Dipartimento **IMPRESA E MANAGEMET** Cattedra **Marketing Management**

Rebranding and repositioning a global power brand: Accenture case study

Relatore
Prof. Peter Leeflang

Candidato
Barbara Di Cesare
Matricola n. 625581

Correlatore
Prof.ssa Simona Romani

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Abstract

Keywords: Brand Management, Branding Strategy, Repositioning, B2B Service Providers, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Brand Equity, Business Outsourcing Process, Marketing Integration, Co-branding.

Introduction

The thesis sheds light on the role of B2B brands, the message of reliability they carry on and eventually the concept of rewarding resulting from that. The researches have been oriented towards the Business-to-Business environment, which is the general framework for financial services providers and all those companies operating with other companies, rather than end-consumers.

The work emphasizes how the nature of B2B sector has changed its mentality of doing business. In fact, maintaining the primary objective of serving clients, firms are currently struggling to acquire a wider customer-base by improving the quality of their offers. In order to achieve such a result, they've implemented new strategies raising the 'Brand Perception' as the most powerful asset they own. As a result, a compelling and well-structured positioning, based upon the pillars of brand image, awareness and equity, does affect the perception people have about the firms itself, and also impacts on the evaluation of its products. The consequences, moreover, are reflected by further expectations on extensions and diversification (of both products and business). The study finishes with the analysis of empirical findings related to corporate branding strategy, in particular referring to re-branding and re-positioning. The model chosen to serve as a guideline in such a research, refers to the 'Accenture' Case Study. The company, a successful as well as globally known consultancy provider, represents the most outstanding example of how B2B firms have to deal with Marketing and Brand Management, much more than it can be though or deemed to be worthwhile. Therefore, as the company itself has proven, the more the offer is intangible, the more it need to be supported by a powerful branding strategy.

The thesis is articulated as follows:

The first chapter is going to present how companies operating in B2B set up their brands, and the reasons why investing in brands has become a crucial matter, especially for those who promotes financial or professional services. The last paragraph strongly supports this perspective by showing the impact of brand consistency on market performance.

The second chapter, instead, analyzes the literary review about Branding Management and organizes the speech following a step-by-step approach. At first it focuses on the essence of B2B brands, by rescuing both their nature and relevance; secondly, through a rethinking of marketing tools and a further insight into innovation, it highlights the successful experience of extending B2B brands global strategies for consulting firms. Finally, it presents three alternatives of implementing these strategies in the business-to-business scenario. Co-branding, the most applied technique, provides firms a chance to establish global brands into local markets; Ingredient branding, instead, leverages the strengths on a known brand, and simultaneously exploits the dominance on local market of minor ones. Online branding, again, is the new marketing tool, which raise at exponential level the contacts of the firm through the word-of-mouth mechanism and the diffusion of shared experiences. The ultimate goal concerns the acquisition a bigger share of profits, by gathering a wider client-base. The devices that companies use to bridge this gap are those factors making the difference.

The third chapter continues on this track while introducing, at the same time, the Case Study. Indeed, it presents, in a well-round perspective, the activities and the marketing processes set up by Accenture during its climbing of the mountain of success (from the Strategic Brand Management to the Business Process Outsourcing, recently implemented). The material, which has been collected thanks to the cooperation of the Director of Marketing Department in Milan, embraces the company history from the origins, passing through the conflict with Arthur Andersen and the Accenture launch, the re-branding and repositioning process, which involved one of the greatest investments in advertising campaigns ever. The company excursus concludes by analyzing the current challenges of the service provider, concerning the integration of outsourcing solutions as well as the creation of value for shareholders through learning.

The forth and last chapter, eventually, is a general discussion about the results obtained so far. In addition to that, it gives an interpretation of financial data and empirical results, preparing the soil for future researches.

Research Questions

The thesis develops a deep insight into the features on the B2B sector, analysing the pivotal role of brands for reaching a sustainable competitive advantage and outperforming competitors. In order to follow such a path, the work has been organized answering to three main questions, better known as Research Questions. The first one focuses on firms operating in B2B environments, and also deals with the Brand Management, stating: How would they implement successful strategies and leverage on brand awareness to increase their equities? The second question, instead, is more technical and carries on a multi-fold analysis of different marketing devices, respectively Co-branding, In-branding and E-branding. Are these the breakthrough marketing tools to lead the market and outperform competitors? The third and last question, eventually, refers to a global-known company, working in the consulting sector as financial service provider, Accenture. Referring always to such a company as the master example, the thesis finishes by addressing the issue: How do Re-branding and Re-positioning affects positively (or negatively) brand extension, brand reputation and brand image? It has been demonstrated that, when implemented in the right way, branding strategies are the keystone for the future management.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Exploring how B2B firms build corporate brands

Brands cannot be created over night. The decision to brand a product, or service, needs to be based on evidence that brands do actually matter in the respective area. The environment for establishing and monitoring brands is thus dynamic and complex. Other than the biggest misconception that branding is only for customer products, and therefore wasted in B2B, there are other common misunderstandings related to this sector. One frequently mentioned branding myth is the assumption that brand is simply a name and a logo. Branding is actually much more than putting a label on a product or service.

Nowadays brand management, particularly in B2B, isn't related to one single product, service or market offering, but rather to the whole company. Therefore is fundamental to recognize the value that a brand portfolio together with a corporate brand can provide. Owing this, firms have to find the right combination of presenting themselves to the target audience, while keeping the necessary consistency outside, as well as inside their structure.

1.1.1 *The Brand Management for service providers*

B2B firms provide support that help different kind of companies to develop and grow, both at strategic and delivery level. Those companies offer a wide range of business support services, starting from micro-business to multi-national organizations. Their mission is to present a coherent program of action, in order to meet any type of demand. Of course, this might include operational management, capacity building, exploring opportunities overseas, event management, assessment and delivery of training and finally sustainability. It often occurs that service providers work on behalf of those organizations which are responsible for the success of businesses in their area. In B2B environments, is vital to build up strong and long-lasting trusting relationships with business organizations, as well 6s public bodies. Since the service providers are both the strategic and delivery partners to their clients, they can always be judged on results: that's why past experience is deemed to signal their prestige. The ultimate goal of such organizations is to help the overall business to grow; nevertheless every sector will need a different approach or level of support. Thus, in order to choose the right method to implement, firms experience is essential to gather a manifold understanding of client's aims. The most common tasks providers are asked to perform include: helping the business to understand its position within the supply chain; finding and recruiting the right people; identifying new business opportunities; performing a training needs analysis to meet skills needs; procurement training; mentoring managers and so forth. Eventually, there is the improvement of businesses' performance and productivity.

Since people are attracted to the idea of working in companies with strong brands, service providers should bear in mind the relevance of their brands for customers, apart from themselves. Indeed, people aren’t captured by the size of the firm, but rather by the strength of its brand; reliable image can hire and retain talent more easily because it incorporates a sensitive corporate culture. In fact, as the case of Accenture shows, when the brand is strong enough it can shape its own culture, despite having thousands employees from all over the world. It’s important to specify that brand exist only in the minds of customers, hence is something intangible, like an idea, or better a perception. However, to reach what a brand is all about, firms must find out, through a brand audit, the idea relying in the minds of customers. In fact, if you don’t even know how your brand is perceived, whatever strategy you put in place will be flawed. Brand is extremely different from business; the latter is based on opportunities while the first one is driven by vision. According to this a great distinction need to be done: whatever makes money today, that's what a business will do. Hence, it's very short-term oriented. On the other hand, a brand will try to own 50% of one category without considering too risky to put all the eggs intone basket. A business would rather have 5% of ten categories. However, in this way it's extremely easy to be overwhelmed by competitors, moreover becomes almost impossible to fight off challengers.

1.1.2 *Why B2B entrepreneurs have reasons to invest in branding*

A recent study done by consulting firm StrategiCom, has sowed that 80% of companies that launch branding campaigns registered higher revenues compared with companies that don't. Moreover, those that engaged in multiple branding platforms, such as internal communications, relationship management, market communication enjoyed higher average annual revenue growth rate. This data provide a compelling reason for entrepreneurs to invest in branding, not only in terms of media but as well as of interaction with customers.

Although some B2B CEOs think that branding isn't important, Accenture has patronized the role of branding for consulting firms, fighting against any objection about the value of brand for B2B companies. First of all, many firms operating in the sector believe that buyers are rational and thus not affected by intangible like brands. Unfortunately, clients are always human being hence their emotions and preferences do have an impact on their choices. Secondly, B2B transactions are considered to spin around relationships, and that's all. Indeed, while it's undeniable that trust-based relationships are extremely positive, the brand also has a lot to do with the purchase decision. Related to this, there's also the misconception that price is the only thing that matter in a B2B purchase. As the B2b Branding Study for Globalization showed in 2007, price isn't a consideration during the short-listing process. Thirdly, some

CEOs erroneously think that since B2B products are largely invisible or intangible branding won't help. That's as wrong as believing that customers have perfect knowledge about the offer or that since B2B services are utilitarian, rather than aspirational, they can't be a status symbol as well. Another prejudice comes from the idea that B2B companies don't sell to millions, so branding isn't needed. The point is the following: you don't have to sell to millions of customers to need branding because you will always have competitors. It's useless for B2B firms to have a warped idea of what branding is about, even worse, think that they're unique and therefore don't have any competitor. As a matter of fact, the more complex and difficult to understand a product or service is, the more you need to brand it, so that the brand helps to simplify the decision-making process.

B2B brands could be loved, even take on a different level of insistence by the customers. This insight reflects that expectations are the essence of branding and therefore they need to be managed efficiently. Coordination as well as collaboration with the various stakeholders is just as important as the leadership from the top. Nowadays B2B companies are moving from product and system to more attention to service; to reach the goal of higher profits, brand management is the crucial ingredient.

1.2 How brands create value in B2B

1.2.1 *The power of brand image and consistency*

One thing of crucial importance, if not even the most significant, in B2B brand management, is 'consistency'. The most recommendable brand strategy for B2B companies is the combination of a corporate strategy with a few individual brands. Indeed, strong corporate brands carry a distinctive and self-contained image that captures customers' minds. On the other hand, a product-specific profile facilitates the capitalization of brands since it's effectively targeted at customers. A strong brand is the anchor for building and maintaining persistent perceptions in the minds of customers. In fact, the brand name and its relative associations are a shorthand for all the products and services that are being offered. The brand strategy has to match to corporate strategy. Undeniably, the product quality, the reliability of delivery, the value for money does all belong to people's estimations and evaluations of that specific brand. There are several types of names companies can choose for brands: the name of the founder, fabricated or descriptive names, acronyms and metaphor are just few examples. Nevertheless, working out what people associate with a brand doesn't solve the situation; what is really crucial for capturing them is put a monetary figure on the brand value.

Foundation of a brand

Any future brand strategy relies on a research-oriented approach. To establish an effective branding plan, firms have to track and measure the power of the current brand, as well as that of the entire brand portfolio. Even the best advertising can't create something that's not there; in fact, when a company doesn't understand the concept of brand, nor is able to highlight its value in the eyes of the audience, there's little chance that marketing can change people's minds.

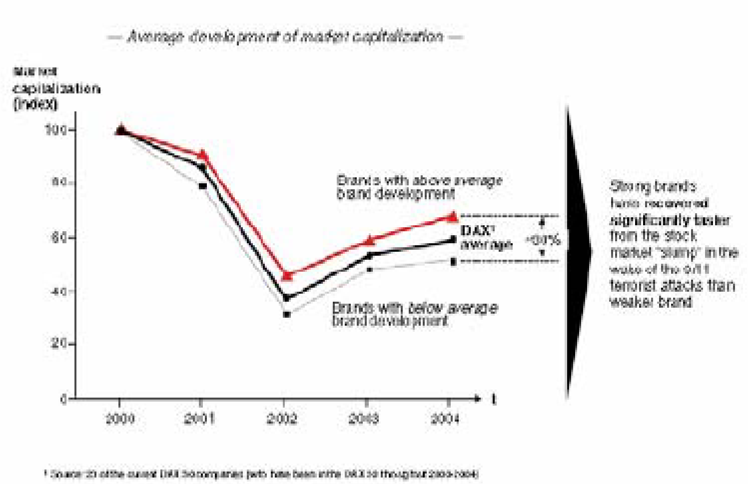
Brands are deemed to represent an outstanding instrument for increasing the opportunities of making a difference (against the competitors). There are a series of advantages deriving from the figure of the brand itself, which are all linked together and mutually influenced by each other. Firstly, brands encourage the willingness to try a product or service; they also allow people to save time during the purchasing phase and at the same time increase the likelihood that the product/service is purchased. Moreover, brands make customers willing to pay a price premium, for superior performance; with the consequence of awarding a larger share of purchase requirements. As a result, customers are less sensitive to price increases and less induced to try a competitive offering. It’s crystal clear that differentiating from competitors leads to enhance the brand equity. Although there’s still an open debate concerning the definition of brand equity, its main drivers are universally recognized to be: the perceived quality of the offer, the name awareness, the brand-related associations and finally the brand loyalty. Firms that will prove able to leverage on their brand equity, also exploiting appropriate brand communication tools, will turn out to be the leader of B2B.

The most widely used brand communication devices, in B2B sector, are Public Relations, Trade shows and exhibitions and Sponsoring. Public Relations are about providing coverage in the media, which reaches different categories of stakeholders. They’re more credible because of their authenticity; moreover they can achieve potential customers that avoid sale people and advertisements. In the end, PR can affect brand awareness at only a fraction of the cost of other communication elements. Trade shows and exhibitions are of major relevance in the B2B environment; in fact they provide customers with access to several potential suppliers and other customers in a short period time. Moreover, costs are relatively low compared to classical information gathering methods. Finally, sponsorships of public events such as world famous car races are quite common for B2B brands. Corporate goals for sponsorships might be: creating a platform for developing relationships, providing opportunities for suppliers as well as benefits for employees and clearly increasing both visibility and revenues.

1.2.2 *The B2B brands financial impact on market performance*

Nowadays brand management, particularly in B2B, isn't related to one single product, service or market offering, but rather to the whole company. Therefore is fundamental to recognize the value that a brand portfolio together with a corporate brand can provide. Owing this, firms have to find the right combination of presenting themselves to the target audience, while keeping the necessary consistency outside, as well as inside their structure.

Fig.1. Average development of market capitalization

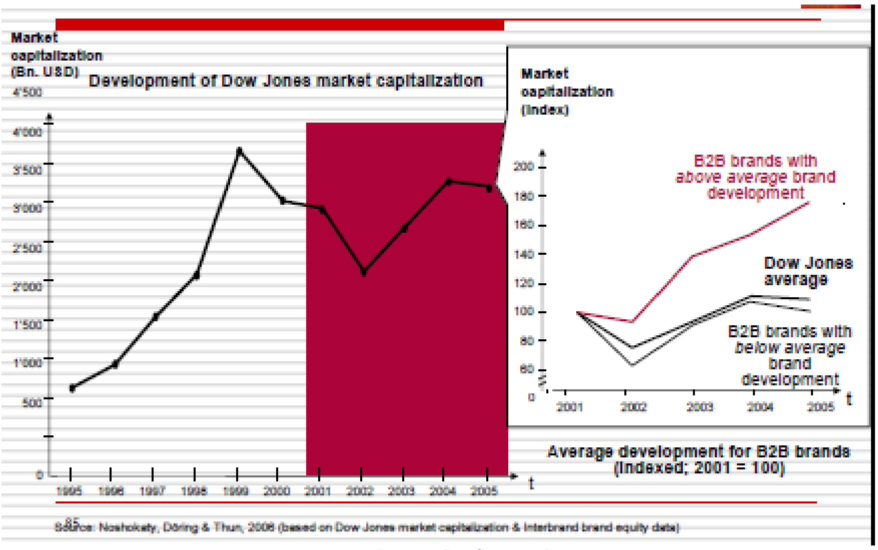


Source: Kotler and Pföertsch, 2006

Outcome:

The 'Good brands' outperform their peers with more than 40%; such superior position allows them to survive in crisis situation much better (think about the 2001). Furthermore, the distinction between good and average brand is getting wider. The brand strength of B2B companies clearly has an impact on financial market performance, and the picture below emphasizes this point. In particular, it analyses the market capitalization of selected large cap B2B companies of the Dow Jones:

Fig.2. Development of Dow Jones capitalization



Source: Kotler and Pföertsch, 2006

Market capitalization, also abbreviated to market cap, is used as a measurement of corporate size over the years 2001 to 2005. It evaluates the current stock price multiplied by the number of out standing shares. The Dow Jones Industrial average was used as base line as well as starting point. This performance measurement could be considered as a representation of the true shareholder value for evaluating enterprises; moreover it's an indicator of long-term oriented shareholders success.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Rescuing the essence of brands for B2B

2.1.1 *The brand-building process: from awareness to integration*

Brands are the essential element of all cultures across the planet, as well as in the business world. They not only help people make decisions, from the small ones to the big ones; but rather enable individuals to trust the products/services they purchase. Brands are ideas, expectations, perceptions and beliefs, which are in the mind of customers, and thus can directly affect enterprises. Nowadays, the proliferation of new communication technologies has made reality more interconnected and transparent; as a consequence, a company and its brand are increasingly exposed to observations. Indeed, strong brands go far beyond creating awareness, they represent the corporate soul and promise. In such age of consumerism, where clients have greater access and control over information, an evolution of brand relationship (as well as accountability) is strictly required. Companies working in this new business environment can't hide behind inaccurate pretenses. As a matter of fact, while consumers stay always local, the transparency mechanism has made brands susceptible to scrutiny, globally.

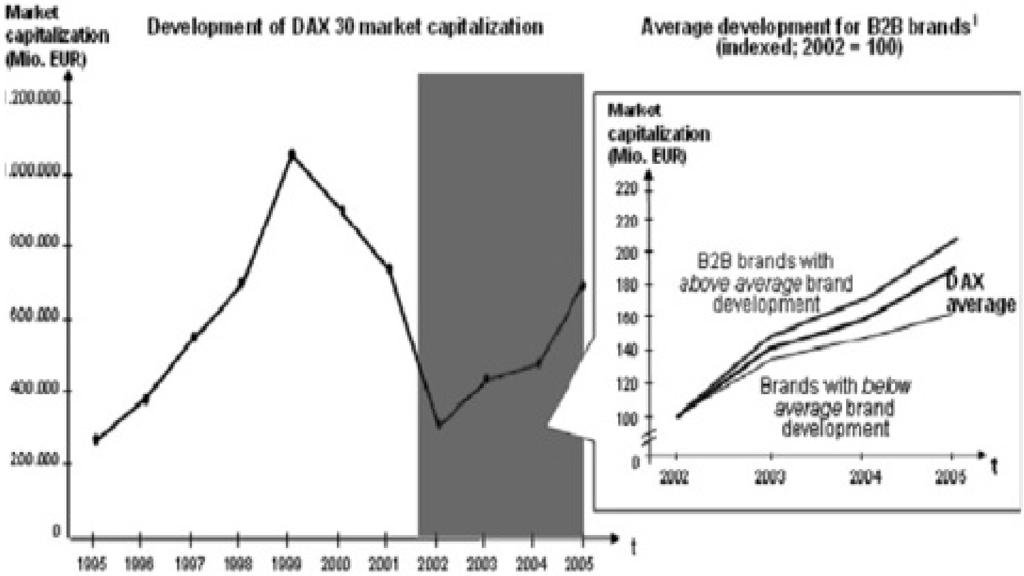
Creating awareness of its name to the related customer-base is just the first phase of the brand building process. Instead, it's much more articulated, and represents a process of building the corporate soul to communicate it inside and outside the company. That's the only way customers truly get what the brand promised.

