professionals, however, have not yet adapted their brand strategies to the new technology. The use of mobile phones in marketing has been characterized by trial-and-error activities and has often been met by annoyance reactions from consumers. The slow adoption of mobile technology in branding