The whole world is constantly changing; every day technologies, products and services, marketplace emerge, evolve and finally disappear. Along with hyper-competition and globalization, the explosion of choices in every area has come; thus Business-to-Consumers (B2C) has adapted their brand management to such changes. On the other hand, many Business-to-Business (B2B) companies still regard such effort as irrelevant. Only recently B2B brand management has been given more attention, since researchers have highlighted that the management of brand, for industrial goods and services, represents the unique opportunity for establishing enduring, as well as competitive, advantages. No matter what companies sell, products rather than services, a compelling brand is the most effective asset they own. Again, branding isn't just inventing fancy names and logos. A world without brands would lack one of the most fundamental factors, which simplify people's life in this increasingly complex environment: Orientation. Indeed, brands accomplish to a wide array of tasks: they differentiate, reduce risk and uncertainty, and communicate the benefits (value) a product or service can provide. This is so true in B2B as it is in B2C.

Even though in B2C hardly any company neglects the importance of brands, in B2B things are quite different: branding isn't meant to be a relevant issue. The majority of services providers are convinced that this phenomenon is confined only to consumer products or markets. According to them, brand loyalty is rather a non-rational behaviour that can't be applied to the rational context of B2B. In fact, that kind of products are chosen through an objective decision-making process that accounts for specifically hard factors like functionality, benefits, price, and service quality. Soft-factors, like reputation, aren't of interest. Nevertheless, companies like Microsoft, IBM, Intel, General Electric, Cisco System, SAP, FedEx, Oracle they are all vivid examples of strong B2B brands. Thus, they (brands) serve exactly the same general purpose in B2B market as they do in consumer ones: they facilitate the identification of services, providing a guarantee of quality, origin and performance, thereby increasing the perceived value to the client. B2B firms are currently struggling to capture the emotional side of brands, and transfer it in customers' minds. Furthermore, they've understood that Internet has provided an additional array of choices to every decision maker, anywhere, with just a mouse click. To enjoy such prosperity, however, services providers need to be represented by a trusted brand, which will act as an ambassador in a global economy. In fact, B2B branding doesn't only reach the final customers, but all stakeholders as well, hence investors, employees, partners, suppliers, competitors, regulators, and local community members.

Apart from the biggest misconception that branding is just for consumer products and therefore wasted in B2B, one frequently mentioned branding myth is the assumption that brand is nothing than a name or logo. Brand, instead, is an intangible concept, which represents a promise, a totality of perceptions and a short cut of attributes. Since it holds a distinctive position in clients' minds, it (along with brand equity) needs to be recognized as a strategic asset, as well as the basis of competitive advantage for long-term profitability. Despite that, evaluating and measuring the success of brands is yet a controversial subject. As a result, there are only a restricted number of research projects and or analysis dealing with the actual return on investment for brands. Current results by BBDO Consulting Germany shed light on the power of branding and its impact on share price. By comparing the financial market performance of 23 out of the 30 DAX companies, it emerged that the massive difference in performance was mainly due to the importance of brands.

Fig.1. Branding's effect on share price[1]



Source: BBDO Consulting Germany

Companies that once measured their worth in terms of tangible (factories, inventory) and cash, have to revise their point of analysis and embrace brands as a valuable and equally important asset, along with patent, distribution, customers and human capital). Services providers, in particular, can benefit tremendously from a vibrant brand since it has the power to command a premium price among customers, and again a premium stock price among investors. Hence, it not only would boost the earnings and cushion cyclical downturns, it does help services firms to become really special.[2] B2B brand advocates underline that the real essence of brands in the sector hasn't been realized yet. McKinsey & Company, together with the Marketing Centrum Muenster (MCM), a German marketing research institute, investigated the relevance of brands in several German B2B markets. From this analysis, they

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1 Source: BBDO Consulting Analysis 2005

2 Gerry Khermouch, Stanley Holmes and Moon Ihlwan, 'The best glocal brands', business week (6 August 2001).

captured the prime functions of B2B brands:[3]

- Increase information efficiency

- Risk reduction

- Value added / image benefit creation

These functions are essential determinants of the value a brand can provide to business, thus they play a crucial role in B2B markets. Obviously, it's not possible to guarantee that a business will realize immediate benefits after implementing an overall brand strategy; brand building is meant to create lasting non-tangible assets rather than boosting short-term sales. Currently, the companies operating in B2B markets have realized that establishing a reliable brand was the only way to stay ahead of competition. Even though the Dot.com boom has seemed to prove the opposite (to establish successful brands in a very short time), this is just the exception to the rule. Brands are built over time.

2.1.2 *Making branding decisions in Business sectors*

Although many marketers push forward the differences between B2C and B2B as justification for neglecting the role of branding in business related markets nowadays we can see a great number of successful companies, like Accenture, which consciously decided for B2B branding. They've been able to forecast the manifold potentials that a well-managed B2B brand could offer them, especially at an early stage. A prerequisite for implementing a successful brand management is a so-called 'holistic marketing' approach. That's an

[3] Mirko Caspar, Achim Hecker, and Tatjana Sabel, 'Markenrelevenz in der Unternehmnensfuehrung – Messung, Erklaerung und empirische befunde fuer B2B markete'

integrated perspective characterized by the strong alignment of all marketing activities to their overall scope and complexity.

We will analyze now, more in detail, how a successful company like Accenture has never questioned the power of a B2B brand. We will focus on such company since it's the best example of services providers that built up a renaming, as well as a repositioning strategy to outperform competitors and increase the awareness of its name inside/outside the organization. When Andersen Consulting had to change name because of the split with the affiliate Arthur Andersen, it was never put in question whether to brand or not. The company had less than five months to come up with a new name and brand strategy to fit their business one. What follows is considered one of the most ambitious rebranding efforts ever undertaken within the professional services industry. The main aspiration of Accenture was to remain one of the word's leading consultancies, and thus changing its name also meant to reposition itself in the marketplace to better reflect such new vision. By refocusing its capabilities and executing an innovative business strategy, Accenture eventually became a market maker, architect and builder of the new economy. Six WPP agencies were assigned to assist in the rebranding process; Accenture, the word that won the race, was coined in an effort to denote the company's mission of putting an accent on the future. Currently Accenture is a profitable global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with net revenues of US $ 13.67 billion in 2004.[4]

Analysis of B2B markets

Businesses operating in industrial markets require goods and services to use in the production of different products, which are sold, rented or supplied to other businesses. In other words,

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[4] Website of Accenture, New York, cited June 2005

almost all companies are engaged in business markets. Therefore, B2B sale far out strip those of B2C. The biggest differences of those markets are found in the nature and complexity of industrial demand, the fewer number of customers, the larger volume per customer instead, and finally the closer and long-lasting supplier-customer relationships.[5]

The complexity of industrial products and derived demand

The variety of industrial products and services is so huge and complex that's almost impossible to make universal valid statement about them. Researchers have broken business markets down into these markets: materials and parts (e.g. raw materials and manufactured materials); capital items (e.g. buildings and equipments); supplies and services (e.g. operating supplies, repair and maintenance item).[6]As a result of such complexity of industrial products is that the purchasing process often requires qualified experts on both sides. In contrast, consumer products can usually be accomplished with little or no expertise at all. Unlike the standardized customer products, industrial ones tend to be require high level of fine-tuning, as well as integrated systems for certain product specifications. Obviously, all these factors have a great impact on the way industrial products have to be marketed.[7] To make an example, generally the demand of B2B firms is derived demand pulled through the chain as a result of demand for the final end product. Hence, the value chain of industrial business, despite the apparent simplicity, causes enormous complexity. Moreover, changes at the end of the value chain can have consistent repercussion on all the suppliers concerned. For this reason, industrial demand tends to be more volatile than consumer one.[8]This leverage impact

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[5] Philip Kotler, Kevin Keller, Marketing Management, 2006; Philippe Malaval, Strategy anf management of industrial brands: B2B products and services, 2001

[6] Jim Turley, 'silicon 101', Embedded systems programming (27 January 2004)

[7] Paul Hague and Peter Jackson, The power of industrial brands, 1994

[8] Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller, Marketing Management, 2006

can provoke wide swings in demand, sometimes referred to as the ‘bullwhip effect’.[9]

Internationality

Industrial products and professional services are similar across the world, since they are predominantly concerned about performance and functionality. Therefore, market offerings require much less adaptation; customers from all over the world seek the same level of functionality and performance from that kind of services. Moreover, the ongoing worldwide globalization, liberalization of trade, innovation in transportation and logistic, as well as advances in IT, continue to erode the barrier of geographical distance between B2B companies. This implies an additional reason for B2B firms to always pursue global branding strategies.[10]

2.1.3 *Discovering the relevance of B2B brands*

Still many B2B marketers consider the development of a brand only as a variable marketing expense with a high risk of failure. Nowadays, considering the exchangeable market offerings and the highly competitive environment, there are numerous powerful forces making B2B brand building a crucial factor. The main factors, which leverage brands in B2C are also quite evident in B2B: proliferation of similar products and services; increasing complexity; and incredible price pressure are just a few of them. An overabundance of choices isn't only prevalent in B2C; it's currently more than true also for B2B markets. Technical superiority is no longer the only crucial factor to success. As a result, almost all businesses showed a

[9] Robert P. Vitale and Joseph J. Giglierano, Business to Business Marketing: analysis and practice in a dynamic environment, 2002

[10] James C.Anderson and James A.Narus, Business market management: understanding, creating and delivering value

tendency towards complex solution-based market offerings. They have stopped selling single products: they sell solutions. However, businesses are also confronted with remarkable price pressures, and so can't realize higher prices for their services by merely offering special functional advantages. Brands, instead, can provide additional value for clients incorporating both tangible and intangible assets. B2B marketers are starting thinking outside the box: this trend is confirmed by a recent study conducted by McKinsey and MCM, which highlighted the relevance of brands in a B2B environment. The most important functions are listed as follows:[11]

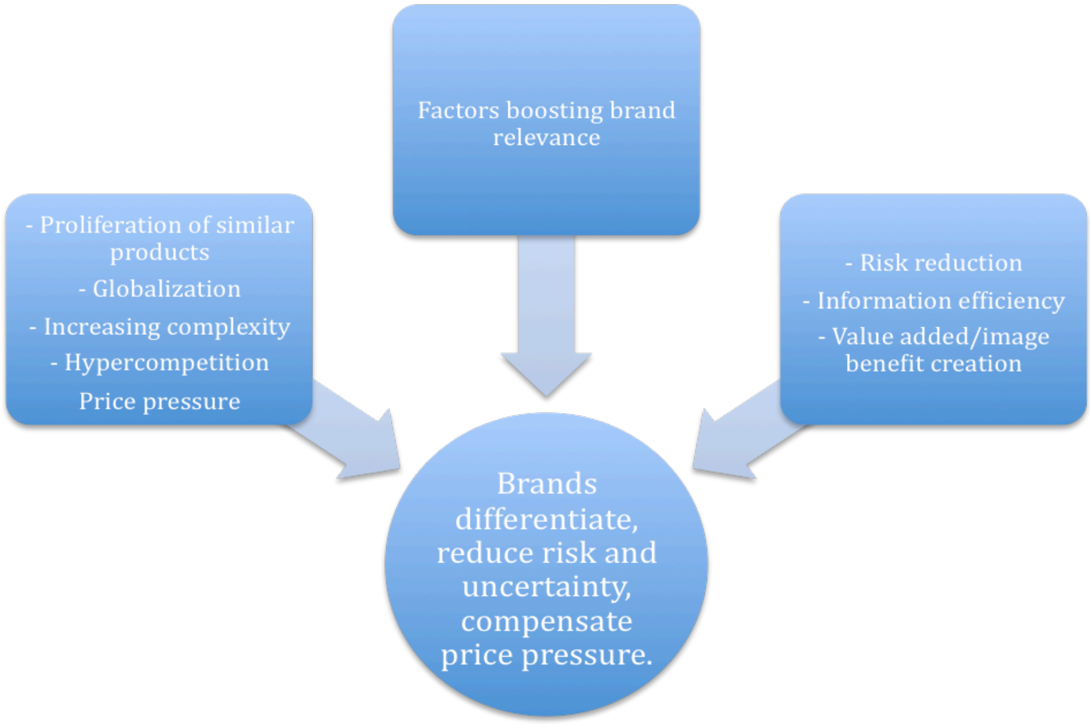
1) *Increase information efficiency.* Branded products make it easier for clients to gather and process information about the service; moreover they have recognition value, thus customers can find trusted brands quickly and repeatedly.

2) *Risk reduction.* Choosing a branded product reduces the risk of making wrong purchasing decisions; especially in B2B, brands ensure and legitimate buying decisions since buyers have a real penchant for avoiding risk.

3) *Value added / Image benefit creation.* For clients, those spillovers come from the self-expressive value that brands can provide. Although in B2B environment the additional value provided usually is not anchored in purely self-expressive values, it can be dramatically important.

Fig.2. Brand relevance and functions in B2B environments

[11] Mirko Caspar, Achim Hecker, and Tatjana Sabel, 'Markenrelevenz in der Unternehmnensfuehrung – Messung, Erklaerung und empirische befunde fuer B2B markete'



Source: Kotler and Pföertsch, 2006

Based on an empirical survey of more than 750 deciders and applying a comprehensive valuation system. McKinsey and MCM have determined the relevance of brands in 18 representative markets. Even though the study was conducted in the German market, the approach and its implications can be applied on an International level. They investigated on the inherent brand functions and argued about their role for the valuation system.[12]

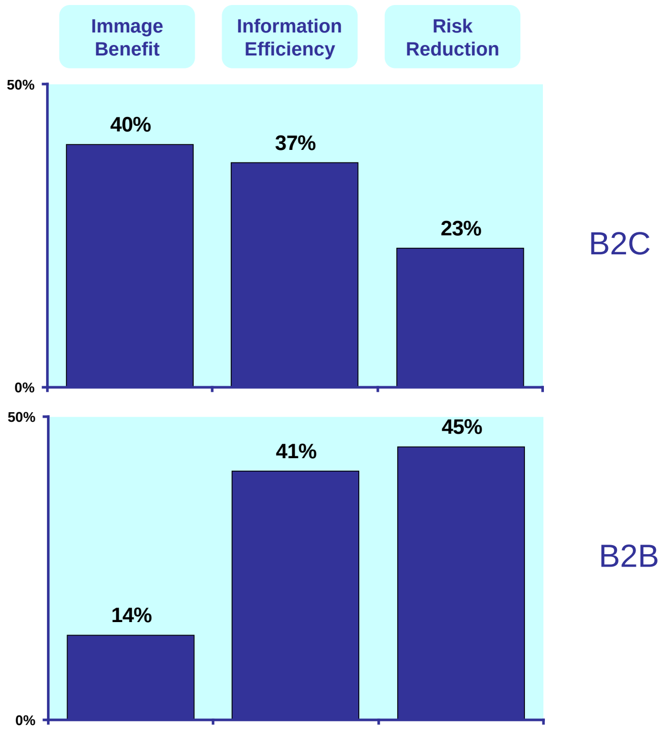
As shown by the charts below, the major finding was that risk reduction was by far the most important brand function within the B2B area, with 45%, closely followed by information efficiency at 41%. Valued added/image benefit creation is much less distinctive in the sector, accounting only for 14%. It's interesting to point out that such results are the opposite of

12 Ibid., pp. 38-43

those in consumer markets, where value added captures the leading position, with 40% of relevance.[13] These results clearly provide precious information about where brand relevance originates from, thus is possible to draw three main conclusions. To reduce risk involved in the purchase process is vital when buying complex high-profitable services; information efficiency is essential for the purchase of capital-intensive items and systems; value added exercises a leading role for publicly visible products and services.

[13] Ibid., pp.38-43

Fig.3. Importance of brand functions in B2C vs. B2B



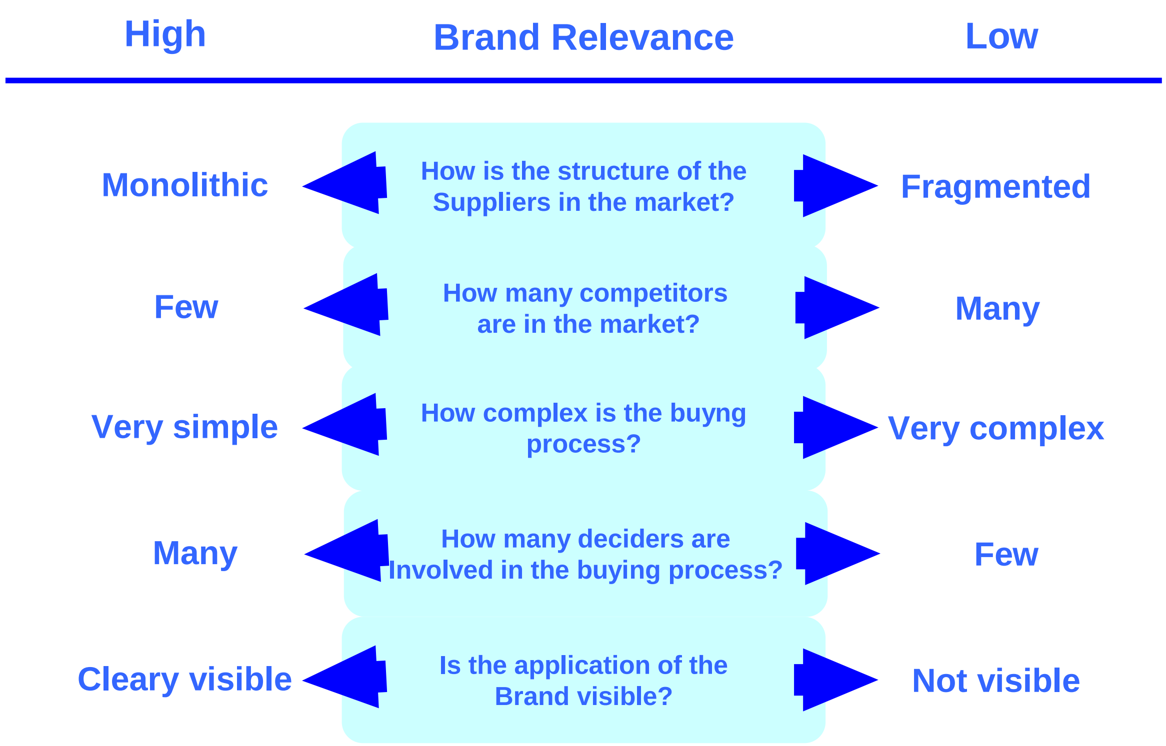
Source: Kotler and Pföertsch, 2006

Along with MCM, McKinsey & Company developed a method to determine the brand relevance in any kind of B2B market. The evaluation is based upon certain context factors:

- The supplier structure of the market
- The number of competitors
- The complexity of the purchasing process
- The size of the buying centre
- The public visibility of the brand

Altogether these criteria provide crucial information about whether or not investments in branding make sense. The role of brands in B2B buying decisions also varies according to the different situation that a company faces. The graphic below summarizes all possible scenarios.

Fig.4. Brand Relevance according to context factors



Source: Kotler and Pföertsch, 2006

The power of the business brand

The power of a business brand, measured in terms of equity, relies in the fact that it can be one of the most valuable assets a company owns. Brands aren't just a label or a representation of what company sell, but rather what it does and what it is. Indeed, most brands are the reason why a business exists, not the other way around.[14] Enduring brands can leverage a business more that any other asset, providing an emotional short cut between a firm and its clients. A brand's personality and reputation for high-quality performance can distinguish it

[14] Scott Davis,'The power of the brand', Strategy and Leadership (28 April 2000)

from competitors, engendering customer loyalty as well. However, there are still just a few successful B2B brands that already prove the potential in the sector. Following the out standing example of Accenture, other companies should profit from a first mover advantage and set the new business standard with their brands.

The role of brands in B2B sector is articulated in the next components of the list:

- Differentiate. Brands are the most effective tool to ‘decommoditize’ product categories, which are highly undifferentiated (examples include IBM, Intel, General Electric).

- Secure future business. Brands are meant to prepare companies for the future: consolidate brands make it easier to withstand critical times and moreover attract financial investors.

- Create brand loyalty. Brand leads the firm conducting its relationships with customers, in order to delivery what it has promised. HSBC with its campaign ‘the worlds local bank’ has seen one of the biggest increases in brand value in 2005 ranking, according to Interbrand. Thus benefiting from higher brand loyalty is possible.

- Differentiate marketing efforts. Marketing efforts will be more readily accepted, compared to those of no-name services; hence communication effectiveness arises too.

- Create preferences. A strong brand can act as a barrier to people switching to competitors services, this doesn’t happen only in B2C, but also occur in B2B environments. Thus, brand preferences at its best cause the rejection of competitive brands.

- Command price premium. Brands can balloon the prices of services tremendously, and especially in B2B this is the result of a valuable brand. Higher power on prices makes in turn companies less susceptible to competitive forces.

- Create brand image. Brands increase the emotional side of firms; in fact by building a positive brand image companies also appeal to all other stakeholders. Such mechanism makes it easier to recruit and retain talent inside the company.

- Increase sales. Strong and reliable brands can secure firms with both higher margins and higher sales volumes. This viewpoint is perfectly in line with the money-making mentality.

2.2 How marketing can drive a new growth agenda for consulting firms in B2B

Accenture believes that also in the face of continued economic uncertainty, the coming months will provide a significant opportunity for companies to move ahead of less-nimble competitors. In fact, fueled by a renewed marketing function, companies can create their own upturn. If they keep on practicing marketing in the same way that made their brands successful in the past, they may destroy equity and erode profits. The digital era and the new business environment mean that every business decision should be made with the customer in mind. To truly follow that direction, marketing needs to shape strategy, not merely execute it. Thus, there's urgency, along with the compelling opportunity for marketers to own the growth agenda of their firms. Accenture, in particular, believes that marketing leaders of the future should present four characteristics:

1) A foundation built on well-tuned marketing processes and operations that help customers produce the capital needed to invest in innovation. To achieve such goal, companies in B2B need more rigor, discipline and financial metrics to support the process of growth. Marketing must then be connected to decisions about supply strategy, organizational structure and an intransigent assessment of returns.

2) The ability to generate data-driven insights into customer preferences and behaviours. This requires that companies stay connected with their customer-base, in terms of market trends and demand. Accenture strongly seeks to deliver the right message, at the right moment and in the most effective way, to influence the target audience. Better segmentation strategy and execution are thus critical to successfully deliver ever-more engaging relevant messaging.

3) The wise use of these insights to undertake innovative efforts and to design meaningful as well as profitable interactions. In fact, customer data by itself is worthless, what really makes the difference is using that data to turn insight into actions, products, while also optimizing sale channels.

4) The capability to reach and connect with customers when and where they it matters the most. The objective is to create opportunities for ongoing dialog and long-term relationships with clients, based primarily on engagement, efforts and social networking capabilities that communicate interest for the brand. The change for marketing professional, coming from the Web 2.0 era, has carried out an irreversible climate change for B2B firms. As a result, companies can no longer control their messaging, since customers now control the message. Accenture has understood that nowadays, companies working in B2B

environments must be savvy at triggering opportunities for ongoing dialogue based on shared experiences. That's also the reason why they tried to build up strategic alliances with firms working in IT sectors: software will shorten the journey from engagement to purchase.

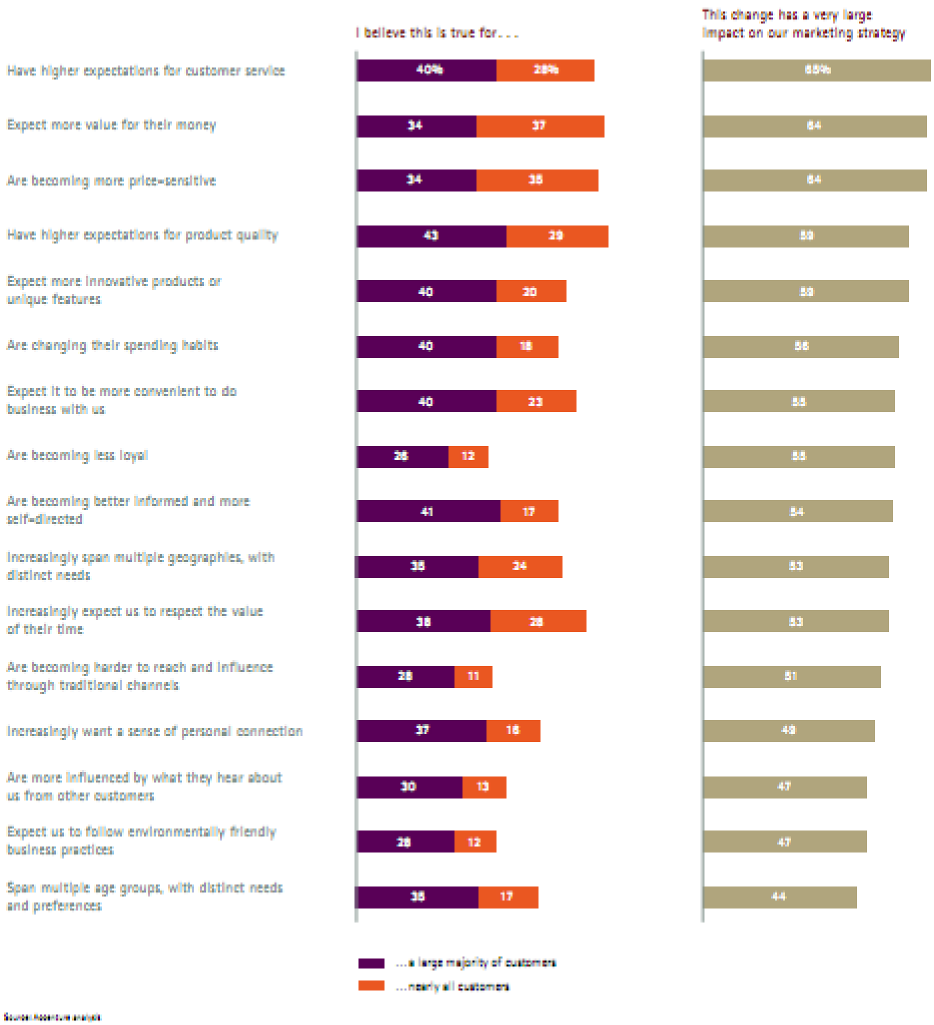
What the global managing director of Accenture's Marketing Transformation group believes in, is the great chance for organizations leaders of B2B to look at the recession as the start of a Golden Age for marketing. In such customer-centric economy, Nick Smith and his peers are required to take advantage of Accenture's own upturn.

2.2.1 *Rethinking of marketing role in growing B2B companies*

In an increasing number of organizations, working in the B2B environment, marketing is assuming a commanding new role, shaping the strategy by implementing it step by step, throughout all the organization levels. The economic downturn, in fact, has forced the whole business sector to rethink itself and the way it interacts with customers. For this reason, Accenture has recently surveyed some 400 marketing executives from a wide range of companies, industries and geographies, to get better-quality products and ensure a lasting service provision. The change in the global scenario concerned how customers exercise their role as well as they build expectations about the provider. In short, customers are putting marketing centre stage in post-recession decision making. However, yet within many services providers, the marketing department is ill-prepared to take on such a commanding role. Accenture has wisely identified a top three areas to devote significant resources in the next future. The company, leader in the B2B sector, has firmly recognized the need to focus on the streamlining of all marketing processes as well as on investments in digital advertising/online presence. As results have deemed so far, the development and training of the marketing team is also a fundamental issue. In other words, companies thirsty of growth are required to arise marketing to a new level of rigor: digital technologies and social media are the triggers of more interactive customer experiences. By investing in customer data management, these innovative devices have boosted the power of scientific marketing, also optimizing the data-driven insights that analytics deliver. The adoption of such scientific perspective has set the marketing function free towards a creativity stage. As a result, leading financial services groups are reinventing operations by centralizing their decision-making and automating their processes. The upshot is the following: faster campaign cycle times, higher customer response rate to product offers and lower direct-marketing costs. The huge amount of time saved from this effective mechanism allowed firms to concentrate on strategic issues and better coordination among different functions.

According to Accenture research, marketing executives have observed profound shifts in customer attributes and behaviour, the majority of which is having a significant impact on marketing strategies.

Fig.5. Shifts in customer attributes and behaviour affecting marketing strategies

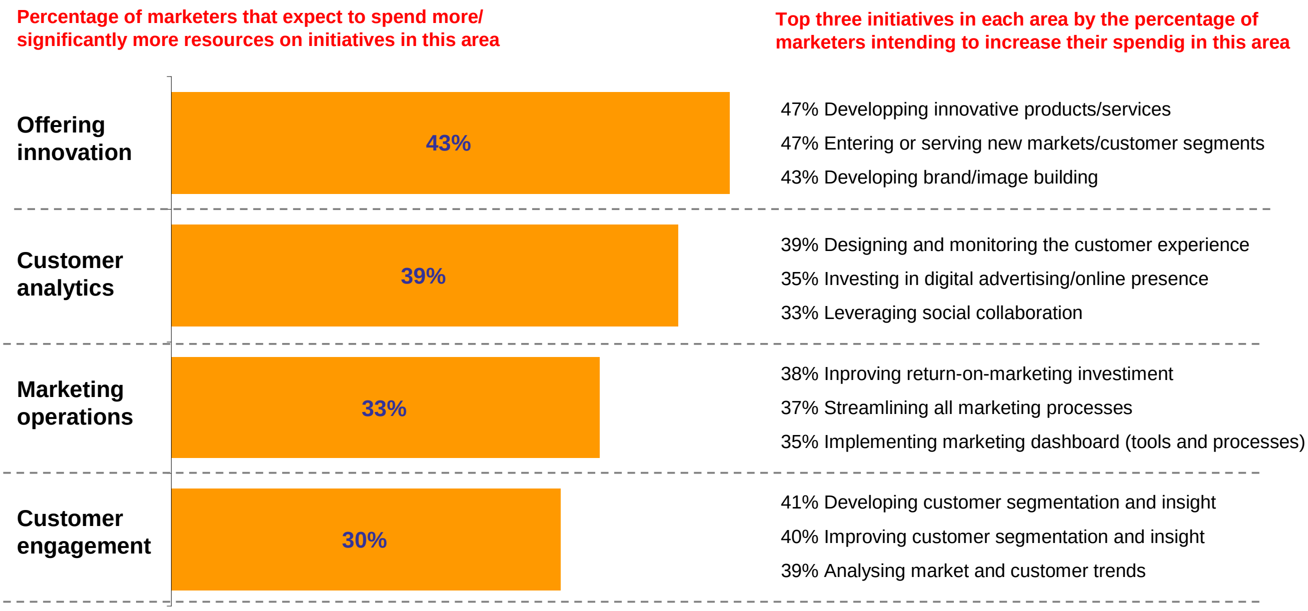


Source: Accenture 2010

Customer analytics

Accenture's managing director of marketing transformation stressed the importance of understanding customers' behaviour, even though today they're demographically heterogeneous and their preferences are constantly shifting. Indeed, Accenture's research shows that high-performance business are five times more likely than low performers to use analytics strategically. Thus, the data-driven insights delivered by analytics are crucial to power profitable growth. One of their biggest merit is that they fully segment the market, thereby enabling firms to serve their customer-base accurately.

Fig. 6. Targeted Investments



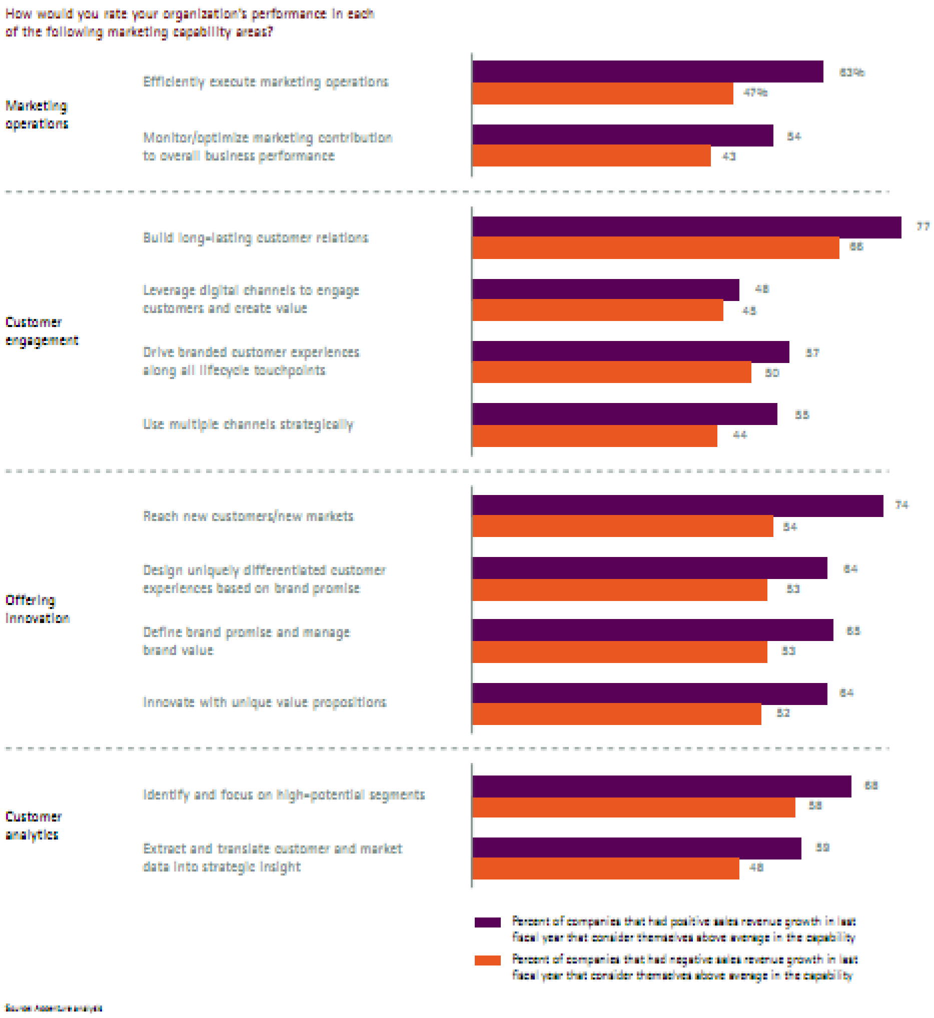
Source: Accenture 2010

The confidence factor

Companies with recent sales growth are more confident about their abilities in key marketing areas than companies with recent negative sales growth.

Accenture asked the following question to the companies it surveyed: how would you rate your organization's performance in each of the following marketing capability areas?

Fig.7. Performance rating according to different market capability areas



Source: Accenture 2010

2.2.2 *Insight into innovation*

Leading companies in general, inspired by the brand history of Accenture, are nowadays turning their strategies into profitable actions. This process involves several aspects, like the enhancement of existing offers, the use of more innovative tools and a deeper customer engagement. For many, in deed, creating a dialogue with customers has become the name of the game. Although investment in people remains crucial, both social media and innovative analytics are among the top priorities.

As follows we introduce two case studies, which clearly emphasize how firms can deploy analytic tools to deepen their understanding of clients, ultimately optimizing the offers and targeting advertising more effectively. We will present first the example of Sephora, explaining how the marketing team has leverage the power of customer analytics, thus creating one of the most loyal customer-base in its industry. Secondly we will consider how HarperCollins, a trade publisher has created a global digital warehouse with additional business growth opportunities, starting with the digitalization of its content.

Sephora is a revolutionary french company operating in the global beauty business. The centre of its success is the personal attention provided to its clients, through a multichannel approach of delivery. The company, in fact, has implemented one of the savviest and most sophisticated customer relationship management programs thanks to the customer analytics. Thus, the loyalty program gave them a compelling reason to release personal information, which was utilized, in turn, by the firms to create tailor-made products. Sephora's ability to view a single client over time and across different touch-points has provided it one of the highest response rates in the retail industry.

On the other hand, HarperCollins represent another example of how leading firms are coming to digital marketing. The publisher set up an innovative program aimed at creating an interactive writing platform, enabling writers to reach their audience and also allowing teens to publish personal works.

The use of social network devices, combining content with interactive exchange of opinions, has increased the brand awareness of the company, whilst consequently shortening the response to mounting demand for online services.

2.3 Implementing Branding Strategies in B2B

2.3.1 *Brand Equity and extendibility on brand name*

Brand extension is an opportunity to use the equity built up of existing brands in order to enhance marketing productivity. The brand equity has several definitions; academics refer to it as the incremental cash flow resulting from a product with brand name, rather than the goodwill associated to a brand name, additionally a value added or a residual value in the form of favorable impressions, attitudinal dispositions and behavioral predilections.

Brand extension will be a function of the perceived quality of the core brand, the degree of fit between the original and the extension product categories, and the difficulty of making the extension product. The interactive relationship between quality and the fit variables is sensitive to the levels of perceived quality and fit; furthermore different images for brands of equal quality and in the same parent category may produce different extension's evaluation, depending on the target category. The framework tends to be even more complex if we consider that consumer evaluations of brand extensions have proven to depend on personal tastes, core brand's features and the target category.

Economists have developed a model of consumer utility for testing the extendibility of several brand names. To maximize future extendibility, a brand should enhance the value to consumers of characteristics associated with its brand name, such as quality, style, durability and reputation.

In the last three decades, about 90% of the line extensions were made by using existing brand names to enter new market categories. In fact, capitalizing on the equity in established brands has proved to be the guiding strategy of product planners. The driving force for leveraging on that is the massive cost (up to 80$ million for National introduction) incurred by a firm entering a new product category. Moreover, brand equity has real value in term of licensing (which is becoming a 14$ billion business). Through licensing, hence, is possible to extend the brand name across segments and keep it alive. An understanding of the overall extendibility of a brand name can help management to decide how broadly or narrowly to define the related business. The step further is to provide a framework enabling managers to foresee the new product development process through an opportunity-identification phase. The starting point of past research in this area has been the influence on consumer evaluations made by two factors:

- The similarity between parent and extension categories or between the incumbent brands and the target category, in other words the fit between the brand and the extension category;
- The brand associations, thus the unique meaning associated with a brand name.

The objective is the transference of brand beliefs and attributes to specific new product categories through brand extension. A brand name influences both the consumer’s perceptions of and the preference for the brand. In order to understand its effect on extendibility, the researchers have divided the overall product utility in: physical attributes, utility for the brand name, utility due to the interaction of the previous two. By partitioning the total utility, it’s possible to predict the utility transfer, associated with a brand name, to its potential extensions. The conclusion presents a double implication:

a) Higher quality perceptions toward the original brand are associated with more favorable attitudes toward the extension. As a result, superior quality brands stretch farther than average quality ones. Eventually, the utility contributes only to the extent that parent attributes are also present in the new category, at the desired level.

b) The brand name by attribute interaction is a category dependent term. The transfer of a brand's perceived quality is enhanced when the two product classes fit together. The fit between these elements is indeed crucial for the interaction process.

For both of the tasks, the conjoint and the brand extension-evaluation one, the brand name exercises a pivotal role; several studies have find out that the most highly valued brands extend better, on average, across different extension categories. Aaker, in particular, has identified four dimensions on which brand names can add value to extensions: awareness/presence, brand associations, quality associations and credibility. The brand equity can be exploited not only through the spillover effects of a familiar brand name in new product categories; it can provide familiar carryover effects across time and usage conditions. In addition, the purchase intent measures are influenced by category usage rates, which vary across the extension categories. However, we would expect that if a brand name with a highly interactive utility component was extended to a distant category, the extension is more likely to hurt the evaluation of the brand in the original category. For all these reasons B2B firms need to be strictly aware of the type of marketing strategy that they want to implement, considering also the future effects (that a combining brands policy can cause) on the reliability of the service they provide to customers.

2.3.2 *Co-Branding: a change for B2B firms to establish global brands into local markets*

Co-branding involves the short or better long-term association or combination of two (or more) individual brands, products and other distinctive property assets to form a separate and unique product. The term co-branding can also be used interchangeably with co-marketing, brand alliances, joint branding and symbiotic marketing.

Acquisition is one good reason to employ the co-branding strategy: the acquiring company often obtains a rich brand heritage, useful to boost declining products. Furthermore, it helps gaining more marketplace exposure and fend off possible threats from competitors. It also limits the risks of entering into a new product category, since it appears to be a compelling proposition for compatible product categories. Co-branding is also typically used as a marketing device aimed at capitalizing on brand value; this, in fact, increases the chance that two products will be regarded as being similar in quality. The final effect is to enhance assimilation, thus the image of the target brand usually converges with the better-known one (so that consumers can adopt its brand value). Since the unknown brand hasn't position in the mind of consumers, no attitudes are formed about it, then, they associate it with the well-positioned one. When a brand can't effectively signal its high quality or propose new products to the market, the best way to do it is to form a synergic alliance with well-established firms. Undeniably, the fact that there's a second brand name on a product might signal to potential clients that another firm is willing to put its reputation on the line. Last but not least, two brand names in a co-branded product can give consumers more information on product essential features, thus making the brands extremely attractive. Park, Jun and Shocker explored the dual brand effects and stated that by combining two brands with complementary features, the composite one shows a better profile than a direct brand extension. The improved profile seems to enhance composite brand effectiveness in influencing consumer choice and preferences.

Co-branding has proved to be a pivotal strategy for the transition of brands; in fact, for multinational companies with global brands, it raises the chances of success in local markets, whilst for local firms owning strong brands it secures their future through FDI and access to technology. They can also maintain consumer franchise and loyalty. This kind of strategy had been extremely rewarding in the US market, where it proliferated in a wide array of contexts, from advertisements to product placement and retail outlets. Studies and researches, carried on by Simonin and Ruth, had reported that cooperative brand activities have enjoyed a 40% annual growth rate. They also found that brand familiarity plays a key role in understanding brand alliance evaluations and their spillover effects. That explains why co-branding is being used more and more as a strategy for introducing consumer products. Indeed, exploiting brand popularity and extension, many new products are launched as co-brands, with the final purpose of capitalizing on the complementarily features of different brands.

The winning factor of co-branding relies on the inherent equity that all brands have gained so far. During the transition phase, in fact, all brand names are kept for a while, giving consumers the time to adapt. A common way to achieve consolidation is by harmonizing the package design and logotypes. All these techniques aim at creating a new unique perception of the co-branded product. Each brand is presented in the context of the other, so that judgments about the alliance are likely to be affected by prior attitudes toward the individual brands. As Levin argued, dual branding provides a potentially reliable context for evaluating the separate brands. Moreover, future expectations toward the alliance itself can also influence how both brands are evaluated. Dual branding gives the brands involved equal prominence, however it can take a variety of forms: ingredient co-branding, like Volvo and Michelin; same company co-branding, such as Kraft Lunchables; and multi-sponsor co-branding, such as Delta airlines pairing with American express through the Sky Miles credit card.

As a strategy, co-branding has been very successful in the Unites States; moreover it proved to be a transversal phenomenon (thus reshaping also the B2B structure). The final outcome has been a take-over by international brands, not known there, of well-known local ones. Indeed, it would be extremely hard to break into the local business by using a foreign brand name such a move would surely be rejected even from the most loyal consumer. Even Accenture has adhered to such a devise to spread the awareness of its brand, empowering the value of intangible asset not only within the US market, but worldwide.

Using Co-Branding to leverage a brand

According to Simon and Ruth's findings, previous attitudes toward the parent brands, the perceived fit, so compatibility, and the perceived similarity of their images all exercise a significant positive influence. In fact, attitudes toward brand extensions are more favorable the better the perceived fit between the brand's original product class and that one of the extension. Obviously, strong parent brands affect the perceptions of co-brand more than weaker ones; moreover secondary brands are relative immune to negative spillover effects, especially when they're well-respected. They also appear to be immune to brand dilution and confusion; leading to the conclusion that co-branding arrangements pose a greater risk to the primary brand. Finally, post-effects like spillovers do manifest especially when parent brands are less familiar.

The above statements suggest that product complementarity might be a key appeal in co-branding, since it allows the co-brand to inherit the desirable qualities of each parent brand. In fact, high-quality brands do confer quality perceptions to partners, whilst high-quality ingredients have been shown to enhance the perceived quality of lower quality and private label products. It's also noteworthy that associating a nationally branded ingredient with a private label product didn't adversely affect the evaluation of the national one. Similarly, Washburn found that low-equity brands gain more in a co-branding situation that high-equity ones, but don't manage the high-equity brands they partner with. Therefore, powerful brands have relatively little to lose in co-branding ventures, even when the partner is a weak. Finally, Blackett and Boad identified another source of value that a brand could offer. Each partner, in fact, can increase awareness by gaining access to the other's customer base. Credit card co-branding represents a commonplace example of reach/awareness co-branding. According to Blackett and Boad's assumptions, four conclusions can me listed:

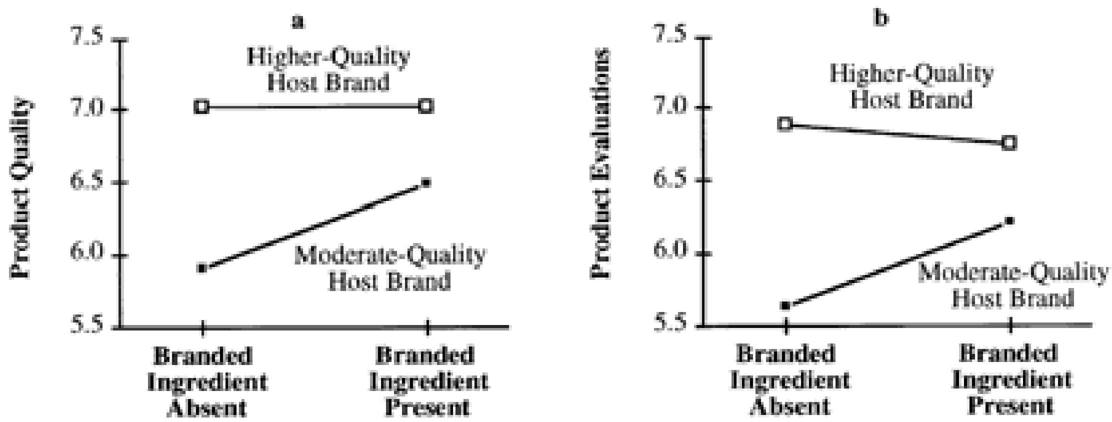
- Co-branded products can acquire the salient attributes of both parent brands, making co-branding a highly attractive alternative to brand-extension;
- Spillover effects come from the perception about co-branded products and impact on the parent ones;
- Pairing a high-status parent brand with a low-status parent isn't necessarily detrimental to the high-status one;
- Each partner brings a customer base, potentially available to the other, as in reach/awareness co-branding.

Bearing this in mind, Accenture has set up several partnerships, in manifold areas of business, all spinning around B2B but referring at the same time, to sectors particularly interesting for the company. The alliances with Cisco and SAP are the strongest examples of how Accenture has focused on IT, and in particular on 'Cloud Computing,' in order to successfully keep on growing, diversifying the offer.

2.3.3 *Ingredient Branding*

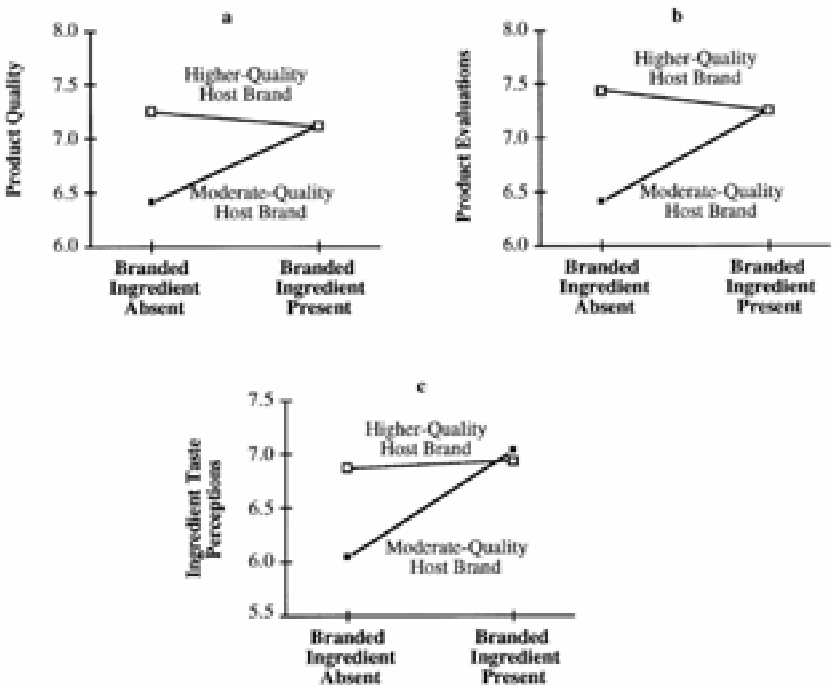
Nowadays, a new marketing trend has affirmed among firms operating in global industry, as well as in B2B, called the 'ingredient branding'. According to this strategy, key attributes of one brand are incorporated into another one, with the final objective of the enhancing the differentiation of the host brand from competitors. Firms are motivated to establish brand alliances by linking themselves to other firms or brand's attributes in order to improve both their competitiveness and equity. In fact, ingredient branding would send a strong signal to consumers that the product offers the combined benefits of two quality brands into one. However, the impact of this strategy will depend on the inherent importance of the ingredient itself. Hence, branding a well-known ingredient should facilitate the host brand's differentiation and evaluation to a greater extent. The sequence of graphics, which follow, highlights the impact of In-branding, considering several aspects of products (quality and evaluations). The firsts compare the situation in which a branded ingredient is selected or not, by a parent/host firm; the last two instead analyze the spillover effects of deploying a ingredient brand strategy and the further impact on competitiveness.

Fig. 8. The effect of branded ingredients



Source: Norris/McCarthy 1999

Fig.9. Change of competitiveness through branded ingredients

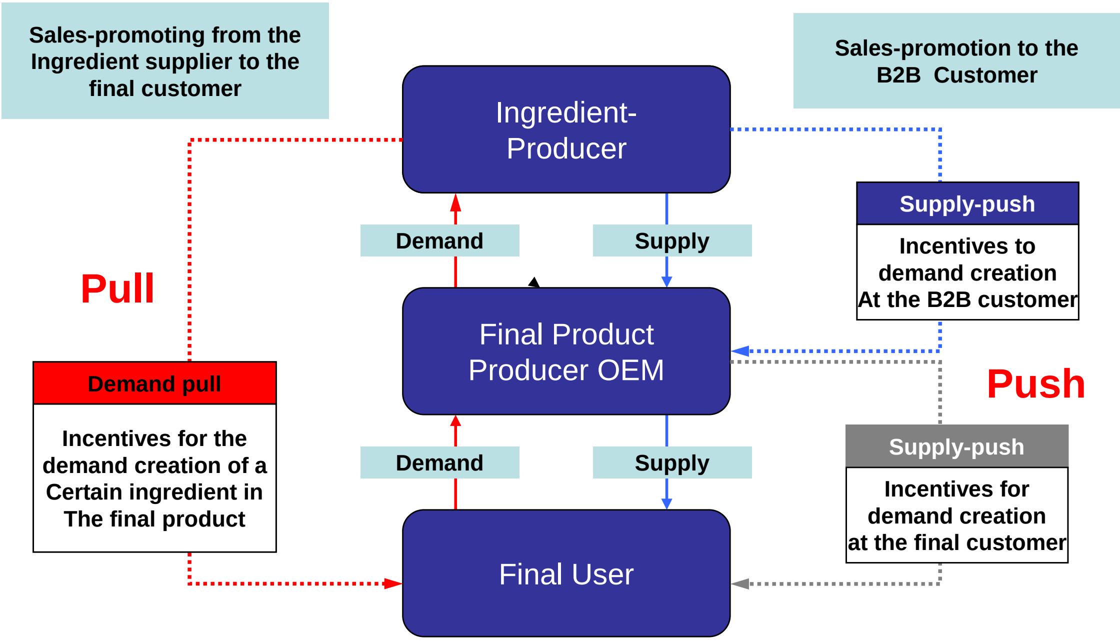


Source: Norris/McCarthy 1999

It's interesting to observe the difference existing between high-quality host brands and moderate-quality ones. The effects seem to be particularly relevant for the second category.

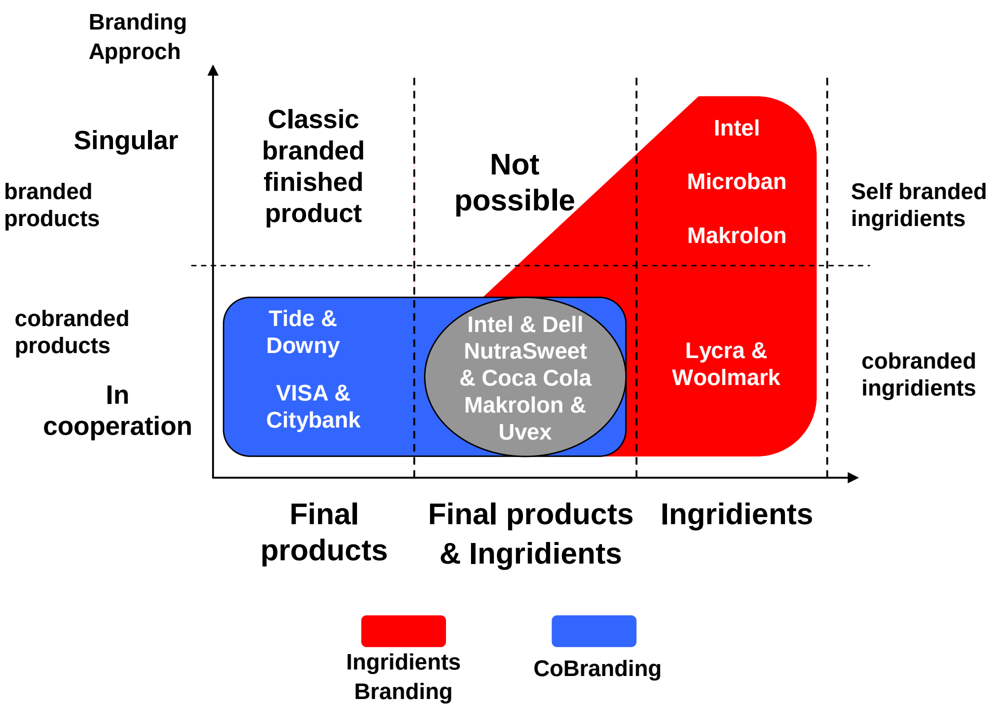
Finally, ingredients are deemed to lead toward an improvement of both consumer product evaluation and acceptance. As a consequence, they offer moderate-quality host brands a potentially powerful strategy for developing competitive position, marketplace performance and ultimately consumer satisfaction.

Fig. 10. In-branding strategies: supply-push and demand-pull



Source: Kotler/Pfoertsch (2006)

Fig.11. The distinction between In-branding and Co-branding

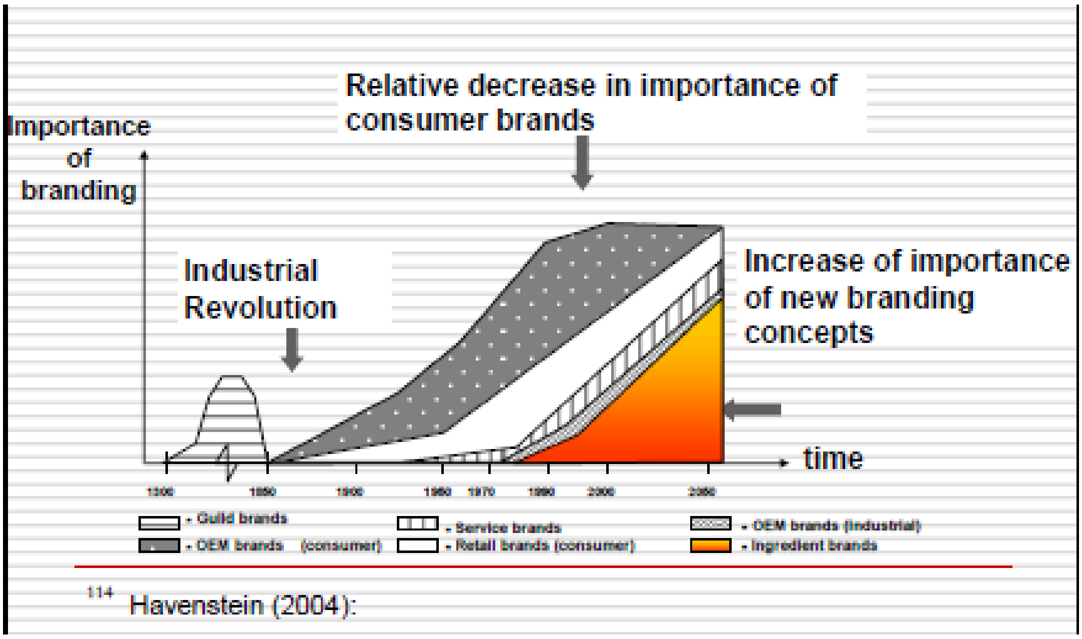


Source: Baumgarth (2001)

Future of ingredient brands

The picture below shows the path of development signing the importance of branding throughout the years. Starting from the industrial revolution till the actual global economy, Havenstein registered an exponential growth of such phenomenon. In particular, both the concept of branding and the role of customer expectations about brands, have been the focus of the study.

Fig.12. The trend of growth for branding



Source: Havenstein (2004)[15]

Firms working in B2B environments, which seek to plan a In-brand strategy, need to enrol a list of priorities:

- Analyze you offerings for real value items for the customers and segment them
- Determine the benefits in the value chain
- Identify the power configuration in the value chain
- Analyze the business environment and competitive situation for their brand
- Evaluate and stimulate possible In-brand offerings

There are still some open research questions about how firms can achieve competitive advantages through ingredient branding. Considering it as a type of brand alliances, B2B companies have to establish brand metrics for multi-level branding and eventually predict

15 Kotler, Pfoertsch. Brand Management in B2B (2006)

ingredient branding's success.

2.3.4 *Online/E-Branding*

Anything seemed possible at the dawn of the Computer Age, but companies and governments needed experts who could tell them how to benefit from a succession of new technologies.

The global spread of technology raised the competitive pressure of companies across a wide range of industries. In fact, the advent of the Internet and corresponding growth of e-commerce were driving fundamental changes in the way companies did business, and creating a new industry environment. Clients flocked to consultants for help in designing and implementing online strategies to interact with their existing operations. In addition to their excellence in using computer technology, Accenture consultants had a crucial influence on new management techniques, such as just-in-time processes to manufacturing clients, serving as a model for truly integrated business solutions. Knowledge capital, then, was its most valuable asset, and the organization driver as well. Both partners and clients should diligently find new ways to share and reuse information and deploy it worldwide. This is an old story, especially if consider that in 1993 the firm launched its Knowledge Xchange, an initiative that enabled personnel to share information globally using personal computers and Lotus-Notes (at the time cutting-edge technology). Millions of pages of information would be eventually included in the shared databases. Also, three years later, the company developed client/server software for use in key business processes, and ultimately integrated and maintained their client/server systems.

Consulting played an increasing crucial role at Accenture as pioneering partners focused on using computer technology to improve both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the client's management systems. As the company began growing worldwide, it achieved efficiencies for clients across a variety of industries. Accenture focused on transforming its own approach to business as well, constantly experimenting new ideas and global projects.

The late 1990s witnessed a surge of entrepreneurial risk-taking unleashed by the growth of the Internet. The fully independent Andersen Consulting established its own identity with the adoption of a new name, Accenture, and a successful IPO, despite the bursting of the dot-com bubble. In the meantime, it remained focused on 'attacking the marketplace'.[16] Hence, there was a tremendous amount of work to be done. The economy was booming, especially the Information Technology (IT) sector, and Andersen Consulting was leading the consulting services to the soaring communications and telecommunications area. In fact, eighteen of the top twenty communications companies worked so closely with Andersen Consulting (during the dot-com boom) that they hardly sought competitive bids on new projects. However, the consultants were so obsessed with major clients that they trailed some rivals in serving the soaring e-commerce market, in the US as well as in other regions. The company responded quickly to the Internet's impact on clients of all sizes, and by 1999 was providing a full complement of e-commerce services. Several months later, it was also asked to create a more integrated and satisfying customer experience across its Internet presence. Hence, the company introduced (for a French bank), the first banking service delivered via interactive digital television, using a simple remote control. In Canada, simultaneously, it was working with another bank, CIBC, to use Internet-based procurement to slash acquisition costs for non-strategic goods, and also to identify approaches to new markets. In 2004, again, the company led a successful bid by the Smart Border Alliance to win the bidding for the US Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) contract, to create a virtual

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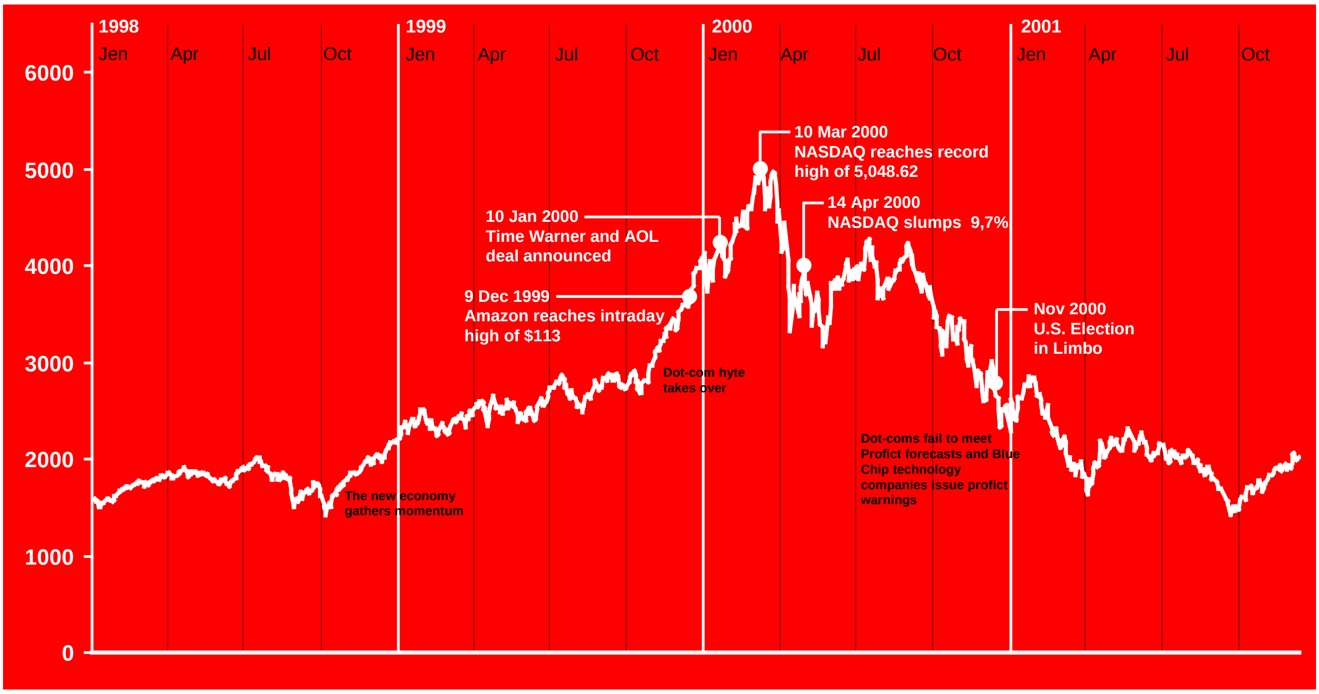
[16] Shaheen, the company's CEO. San Francisco meeting, December 1997.

border for the United States.

Fig. 13. The technology sector: boom and bust



Source: Four Corner, Australia Broadcasting Corporation

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Strategic Brand Management: Accenture Case Study

The case study presents a compelling example of how a well-known firm in B2B sector, Accenture, has undertaken a process of re-branding in order to reposition itself in the consulting service market. I've chosen this case study since it has been one of the most remarkable process of branding management, if we consider both the magnitude of the advertising campaign and the short amount of time available for such a big change. Never before had a re-branding of such scope been implemented over so short a time-frame. This issue makes the case particularly interesting and actual. Nevertheless, Accenture was able to maintain its customers loyal as well as to recruit new potential clients, leveraging on the brand equity consolidated in the previous years. In order to further understand this process of change, I though it was important to go back to the start, when everything was conceived and envisioned for the first time.

Andersen Consulting was established in 1989 by Arthur Andersen as a consequence of the separation between its accounting firm and the consulting practice division. The biggest challenge for the brand new independent business unit was to retain the positive aspects of the previous brand equity, along with the limitations associated with an accounting brand. For Andersen Consulting, in fact, positioning in the Information Technology market space was an extremely difficult task to accomplish; moreover, it was struggling to force a separate identity from its accounting heritage. Before this inception, Andersen Consulting wasn't well known in the information technology sector; moreover, those who did know it have always considered it as accountants rather than an innovative technology solution deliver. That's the reason why Andersen Consulting used extensive market research to create a brand and establish credibility through an impressive naming strategy. At the same time, to bridge the gap, it leveraged all of the positive aspects with the previous brand. Market research and data analysis were also crucial for launching the new name and positioning. Andersen Consulting, in fact, set a ground-breaking strategy by coupling sophisticated marketing tools with professional services industry's first large-scale advertising campaign. The objective was double: to build a new identity through a renaming and repositioning strategy, secondly to create a reliable brand image. As a result, over the next decades, Andersen Consulting grew from an accounting firm's offshoot into the world's largest management and technology consulting organization. Despite this success, the relationship with the Arthur Andersen company became strained over time, so that in August 2000 Andersen Consulting was granted its independence. Now a new challenge arises: after spending an estimated $7 billion[17] building the Andersen Consulting over a decade, the firms had to find, implement and introduce to the world a new name in a matter of months. Furthermore, this re-branding also coincided with a different positioning toward a broadened set of capabilities.

Company history

In 1913 the economics professor Arthur Andersen founded its accounting firm, aimed to offer more than the standard certifications of corporate balance sheets, rather a sound under standing of the principles of economics and finance[18]. In the 1950s, Arthur Andersen began offering consulting services to companies wishing to implement information systems; four years later consultants from the company programmed and installed the world's first business

17 Andersen Consulting estimate, quoted in "Andersen Consulting wins Independence". Wall Street Journal, 2000

18 As quoted in "Our founder". Arthur Andersen Press Release, 2000

computer for General Electric. By the late 1970s, Arthur Andersen business was becoming increasingly global: a new structure was needed to address legal, tax, and competition issues in several markets. In 1977 the company created an Arthur Andersen & Co. Society Cooperative to govern different divisions and to deliver seamless services across the world. This entity was eventually coined the Andersen Worldwide Organization. Two years later the Administrative Services Division became the Management Information Consulting Division (MICD), performing a range of consulting activities in the information business. [19]

Consulting takes off

The 1980s signed the boom of the consulting business, mainly since a national recession forced companies to rethink their strategies, in order to stay competitive. As a result, MICD began gene rating significant profits for the accounting firm. Although MICD operated as a professional services firm, it functioned as a unit of A. Andersen; its identity was directly linked to it. However, the qualities typically associated with accounting firms (such as risk-aversion and conservatism), didn't match the traits essential for a consulting organization, which are innovativeness, creativity and dynamism. MICD division thus suffered low visibility, while its image was perceived by customers as undifferentiated.

To cope with this image crisis, in 1987 MICD embarked on an 'Image Initiative': the triple goal aimed to generate awareness, differentiate itself in the information technology services market space, and finally distance itself from the accountancy heritage image. One of the pillars of such initiative concerned the selection of a new name. So, to help devise a consistent strategy, a research was conducted and internal debate stimulated. The views on brand equity and its impact on future business opportunities were highly divergent; however,

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[19] As quoted in International Court of Arbitration decision, v.2. July 28, 2000

a consistent group of thought supported the idea to borrow equity from A. Andersen, yet create a distinct position in the market. This solution would provide a separation from the previous company, while at the same time guarantee the benefits related to its equity. Finally, the name also ensured a clear positioning, while the association with A. Andersen lent credibility and recognition. Indeed, in the consulting business, a reputation for innovation was the key to success.[20]

Andersen Consulting's emergence

The consulting sector experienced tremendous growth in the 1980s, reaching an estimated $ 30 billion annual business globally in 1990 from just $ 3 billion in 1980 (ten years before). The latter down turn affected consulting firms more severely because the business environment has fostered corporate distrust of consultancies. In addition, corporations wanted changes implemented, not simply suggested, but not every consulting firm was able to execute the strategy recommended. To better understand the magnitude of this phenomenon, just consider that Bain Consulting laid off 17% of its staff in 1990, KPMG cut back on the number of consulting partners during 1991. Even though the industry was faltering, A. Andersen grew successfully, by 19% to $ 2.7 billion in 1992, a year when IT consultancy segment grew by under 7%. The company rode the wave of such consulting boom, emerging then as one of the premier IT consultancies. Apart from offering standard business consulting, it offered a range of IT services, from designing complex computer networks to integrate companies' database to developing and installing financial trading systems. The IT business has yielded out standing profit margins, which fuelled this accelerated growth. System integration concerns the design and the implementation of complex package

[20] Civil War at Arthur Andersen. "The Economist, August 17, 1991

application or customer technology-based business solutions, required to support critical enterprise operations. This represented the latest trend in the wider category of information technology services. Andersen Consulting focused on offering system integration devices to a large range of key industries, including financial services, products, health care, government, communications and utilities. The company also found success with traditional outsourcing avenues as well. In fact, in July 1990, A. Consulting opened a data processing center, thereby establishing a strong presence in the outsourcing market as well as posting strong increases on an annual basis.

3.1.1 *The role of Marketing*

The newly formed company set a new standard for marketing a professional service provider; Andersen Consulting was credited as being the first professional services company to advertise aggressively. In 1989, in fact, it didn't only invent a new management and technology organization, but it also created a new advertising category for professional firms. Of course, it needed the help of a communication strategy like Young & Rubicam. The merit of A. Consulting, in the services sector, was the elimination of the historical formal rules which have prevented advertising within the professional services category. Furthermore, since the company has understood the pivotal role of IT for consulting businesses, it began marketing itself as an organization that helped companies to apply technology to create competitive advantage. Thus, the marketing and communication campaign was meant to create awareness of the brand, as well as to communicate the leadership position of A. Consulting in the marketplace. In order to achieve an independent identity, the company exploited marketing in a strategic sense, and had the courage to create a brand and invest in it, at the time when branding wasn't a priority for professional services firms. Such an innovative strategy allows A. Consulting to forge a distinctive factor and to enhance its predominance in the marketplace, against all competitors.

Breakthrough Approaches

The launch of the new brand officially began with the New Year's campaign, featuring a television commercial that stressed the A. Consulting's technology expertise, thereby positioning them as a leader in empowering organizations to apply IT to business advantage. The commercial also aimed at differentiating the image of A. Consulting, personifying the company as creative, driven, far-sighted and innovative. The choice of the slogan was extremely pondered, thus meant to be the most appealing and attractive campaign ever:

"One night, not too many years from now, some companies will have cause for celebration. They'll be the ones who used information and technology not merely as a way to compute, but as a way to compete. Andersen Consulting would like to help you be one of them".

The broadcast commercials were also featured with print advertising, showing the following headline: "Sometimes success requires a little reorganization". The slogan offered information technology as a means of overcoming the restrictions or limitations of geography. It's remarkable to note that A. Consulting has spent approximately $ 5 million in advertising during the first year, which at the time was a full 50% of all media expenditures for the whole consulting category. This was hugely unorthodox within the consulting industry. Moreover, the company has wisely alternated periods of high advertising activity with inactivity, to create the illusion of a more ambitious program to come. In doing so, it has strongly broken with traditions, and such a break has been subject of internal debate, but despite that, the marketing program it implemented turned out to be instrumental in its early success. The partner and director of Global Advertising and Brand Management, Teresa Poggenpohl, defined the image work done so far as being the catalyst to get senior executive registration of the brand, serving as a crucial door opener for partners and business development. [21]Complementing the extensive advertising program, the firm also initiated an aggressive and targeted relationship with media vehicles. A team of internal specialists partnered with Burson-Marsteller, a leading public relations firm to influence industry analysis, along with the tier-one business press, in order to position Andersen Consulting as a leader in the services industry, by increasing awareness among the target audience and supporting brand building activities.

Metrics to drive Performance

From the very start, the company sought consistency in its marketing activities; the impressive commitment to advertising and such ad spending drove awareness of the brand, exceeding other consulting firms. In addition, by supplementing the top line advertising with media and analyst relations, Andersen Consulting maintained a consistent as well as integrated marketing program, in advance of competitors. Moreover, the company measured the effect of such advertising with annual tracking studies and regular measures of the senior executive target audience's perception of the brand. Market research was critical in obtaining valuable input from its key target audience, while also verifying the success of the initiatives. Since the advertising investment was drawn directly from the partners' potential profits, they needed assurance that their money was well spent, hence they continuously demanded proof that results warranted the expenditures. As a result, to monitor the situation strictly, very efficient marketing techniques (as well as metrics) have been developed to gauge the reliability of the marketing. From its inception, Andersen Consulting conducted several extensive market researches focusing on five factors:

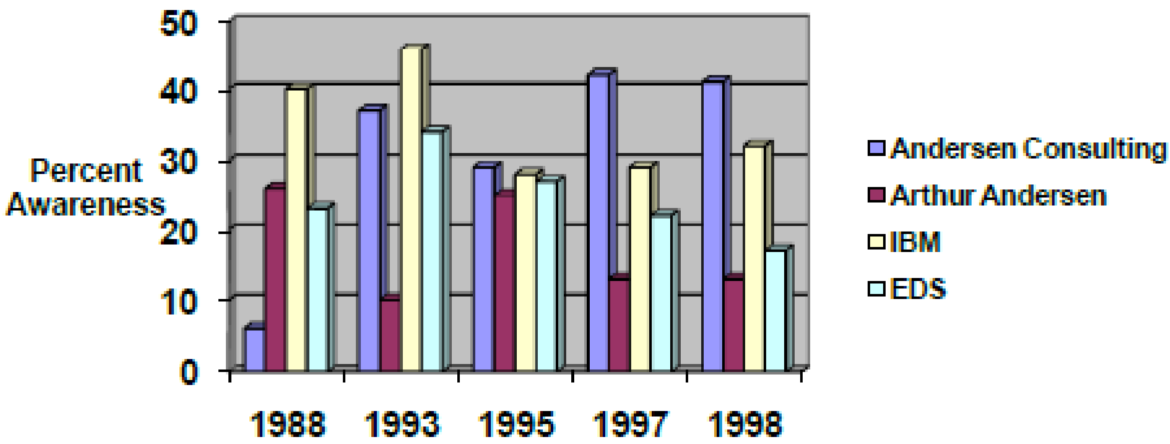
1) Marketplace awareness: the measure of brand awareness in each of the major countries across brand features, personality traits and service offerings;

[21] Teresa Poggenpohl. Personal Interview, December 15, 2000

2) Client satisfaction: the measure of the company's performance with its global client base;
3) Buyers values: the measure of the key values of its global target audience to understand and stay ahead of market trends;
4) Advertising copy testing: the pre and post test measuring the effectiveness of all print, poster and TV advertising concepts;
5) Media monitoring: the measure of both number and type of media hits in the leading business and industry press.

In 1988, only 6% of respondent nationally knew of Andersen Consulting as a systems integration consultancy, a number that would climb to 37% globally in five years.

Fig.1 Unaided Awareness Levels of AC vs. Competitors (As systems integration consultants)



Sources: Image Awareness Tracking Study (1998 & 1993), National Awareness Tracking (1993 & 1995) and Global Awareness Tracking (1997 & 1998)

For comparison, IBM had 90% awareness in the same arena. Commenting the results, Teresa Poggenpohl said: "Research is critical to all of our programs. Both research and insight evolve our strategy, some enable people to react to our creative, others to measure how we're doing in terms of driving awareness and perception gains in the marketplace".[22]

Global reach

In 1992, Andersen Consulting spent approximately $ 10 million on advertising, globally. The same year, it implemented an integrated marketing model, unifying its marketing and communication strategies on a global scale. The program involved three different but related areas of focus: image development, market development, and business development.

Image development entailed research, positioning, advertising, communications, media / industry analyst relations, event and other activities that strengthen the firm's personality and global brand.

Marketplace development involved database marketing, business development centres, market research and similar activities which provide an industry market focus, define best clients and articulate what the firm can offer them. For example, in order to facilitate development of new ideas to help clients, the firm established a number of Business Integration Centers, Technology Centers, and Solution Centers worldwide. According to Jim Murphy, Global Managing Director, these centres fostered innovation and built solid relationships to enhance both firm's brand and positioning.[23] The final aspect of such integrated model, the business development, involved market management, client management, relationship selling and opportunity management. It's important to note that each aspect of the model was supported by marketplace research, to gain both marketplace insight and communication effectiveness' measures.

The changing marketplace

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22 Teresa Poggenpohl. Personal Interview, January 2002

23 Murphy James E. "Marketing and Communications in the Management Consulting Industry". The handbook of strategic public relations & integrated communication. Ed. Clarke L. Caywood. New York: McGraw Hill, 1997.

A significant portion of Andersen Consulting's annual revenue came from its systems integration business. Again, the company's executives foresaw further growth beyond computer networking projects: the wish wasn't just the growth into other consulting disciplines, but rather the bundling of different services together. The mission was to become 'the world's first and foremost full-service consulting emporium'.[24] The use of this combination of services to improve the overall operations was known as 'business integration'.

The first important consulting engagement for Andersen Consulting came in 1991, when the US pharmaceuticals company Merck enlisted it to help it market medicines manufactured by the Swedish drug company Astra. Thus a team of Merck employees and A. Consulting consultants created a marketing department made of 31 decentralized business units. A. Consulting designed and installed a computer network which enabled salespeople from different units to exchange information, quickly. As a result, the sales of Prilosec grew 50% in the first nine months of cooperation, and revenues for the year topped $ 600 million. Even though A. Consulting was firstly engaged for a one-time IT consultancy, by 1993 the pharmaceuticals company considered it a strategic partner and credited it molding much of Astra Merck's business plan.[25] On the A. Consulting side, its manager partner at the time, George Shaheen, defined business integration as follows: "there's no such thing as an IT project. There's only a business project with IT content. Although it was the key in transforming the organization, success came from using the technology to link the strategy with the operations and the people, to obtain real business advantage.[26] I think we've been able to proceed expeditiously because for years we realized that experience in and around the

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24 Inside Andersen's Army of Advice. Fortune, October 4, 1993

25 Andersen jumps into full-service outsourcing. Computer world, May1, 1995

26 information Technology checks out. London Times, June 30, 1991

business side of the equation is very important along with the technology side".[27]

Capitalizing on business integration

As the marketplace continued to change, A. Consulting anticipated and moved with it, taking a bigger step in global branding by developing a world-wide integrated program. It was 1994. Prior to that year, advertising originated in the US for export to different international markets; however, as the firm's business focus became global, it developed an advertising program that projected globally consistent images and messages across all mediums, to be powerful in all local markets. The firm conducted several focus groups testing in the US, Europe, Japan and also Australia to determine which ad concept would help the most to achieve the desired image, positioning and messaging. Such rigorous and diligent research approach, the company gained several awards, including the Wall Street Journal top scoring advertising award, the Business Week award for excellence in corporate advertising and the Forbes advertising excellence best in category award. In order to reach the maximum transferability across cultural boundaries, much of A. Consulting's advertising was metaphor-based. One of them was called 'Shark'; in such advertising a school of fish swim in hazardous, predator-laden waters. As the fish swim, they collectively form together in the image of a shark: the unspoken message emphasizes the power that a skilful team-oriented organization can yield. Most importantly, the ad conveyed that different parts of an organization must be linked and properly aligned to grasp business success.

[27] As quoted in 'Andersen Reeingineers Big Business'. Systems integration business, August 1992

To ensure a highly targeted strategy for its global campaign, A. Consulting sought advertising paths that targeted key prospects and clients where they lived and worked, targeting then publications and business news television programming. The company, in fact, was the first one to embrace airports as a marketing opportunity in the mid-1990s, and its message stood up, placing billboard style advertisements in prominent, high-traffic areas in over thirty airports world-wide. The firm's advertising appeared in eighteen countries in 1994, up from only five the previous year. Another significant development for A. Consulting that year was the International sports sponsorship strategy. The company, in fact, has become the sponsor for the Williams Formula One racing team. Additionally, it also became the title sponsor of the then titled Andersen Cosulting World Championship of Golf. This event evolved into its present day form being one leg of the World Golf Championships, entitled the Accenture Match Play Championship.

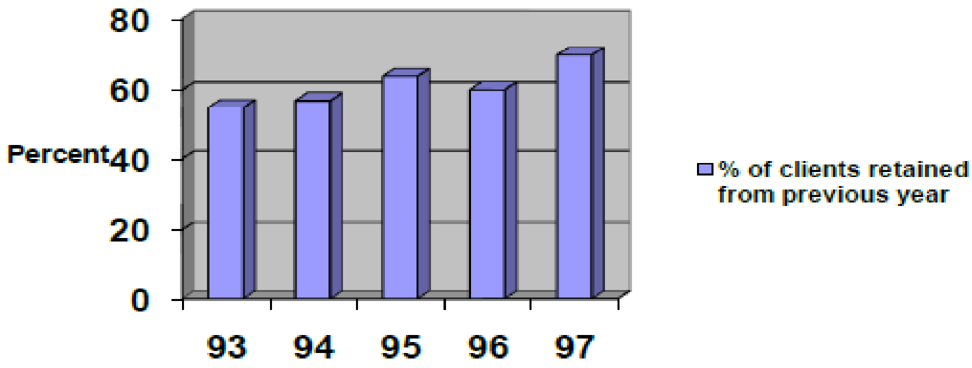
Measurable results

In just half a decade, Andersen Consulting’s marketing and communication program achieved noticeable results. Awareness has enhanced by 75% in approximately three years in Europe, while in the US it jumped from 6% to 50% during the same period. Additionally, between 1990 and 1993, total global awareness of Andersen Consulting grew from 32% to 79%. The levels of awareness for the company as a business re-engineering services provider arose from 26% in 1993 up to 43% in 1997, only four years later. A study conducted the same year by industry analyst IDC has shown that A. Consulting and IBM enjoyed the greatest familiarity among technology buyers. Both the firms were ranked as the two with owing the strongest set of attributes.

Obviously, Andersen Consulting’s status as an IT leader was a source of equity which aided its growth during the early 1990s. other associations for clients and prospects included creative and innovative in developing applications, visionary and leader. In the end, the company wasn’t known only for its technological capabilities, but even for its strategy consulting. Thanks to effective advertising and proven record of results, in little over half a decade, Andersen Consulting had earned a reputation as one of the premier consultancies in the world. By 1998, the company was the market leader in four major categories in consumer rankings of consulting firms: 1) management and technology consultancy; 2) operational strategical consulting; 3) systems integration; 4) business re-engineering.[28]

Fig.2 Andersen Consulting Client Retention Percentage

[28] Keller, Kevin Lane, Witness statement. Andersen Consulting business unit firms v. Arthur Andersen



Source: Andersen Consulting Marketing and Communications Department

3.1.2 *Conflict with Arthur Andersen*

As Andersen Consulting continued to prosper, Arthur Andersen was also changing as an organization. A 1990 agreement allowed the accounting unit of the parent company Andersen Worldwide to establish a non-computer consulting practice for business with annual revenue under $ 175 million. The consultants and accountants agreed that each company would provide separate, complementary services with minimal overlap, to limit the competitive crossover.[29] However, the distinction between the two companies was further eroded and such overlap was creating confusion in the marketplace.

Over time, Arthur Andersen has also begun using marketing as a tool to build business, thus triggering a confusing mechanism in the mind of potential clients. Moreover, it was attempting to leverage Andersen Consulting's brand image. As different studies tested, respondent were capable of differentiating the two brands to a satisfactory extent until A. Andersen advertisement were introduced, at that point the distinction lessened. Such confusion ultimately resulted in a loss of potential clients, which could therefore damage the

29 Arbitration chronology. AC.com, 2000

image of A. Consulting's business. After awareness tracking study from 1994 reported that 41% of senior-level executive respondent and 81% of CEOs surveyed expressed confusion about the relationship between the two firms, A. Consulting decided that it was time to make a move.

In the meantime, Arthur Andersen combined several practices within the firm to create A. Andersen Business Consulting in 1994. Soon after its formation the A. business consulting began targeting companies above the $ 175 million ceiling and offering computer-systems consulting. As a partner of A. Andersen stated: 'With business consulting, we'll have the ability to sustain our commitment to segments of the middle market, under $ 200 million and over, and parts of the larger global market.[30] A research report from the Gartner Group remarked: 'If this expansion of services by AA continues, we could see these two organizations becoming direct competitors. This would confuse both clients and the market.'[31]Additional misconception came from the fact that the media at times referred to both AA Business Consulting and Andersen Consulting as Arthur Andersen Consulting. Mistakes like that were made primarily by press articles, also in major publications such as Wall Street Journal and Dow Jones News. At this point, A. Andersen commissioned a Global Reputation Study which reported that A. Consulting enjoyed a stronger image than A. Andersen, and consequently the latter benefited the most from such confusion. Further proof of this was evidenced by awareness tracking studies from 1994-1995.

Fig. 3 Awareness Tracking: Andersen Consulting vs. Arthur Andersen

30 As quoted in 'How consulting issue is threatening to rend Andersen world-wide'. Wall Street Journal, February 4, 1998

31 Gartner Group report, 1995

1994 Unaided Awareness

	Business Re-eingineering	Strategy Consulting	Systems Integration	Organizational Change
Andersen Consulting	24%	18%	19%	10%
Arthur Andersen	27%	17%	18%	12%

November 1995 Unaided Awareness

	Business Re-eingineering	Strategy Consulting	Systems Integration	Organizational Change
Andersen Consulting	35%	32%	29%	23%
Arthur Andersen	31%	22%	25%	18%

Source: 1995 Global Awareness Tracking Study

Not only did awareness level for A. Andersen moved consistently with those of A. Consulting, but also the accounting unit enjoyed relatively high levels of awareness for service categories in which the firm had little market presence, compared to A. Consulting. To make an example, A. Andersen achieved a high awareness score in the 'strategy consulting' category despite the fact that the company had almost no corporate strategy practice. Analysts attributed A. Andersen's elevated reputation in this category to confusion with A. Consulting. Also the managing partner of AA at the time, Dick Measelle, agreed that the company benefited from the market image of the other.[32] A troublesome problem resulting from the confusion was the potential loss of brand equity for A. Consulting: the association with an accounting firm wasn't beneficial for it; conversely, given the amount of money and time A. Consulting has spent building its brand into a premier global consulting firm, the association with it aided the brand equity of AA Business Consulting.

32 Dick Measelle interview. Financial World, June 1994

3.1.3 Capitalizing on success

The mid-1990s was a time of great success for A. Consulting. From 1994 to 1997 consumer perceptions of A. Consulting improved considerably, moreover the percentage of respondents who agreed with a characterization of A. Consulting as ‘visionary’ increased from 39% to 54% in three years. Again, the percentage that agreed that the firm was ‘creative’ grew from 44% to 58%, while the percentage of respondent who considered it ‘leader’ rose from 48% to 68% in the same period. As a result, the firm’s client retention percentage rose from 55% to 70% between 1993 till 1997. A Consulting reaped financial success as well: from 1993 to 1998, the firm’s billings grew an average of 20% annually, reaching $ 8.2 billion in the end. The firm’s revenues, thus, continued to grow until they topped $ 11 billion in 2001. The positioning of A. Consulting’s print and television advertisings evolved slightly over time, but their tone still used a central metaphoric image, which suggested a problem business often faced, reinforced by a question underneath. The advertising contained the picture of an elephant crossing a precipitous drop by walking on a log placed over the gap. The question:’ Who said you can’t be big and nimble?’ explained that A. Consulting possessed the skills to help massive, far-flung organizations have the balance of the small ones.

'A-to-the-power-of-C' Rebranding

In an effort to evolve and stay ahead of the marketplace, an 18-month comprehensive review of the company was undertaken in 1998. The review included a global audit of current practices, as competitive analysis and client surveys. Such analysis produced a precise positioning to reflect the move to an e-Commerce business environment. Moreover, A. Consulting sought to extend and strengthen its brand image by updating the Corporate 'Logo'. Currently the firm wished to overhaul its logo to reflect its new brand positioning and further distance it from A. Andersen in look and feel. The new logo used the initials "AC" in a unique way, with a lower c resting above and on the right of the upper-case A.

Andersen Consulting

This graphic identity was drawn from the exponential notation in mathematics, so the logo communicated symbolically A. Consulting's energy and vision.[33] Other aspects of the revised branding and logo included the concept of a 'foundation line', which represented the firm's stability in a changing world. In order to inform the global audience of its new image, A. Consulting committed to expanding and strengthening its global marketing efforts. Midway through 1998, A. Consulting boosted its global marketing and communications commitment dramatically over the next two years, two-thirds of which was slated for use outside the US. Half of the budget went towards corporate sponsorships, including events such as Van Gogh exhibit in Washington D.C. the A.C. Match Play Championship and Formula One auto racing. The next year, in 1999, the company announced new $ 44 million advertising campaign aimed at further differentiating the firm from its competitors. The general theme was the A. Consulting's business integration approach, with particular emphasis on unleashing an organization's full potential, also reflecting the move into the e-Commerce environment.

The picture above, appearing in 1999, exhibiting the letter 'e', essentially ask the viewer: Is your e-Commerce strategy built to last? And consequently highlight the A. Consulting's experience to help business succeed in such environment.

Splitting from Arthur Andersen and repositioning Andersen Consulting

In December 1997, A. Consulting sought to split from A. Andersen, filing the arbitration with the International Court of Arbitration in Paris that would force the two business units to formally separate. When the two companies decided to split for the first time in 1989, they agreed that the more profitable of the two would pay the other a portion of annual profits no greater than 15%. Thus, A. Consulting had to pay over $ 450 million to A. Andersen from

[33] A. Consulting further distinguishes its marketplace image. Dataquest Alert, June 17, 1998

1989 till 1997, with payments for 1997 totalling $ 173 million. By 1996, AA Business Consulting was offering a range of IT services and directly competing with A. Consulting for clients. After several failed attempts by parent company Andersen Worldwide to reconcile the differences between the two competing business units, A. Consulting filed arbitration seeking official separation from A. Andersen. AA was willing to part with AC if the consulting firm paid upwards of $ 14 billion in compensation for use of the AC countered by demanding return of the transfer payments and seeking damages for A. Andersen's negative effect on the consulting firm's brand equity.

Measuring Brand Equity

As the arbitration process advanced, AC developed plans to distinguish from competitors, also wishing to capitalize on this momentum with a new brand positioning. In order to do that, hence evaluating the value of AC brand, the company undertook a brad equity measurement study. The study focused on numerous aspects of AC' brand equity: corporate image and awareness, personality traits, perceived capabilities, plus client consideration and preference. Using data collected by the research firm BPRI, the study compared public perceptions of AC with four competitors: IBM, Ernst & Young, McKinsey and EDS. As the figure below clearly shows, McKinsey emerged as the foremost business strategy services company, in terms of perceived capabilities, while IBM led the IT services segment. Nevertheless, AC had a strong position in both business strategy and Information Technology services, which enable it to post remarkably scores and ultimately lead on brand equity. The companies were ranked according to an overall brand equity model, which assigned each company a score in each of four categories (image, awareness, consideration, preference) and averaged the scores. It's crystal clear that Andersen Consulting staked out a leadership position, achieving the highest score on the brand equity scale.

Fig.4 Top 10 IT services providers

		Share of Market	
Rank	Brand	1999	1998
1.	IBM Corp.	8.6	9.2
2.	EDS	6.1	6.6
3.	First Data Corp.	3.1	3.1
4.	Computer Sciences Corp.	3.1	3.1
5.	Automatic Data Processing	2.8	2.7
6.	Andersen Consulting	2.7	2.8
7.	Hewlett-Packard	1.8	2.1
8.	Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu	1.7	1.2
9.	PriceWaterhouseCoopers	1.6	1.0
10.	Oracle Corp.	1.6	1.3

Source: Advertising Age, September 25, 20

Another study, conducted by Harris Research, ranked US consulting firms using a different set of competitors. Compared with McKinsey, BCG, Booz Allen, and AT Kerney, A. Consulting ranked first in the following categories: share of mind, uniqueness, value for money, and momentum. According to a 1998 survey of 500 executives conducted by Landor, AC ranked as the 14th strongest brand in the US, ahead of firms like Holiday Inn, Kodak and Citibank. These studies revealed not only that AC owned favourable qualities and attributes to provide a compelling brand equity; but rather show that the company occupied a unique position in terms of valued strategic business services and well-regarded IT solutions. The results witnessed the company's ability to combine strategic insight, vision, and though leadership with IT expertise in developing client solutions.[34] This hard-to-replicate combination of skills enabled AC to establish points of parity with both technology and strategy firms, while achieving points of difference too. To make an example, AC technology

34 Brand equity measurement initiative. Presentation, Andersen Consulting, November 1999

capabilities were a point of parity that enabled the firm to compete for clients with IBM.

Fig. 5 Overall Brand Equity Index

	Image	Awareness	Consideration	Preference	Average
Andersen Consulting	6.5	10	9.1	5.8	7.9
McKinsey	7.2	8.4	9.2	6.4	7.8
IBM	5.3	4.9	3.6	1.2	3.8
Ernst & Young	3.8	3.2	5.3	1.9	3.6
EDS	1.9	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.7

Source: Brand Equity Measurement Initiative, Andersen Consulting, November 1999

Developing a New Positioning

Over the years, A. Consulting has evolved its positioning to better meet the needs of its customers as well as the marketplace opportunities. This evolutionary model came not only from the demand side, but there was an organizational hunger for pushing the next horizon.[35] The firm, in fact, developed a positioning platform that captured the company's vision and strategy: become a bridge builder supporting companies bridge the gap from the old economy to the new. Moreover, AC role concerned the transformation of trends into business opportunities through its deep global knowledge, its unique vantage point and its breadth of resources and relations. The company's vision statement: 'To help our clients create their

35 Jim Murphy. Personal interview, January 2002

future', reflected the idea of partnering and the intention of AC to restore a positive relationship with its stakeholders. In July 2000, the firm tested its new positioning with employees, partners, clients, potential customers, dot-com, and recruits in key markets worldwide. The feedback was extremely positive, thus the company forged ahead with the repositioning. Underpinning such positioning was the company's vision to become one of the world's leading companies, bringing innovations to improve the way the world works and lives.[36] A. Consulting executives saw the firm as a leader in the new economy, capable of creating value in innovative ways, of broadening the accepted definition of a consulting firm. The firm's new positioning was intended to capture that essence. Such a big change in business strategy was realized through extensive market research with senior executives, coupled with input from a team of brand experts. A. Consulting's new positioning included four attributes: visionary, agile, passionate and well-connected. The agility referred to the firm's ability to move quickly and in sync with rapid pace. The reputation for strategic and innovative thinking contributed, instead, to the development of the visionary trait. To encourage its customers to do the same, AC published several magazines, like Outlook or Chief Executive, in addition it sponsored the AC Contact Forum for the Telecommunication industry, the International Utilities & Energy Conference, finally being an active participant of the World Economic Forum. AC was well-connected due to its global reach and its vast network of partners and proprietary business. Finally, a passion for helping companies succeed had long been a cornerstone of A. Consulting's mission.

Target market

One key difference of the new positioning was A. Consulting's new focus on serving two markets. Demonstrating this two-fold approach was the fact that, in 2000, A. Consulting's

[36] Positioning Platform. Presentation, Andersen Consulting, 2000

worked with 91 of Fortune magazine's 1999 Global 100 companies, as well as over half of the Industry Standard's 100 most important companies of the Internet economy. For example, A. Consulting's helped Motorola employees self-manage their human resource processes and transactions through Enet, an intranet-based virtual HR system, which is integrated with Motorola's back-end HR system. To attract future e-commerce leaders, in fiscal 1999 A. Consulting developed 25 business launch centres across the globe which offered "everything you need to speed from start-up to initial public offering." The launch centres possessed a variety of capabilities, including business model strategizing, organizational structuring, marketing website construction, and post launch support such us operations scaling.

A network of business

Strengthening Andersen Consulting was the recent shift of the economy towards a 'Network of Business'. The idea behind concerned the use of the company's network of business approach to enforce its core consulting and outsourcing expertise throughout alliances, affiliated companies and so forth. AC was eventually able to deliver to its clients fully integrated and innovative solutions. Speaking about this is important to remind the affiliated company that AC created with Microsoft, Avanade, formed in March 2000. Such company was designed to help firms integrate Microsoft technology, in particular Windows 2000 Software. AC, then, provided three-quartly of the initial 1000 member Avanade employee base, all trained with the necessary skills to understand and implement new Microsoft technology.

The official separation from Arthur Andersen

On August 2000, the arbitration ruling the from Columbian lawyer Dr. Guillermo Gamba released A. Consulting from any further obligation to A. Andersen or A. Worldwide, financial, professional, or otherwise. Although the company had to transfer the annual payments since 1997 (totalling $ 530 million), the amount was significantly less than the $ 14.5 billion asked for by the accounting firm. As Gamba stated after the ruling: ”A. Consulting was right in my opinion when they claimed that A. Worldwide wasn’t performing in coordinating obligations. That’s the reason the decision favoured A. Consulting.” [37]

However, in return to its independence AC had to make a concession: the license to use A. Consulting’s name was to expire December 2000. Indeed, the company had begun to change its name in advance of the arbitration decision. Many in the leadership team felt the label ‘consulting’ was limiting to the future role of AC as an organization. Nonetheless, the challenges would be manifold: AC had to quickly create a new name, transferring equity of the old name to the new one, effectively; thereby increasing the awareness of the new brand globally, eliminating confusion as well. The aim of such repositioning in the marketplace was to reflect this new vision and strategy. Never in history had such a wide scale re-branding occurred, in such a short time frame. In fact, within 147 days of the ruling, the firm had to unveil a name, which was trade-markable in 47 countries, effective and inoffensive in over 200 languages, correspondent with an available URL, and finally acceptable to employees and customers.

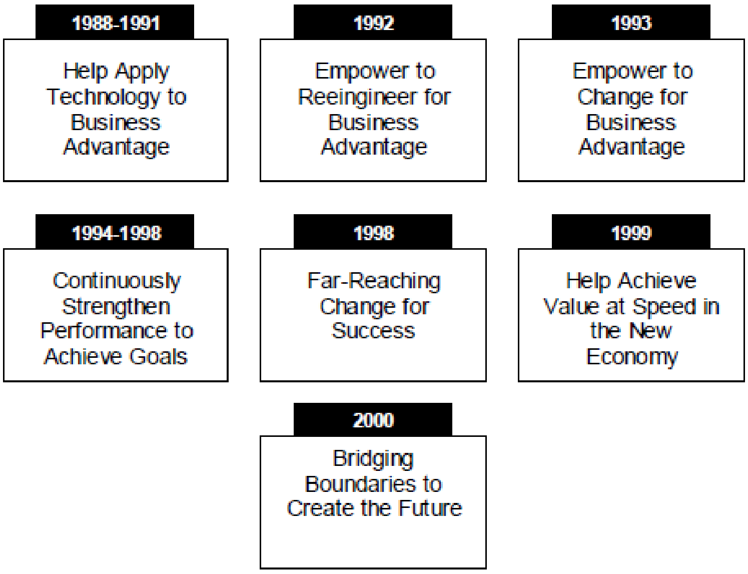
Fig.6 Rebranding Launch Timeline Andersen Consulting, October 2, 2000

[37] As quoted in A. Consulting wins independence. Wall Street Journal, August 2000

Aug 7 - 11	Aug 11 - Oct	Sept - Oct	Nov - Dec	Jan 1
PLANNING	BRAND DEVELOP.	RESEARCH	EXECUTE NAME CHANGE	BRAND LAUNCH
Arbitration Decision Strategy Develop. Creative Brief	Name Develop. Visual Identity Brand Line & Descriptor Develop. Launch Plan Develop.	Market Testing Native Speaker Review Linguistic Analysis Final Recommend-ation	Logo Dialogue Mag. Prelude Ads Media/Analyst Relations	Advertising Direct Mktg. Accenture.com Media/Analyst Relations Int./Ext. Events Outlook Mag. Signage

Source: "The Rebranding and Repositioning of Andersen Consulting." Andersen Consulting

Fig. 7 Brand Positioning Evolution



Source: "Positioning Platform." Andersen Consulting, 2000

3.1.4 *The rebranding and repositioning process*

Andersen Consulting was well-prepared for a re-branding project of such scope, because only two years prior the business had overhauled its visual identity as part of the ‘A-to-the-power-of-C’ re-branding. In looking back, referring to that period (1999), Jim Murhpy defined the current change as ‘a rehearsal of a global brand change’. Joe Forehand, managing partner – CEO of AC, explained in a press release: ”We’re a very different organization today than we were when we formed AC back in 1989. So, adopting a new name and brand identity is a logical step in our growth strategy.”[38]

To carry on the global re-branding and repositioning, AC supplemented its annual $ 75 million marketing & communications budget with an additional $ 100 million. In order to spread interest around the effort, the company tapped the advertising agency Young & Rubican to develop a teaser advertising campaign in support. Even the homepage of the corporate website was updated, to reflect the overall changing scheme. Both the advertising and the website featured a graphic logo, which revealed the following message: ”Renamed. Redefined. Reborn. 01.01.01”. To conclude, the company also developed a series of teaser television adv. that were strategically introduced during the Sydney Olympics, in September 2000.

Step one: Positioning

In advance of the name change, in order to meet changing marketplace demands, AC had implemented rigorous testing to develop a new strategic positioning. Once determined, all the remained was finding a proper name to reflect such intention. Teresa Poggenpohl stated: ”The timing was excellent because we had just spent several months developing a compelling

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[38] Andersen Consulting press release, October 26, 2000

brand positioning which supported the firm's new business and mission".[39] AC could rely on a strong reputation to launch the new brand; in fact, as James Murphy clarified:" Isn't that we don't have the credentials, but we want to transfer the equity that we've built into that name and brand it to a new one".[40] The most demanding challenge for the company was, in the minds of many insiders, the very short amount of time to execute the change.

Step two: Finding a New Name

The search for a new name began immediately after the arbitration's ruling, led by AC marketing and communications department. 500 candidates were selected to undergo research based on specific criteria: how well the name fit with the organization's strategy, how distinctive or unique it was and the name's potential for longevity. Timing was essential, since the company had a little over 80 days to come up with a new name and logo. This would in turn allow enough time to re-brand all aspects of the firm by December 31, 2001 deadline. After a legal review, candidates were subjects to more rigorous research, including linguistic analysis in 47 countries, against 200 languages, to screen for cultural sensitivities and ensure the name carried positive connotations in each market. In addition to time, another challenge was the recent increase in volume of registered Internet domain names: registration had increased 46% over 2000 levels and from May to September only, the number doubled to 17 million (practically one registration per second). The overall name development and search for Accenture was unprecedented, not just because of the 81 days in which it was conducted, but mainly because of its scale and scope magnitude. A. Consulting, in fact, wanted to gain its clients' perspective on the name candidates; the objective was to gauge their overall reaction, the fit with the company's vision and then name's uniqueness. At the

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39 Repositioning the brand. AC.com, 2000

40 As quoted in 'Divorced Andersen Readie New Name'. BtoB, October 9, 2000

conclusion of such research, the executive committee chose the name “Accenture”, submitting it by a consultant named Kim Petersen, who worked for AC in Oslo. The name rhymed with adventure and connoted an accent on the future. Petersen explained his submission as follows: ’When trying to come up with a new name for the firm, I thought of things like bold growth, operational excellence and a great place to work. Accenture seemed to capture all those things.’[41]The name Accenture has been selected because it clearly fit the firm’s positioning and vision, apart from being catchy and distinctive. One Landor Associates executive who worked closely with AC during the selection process, provided further justification for Accenture’s choice: ’A name must reflect a company accurately, and it must bring essence into clear, sharp focus. In this instance, Accenture is the optimal solution for this client, because it does reflect their re-branding and repositioning and their future direction by suggesting placing an accent to the future, directly into the brand essence.’[42]

Announcing Accenture

Andersen Consulting announced its new name on October 26, 2000. The company held an internal global web cast to announce the Accenture name and to answer to employees’ questions about it. Joe Forehand commented at the time of the announcement: “Accenture express what we have become as an organization as well as what we hope to be – a network of business that transcends the boundaries of traditional consulting and brings innovations that dramatically improve the way the world lives and works.”[43]

Until the official changeover on midnight of December 31, 2000, the firm retained the AC name and logo, and continued to globally heighten awareness and interest of the new name,

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[41] Choosing the name. Andersen Consulting annual report, 1999

[42] Anthony Shore. Personal interview, December 2000

[43] Andersen Consulting press release, October 26, 2000

through the 'Rename. Redefined. Reborn. 01/01/01' print poster and TV effort. As a second step in the renaming process, in November, AC launched a new logo to represent Accenture visually. The logo consisted of the word 'Accenture' written in lower-case letters, with a greater-than symbol above the 't', serving to accent the word. The meaning of that was a metaphoric pointing forward to the future, while the lower-case 'a' demonstrated that the firm was, at the same time, both accessible and approachable. Once the logo was revealed, the challenging task of re-branding the organization really began.

accenture

High performance. Delivered.

3.1.5 *Accenture Launch*

Accordingly to the adoption of the name Accenture, on January 1, the company's corporate website was changed into www.accenture.com. Accompanying the announcement was a massive global marketing program, designed to raise awareness of the selected name.

Internal launch

Launching the new Accenture name internally was as equally important and daunting task: Accenture needed to execute a complete and monumental changeover throughout all the organization's levels, by ensuring that both employees and customers understood the meaning of such process. Thus, the firms had achieved 1.200 milestones to make the Accenture name change happen. The name had to be reflected by the company's 178 offices, in 47 countries, by 70.000 employees and their 7 million business cards, again by its 1.200 proprietary software applications as well as 20.000 databases. Moreover, to keep employees apprised of the re-branding plan, Accenture distributed internal newsletters, email, along with internal magazines like Dialogue (beginning in August 2000). In such a way, everyone was always kept informed, by periodic global web-cast.

On January 3, 2001, Joe Forehand welcomed the new company with a global web-cast from Australia, the site of the Accenture Match Play Championship. Throughout the whole month, the company executed a series of open houses and celebratory events to recognize the new brand at local offices around the world.

External launch efforts: phase one

Accenture planned a two-steps marketing strategy for introducing Accenture to its global audience. The aim of both phases was to surround the company's target audience, including 40.000 clients, 70.000 employees, and 1.5 million recruits, with messages informing about the new name and positioning. This starting phase was high-impact and focused on global advertising. The ads were intended to introduce the new name and transfer equity from its former brand. Secondly, they positioned Accenture as offering a broad range of capabilities across: Consulting, Technology, Outsourcing and Alliances. Such repositioning recast Accenture as a company who would bridge boundaries to create the future, helping the customers bridge the gap from the old economy to the new one. As evidenced by the Accenture Match Play Championship, the use of the company's name as a sponsor for global sporting events turned out to provoke an International feedback. By January 2001, television, print, Internet and poster advertisements touting the Accenture name appeared in each of the 47 countries where the firm did business. In addition to the high-profile advertising program, over 43.000 customers received a launch mailing, which included creative packaging to announce the good news. However, the impact of the launch was noticeable in other ways: for example, traffic to accenture.com was up to 72%over a typical week with 27.700 visitors daily. To conclude, the media touted the launch impact as the largest re-branding initiative ever undertaken by a professional services company. The campaign garnered around 120 news items globally in just the first two weeks alone.

External launch efforts: phase two

The second phase began with the television spots debuting in the US during the Super Bowl on January 28. Jim Murphy explained the propose of such a striking ads: “Our goal was to make target audience take notice of dramatic global changes in the marketplace in a way that position Accenture as the organization that can help clients take advantage of these changes and turn them into opportunities.”[44] The advertisements were innovative and interactive, since they were perfectly integrated with the corporate website, showing customers how Accenture could help them capitalize on marketplace opportunities. Speaking about further beneficial effects, a study measured adv effectiveness by tracking purchase intent before and after viewed the ads. Specifically, Accenture ‘Bacteria’ spot garnered a 77% increase in purchase intent, so that Sergio Zyman, founder of Marketing Group, said that the company provides a successful example of how firms can convert a new name into a brand.[45]

As a consequence, the ads had the desired effect of generating interest in the company: traffic to accenture.com increased dramatically in just a week from the broadcast, so that the traffic to the advertising section of the website rose 2.100 %.

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[44] So now it gets interesting. Accenture.com, 2001

[45] Accenture scores come from behind victory in Super Bowl Ad competition. Business Wire, January 30, 2001

3.1.6 *Result and Research*

After the launch, the company executed an evolution of the re-branding and repositioning program as part of the global awareness tracking study with both senior executives and annual brand equity assessment. At the end of 2001, so one year after the launch, the awareness of Accenture remained at, or above, previous levels for Andersen Consulting in the majority of countries. According to research, the results of the advertising and marketing & communication campaign were impressive. For example, the adv. effect on consideration to purchase Accenture's services increased 350% following the campaign. The measurable brand value also increased by 7% over Andersen Consulting. Brand equity, in turn, increased an impressive 11%. Again, awareness of firm's breadth and depth of services had achieved 96% of the previous level. Globally, the vision of Accenture as a provider of Management & Technology consulting services was 76% of its former level. With just few exceptions, Accenture registered immediately with clients, prospects and recruits as well.

Accenture IPO and financial results

In July 2001, once again Accenture looked to the future by offering shares of its stock in a $ 1.7 billion initial public offering. By making such bold move, the company wished to create greater opportunities of growth for its customers, shareholders and people around the world. Accenture believed that through the IPO it was better able to deliver a broader range of capabilities and solutions for its clients. Even though the climate at the time wasn't favourable, Accenture outperformed many companies in the sector; by the end of the year Accenture stock was up almost 80% from its IPO price of $ 14.50.

The need to update the positioning

The fall-out from the dot-com crash and the general slowdown of the US economy provoked dramatic changes in the marketplace. Money evaporated from the venture capital pool, and companies were struggling to cut costs as consumer spending declined. As a result, business grew hesitant to turn to consulting companies for strategy that they could develop on their own. So, the days when you got paid to give advice are finished; the client management wants to tie the remuneration to the value delivered.[46] Accenture's new priority was finding a way to partner with clients and help them execute their ideas. Hence, it focused all energies towards developing an evolved positioning to better suit the marketplace and the client demands.

Refining the positioning

In 2002, Accenture unveiled a more complex positioning, succinctly summarized by the brand essence "Innovation Delivered". The positioning statement was meant to support such essence: 'From innovation to execution, Accenture helps accelerate your vision.'

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46 Connors, Emma. Accent on outsourcing for global giants. Australian financial review, January 23, 2002,

According to surveys conducted by the company itself, senior executives from a different group of industry sectors and countries identified Accenture's ability to deliver on their ideas as the number one barrier to success. The respondents express a need for external assistance from consulting firms to help them bring their idea to life. Furthermore, the executives considered consulting companies as a source of validation for breakthrough ideas generated within a company. Accenture stressed that innovation can come from either the consulting firm or the client, as explained by the CEO Joe Forehand:

We don't want to back away from being seen as someone who brings the best consulting, innovation, and ideas to clients, but our clients are telling us they have a lot of smart people with good ideas too. They just need execution. We are uniquely positioned to fit into this intersection of business and technology capability to drive shareholder value for customers. Our clients value a company that is an independent service organization that can make sure their interest are put first and foremost, but also one that has a network of alliance partner *sit can bring together.*[47]

Thanks to the new positioning, Accenture was able to target a type of executive, which understood the importance of moving rapidly to capitalize on emerging opportunities in the ever-changing marketplace. Moreover, they described the role of the company as a catalyst to accelerate innovation to results, by spurring ideas and putting plans into actions.

Bringing 'Innovative Delivered' to life: 'I am your idea' advertising campaign

On February 20, 2002, Accenture launched the new global advertising campaign: 'I am your idea!' During the Accenture Match Play Championship. The campaign provided a clever and unique perspective, delivering a message focused on turning winning ideas into tangible results. The advertisements were in response to one of the leading frustrations cited by senior executives: that great idea may go unrealized. Hence, here it is Accenture's reply statement: "It's not how many ideas you have. It's how many you make happen. So whether it's your idea or Accenture's, we'll help you turn innovation into results. See how at accenture.com."

3.2 Business Process Outsourcing: Accenture Learning Services

Accenture, through efficient learning BPO services offering, helps talent-powered organizations drive growth and achieve high performance, both in private and public sector. The ultimate challenge is to create distinctive workforce capabilities, which can lead to market differentiation as well as sustainable competitive advantage.

3.2.1 *Addressing today's challenges through Enterprise Learning*

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[47] Cirillo Rich. No ordinary Joe: Joe Forehand is positioning Accenture as the prototypical IT Services firm. VARBusiness, January 21, 2002, p.26

Nowadays, in boardrooms around the world, executive's attention is turned to both business opportunities and challenges. The focus concerns the health of the economy, thus how to serve customers more effectively and retain them, the need to become more cost efficient, or the creation of new profitable services. According to an annual Accenture survey of C-level executives, organizations in every industry are looking for ways to attract, develop and retain the best workforce talent. Indeed, they want to reach high performance levels and a sustainable advantage by exploiting the talent-powered world, bringing such force inside the organization. However, this goal is hard to achieve, since companies compete in a global arena for top talent. Skilled workers can appear to be abundant globally, but extremely hard to find locally. In addition, the increasing demand for qualified skills requires a continuous supply of well-educated workers, and many mature industries find it even tougher to attract young employees. Accenture surveys are wisely aware that creating a truly global workforce represents one of the biggest risks of operating in such a multi-polar economy. Indeed, a global strategy is one thing; effectively managing a global workforce is a totally different issue.

The leverage point in the entire cycle of talent management is the enterprise learning function. From a global perspective, education and learning are now critical factors in driving the competitiveness of firms, and even of entire nations. Although it's impossible to deny the critical role of natural resources, technology tools and so forth to acquiring economic power, in the long-run companies with better-educated people have a distinct edge. In such ever-changing world, learning methods and tools can make the difference between holding onto customers through excellent service or losing them for good. Today, board-executives want to quantify how enterprise learning is helping execute strategy, serve customers, innovate and drive measurable results. Hence, it's no longer merely a cost of doing business; it's rather a crucial strategic driver of market differentiation and superior performance. For business seeking to build up a 21st-century learning organization, outsourcing can support a compelling approach towards innovative and cost-effective talents. Such method would focus simultaneously on the development of each individual employee, whilst also being measurable worldwide, according to how specifically it improves the workforces performance and, in turn, the enterprise itself.

3.2.2 *Integrate outsourcing solutions to drive performance at scale*

Accenture provides proven integrated and comprehensive outsourcing services to its collaborators, in order to enable them to achieve prestigious business results. The company's prime concern is, then, the application of methods and processes to keep learning investments aligned with business investments, needs and results. The range of processes and activities it serves widen from strategy and planning, content design and development, to cost-effective delivery, administration and application of the most innovative technologies. Such strength comes from innovative learning solutions, cutting-edge technologies and impressive global delivery networks. In fact, Accenture learning BPO services is an integrated, end-to-end service offering, which provides scalable, cost-effective learning and talent management solutions aligned with the business strategy. Creating efficiencies of scale is one crucial benefit of cooperating with Accenture; moreover, leveraging on a shared service model and a global delivery network, the company helps organizations set up a nimble while cost-effective learning function. Even more important, Accenture supports government agencies create a talent-powered organization with distinctive workforce capabilities, to drive further market differentiation. What all B2B companies should do, following the example of

Accenture, is offer a tailored package of outsourcing, consulting and technology solutions capable of creating a talent-powered organization.

The latest Accenture High Performance Workforce Study, part of Accenture's comprehensive high performance business research, assessed the level of executive's satisfaction according to the performance of the learning, HR and the talent management function. Only 11% of respondents defined themselves very satisfied with the HR function performance, while merely 10% of them felt the same for the learning function. Finally, just 14% of C-level executives report that the overall skill level of their company's workforce was industry leading. As a result, outsourcing is an increasingly attractive option for those who aim at creating talent-powered organizations, investing in distinctive capabilities and setting up more sophisticated and demanding approaches. Since at most companies, enterprise learning is still underestimated as a source of competitiveness (in part because HR has low visibility and learning investments haven't been properly measured), B2B firms have the duty to aligning the learning investments to the specific business goals and objectives. Accenture has demonstrated track record in delivering measurable improvements through BPO; more specifically, it recorded remarkable results in regard of:

1) *Improved revenues*. Sales conversions for service representatives increased by 102% thanks to a web-based learning solution. Revenues increased by 35% through a learning program for pre-sales and system engineers. As a result, the company generated a new revenue stream of US $ 2.3 million in just a year and a half.

2) *Increased productivity*. A new learning program for account professional and enhanced confidence among call centre staff (by 23%), allowed the reduction of time spent for new hires by 33%, while wasting 13% less of classroom time as well.

3) *Profit growth*. The value per sale rose by 3%, while a leading-edge learning initiative made the customer satisfaction improve by 16%. Again, confidence among all business departments increased by 9%.

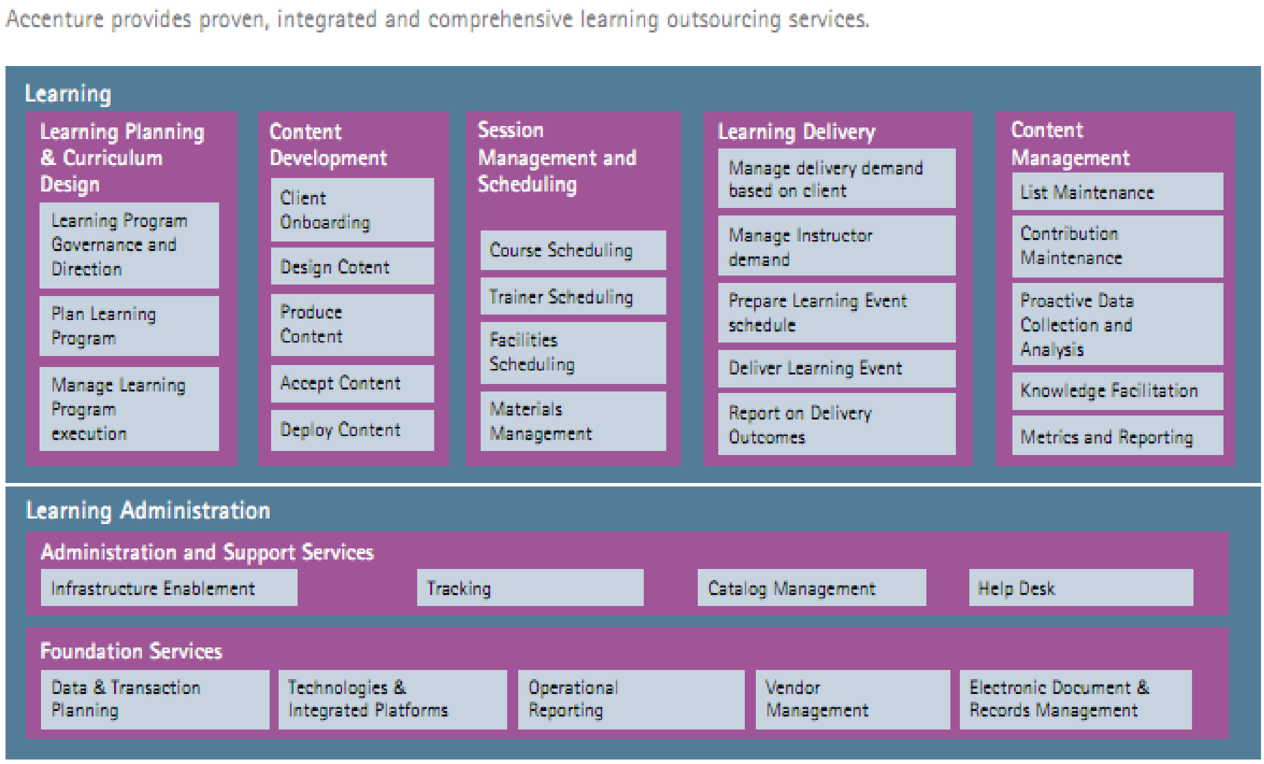
4) *Cost reduction*. An industrialized approach oriented toward back-office training, administration, design and efficient delivery, made possible for the firm to achieve total savings in the 15% to 30% range. For a major telecommunications company, Accenture decreased the cost to deliver health, safety and environmental training to 35% from 90% of total learning budget. Consequently, founds could be redirected to other strategic learning initiatives.

3.2.3 *Creating shareholder value through learning*

Apart from quantitative results, Accenture clients could also realized consistent qualitative benefits from the collaboration. Learning, in fact, generated value from a wider talent management perspective. The program included: defining and deploying talent, developing workforce capabilities, measuring performance and finally retain the top talent. Accenture is an acknowledge market leader across that spectrum of activities, as well as the related discipline of HR, change management and workforce strategy. Learning outsourcing, in addition, gave companies wider control over both outcomes and spends. As a consequence, within the biggest organization, each division could have its Learning Management System, its own suppliers and content providers. In such a way it was possible to gain broader visibility, to identify opportunities for rationalization and finally manage spending more efficiently through better distributional channels. Consistency in learning is one of the key benefits of a good outsourcing arrangement, especially in context where skills certification is strictly necessary. The other ones are scalability and access to innovation and expertise.

The table below represents the range of learning outsourcing activities offered by Accenture.

Fig.8. The learning outsourcing services provided by Accenture



Source: Accenture 2010

From the scheme is possible to identify a few macro-areas that will be interesting to analyze more in detail. The first one concerns ‘Planning and Alignment’. The company, in fact, works closely with its clients executing learning strategy tied to business needs and objectives (always bearing in mind both budget and organization’s priority). Currently, the alignment with the business needs and then the measurement of the impact of learning are the toughest challenges for executives. In order to do that, Accenture uses a proprietary service called Business Interlock. That’s a process and governance system, which aligns a company’s learning strategy and delivery with business objectives. Its duty is ensuring that initiatives and outcomes are locked in, eventually adding value at three levels: operational excellence; innovation; measurement. The second area concerns ‘Content design and development’. It’s not hard to recognize that Accenture offers advanced methods and assets to build, buy and reuse break-through learning contents. The all-inclusive package refers to: planning, design, assessment development, course conversion, content translation and localization. One of the company’s key differentiators is the ability to leverage its network of onshore, offshore and near-shore content development centre of excellence. To make an example, Accenture is currently working with a major US-based financial services company on a multi-year outsourcing agreement. In addition, it has assumed responsibility for a wide range of learning activities and processes, including content development for web-based learning or classroom channels, administration and reporting, hosting of e-learning courses and so forth. The new learning services are targeted at more than 18.000 learners across all workforces, focusing mainly on customer service and collections representatives. The other area of interest, ‘Delivery’, sees Accenture as the leader in providing innovative and result-oriented learning services. In order to achieve such a satisfactory result, it carefully analyzes: capacity management and demand planning, scheduling, and equipment and technology support. The company offers a complete range of services in support of instructor capability development, such as the Accenture instructor excellence program. Furthermore, talking about web-based training, the company is developing a new-hire training program for a major North American financial services provider. The project aims at recruiting higher-performance employees at a faster pace, by incorporating instructor-led teaching with virtual and web-based programs. Again, Accenture can deliver comprehensive outsourced learning solutions very rapidly, including patented learning processes and technologies, to boost the return on investment in training. The last area focuses on 'Administration and support services'. The company's Learning Administration capabilities are supported by a fully integrated and entirely web-based infrastructure. The Learning Management System, instead, provides global access to learner records, registration and assessment; moreover has been deployed in nine languages. Their strength leverages on a shared services model via support centres in the United States, as well as Europe and India, which provides both global and regionalized support with international multi-lingual capabilities.

The primary objective: serving clients

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with more than 181,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining un-parallel experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborated with clients to help them become high-performance business and governments. The company generated net revenues of US $ 21.58 billion for the fiscal year ended August 31, 2009. It's common sense that giant enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) projects drove much of this process of growth. George Shaheen led the company during one of the most dramatic periods of growth in the firm's history, he strongly believed that: the mission is to help clients, rethink and reshape their business as single, interconnected entities (not just collections of individual parts and processes). The business integration was meant to achieve a strategic relevance as well as to provide clients with high-value solutions. Moreover, the consultants committed themselves to six core values: Quality Client Service, One Global Firm, Integrity, Stewardship, Best People and Respect for the individual. A decade later, when the firms was moving toward public ownership, it would recommit itself to such core values, which have changed slightly, despite the colossal changes the company went through in the interim: Client Value Creation, One Global Network, Integrity, Stewardship, Best People and Respect for the individual. At the same time, after several meetings, the committee developed a list of Partnership principles: mutual respect, performance commitment, stewardship, interdependence, honesty and integrity, social responsibility, and shared rewards. In order to put them into practice, the committee also championed an Empowerment Credo by which the partners could fully harness the power of being both operators and owners. The main points of such credo are: trust each other to make intelligent decisions and communicate openly; expect each partner to take responsibility to check his judgement; design decision-making processes to be value-added, simple and non-hierarchical; step forward and correct that which isn't working in this way. All these principles would serve as a common touchstone for the partners as they wrestled with divisive governance and growth issues in the years ahead.

To conclude our excursus on Accenture's learning BPO, here are presented a few data and quantitative measures of how the company has proven to be the leader in innovative end-to-end learning services in B2B. Accenture has delivered proven results from customers across multiple industries, HR and learning outsourcing services to nearly 1.5 million people, in 100 different countries. The approximately 7.500 talent management professionals were deeply-skilled and prepared in consulting, technology and outsourcing on a global basis. Moreover, the company ensured five learning call centres offering 24/7 support, eight global content development centres, more than 20.000 courses and roughly 70 patents for innovative learning solutions (such as performance simulation or virtual coach). Last but not least, the company was selected seven years to ‘Top 20 companies in the Training Outsourcing Industry’, and also won an award for leading solutions recognized by the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals, Chief Learning Officer magazine, Bersin & Associates, and the Outsourcing Center.

In conclusion:

Accenture believed that its global network of employees and alliance partners, along with its breadth of services, represented unparalleled resources to provide clients with innovative solutions. It saw itself as an innovator in ideas, technology, execution and collaboration. Moreover, it identified personal traits as part of the positioning to be: innovative, smart, collaborative and passionate. At the same time, it always remained committed to help clients succeed and embrace challenges. Finally, research revealed that the passionate personality trait was the best way for Accenture employees to live the positioning and bring it to life, everyday.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Theoretical implications

B2B describes commerce transactions between businesses, such as a manufacturer and a wholesaler, or a wholesaler and a retailer. Although many professional institutions focus much more on B2C (business to customers), the volume of B2B (business to business) transactions is extremely higher than the first one. The primary reason for this is that in a typical supply chain there will be many B2B transactions involving sub components rather than raw materials, and only one B2C transaction, the final sale of the product to the end customer. Furthermore, B2B is also used in the context of communication and collaboration; many businesses are currently using social media to connect with the customer-base (however when communication takes place among employees, this can be referred to as B2B communication).

Nowadays firms, especially those working on B2B, have understood the potentiality of social media in reaching a wider customer-base, and are looking forward to using them as a method to learn more about markets, organizations and people as well. Technology, in fact, offers the most efficient devices, at the moment, to target the preferred audience and gain insight into trends, needs and opportunities. Moreover, it allows firms to map the highest number of customer-side relationships, with a minimum waste of time and energy. Indeed, the use of location based social media has provided information of manifold aspects of individual's preferences, habits and tastes; thanks to these information firms could easily connect with different members of the decision-making unit. Thus the interaction becomes deeper and extremely consistent. What firms seek, ultimately, is the integration of social media contacts and connections with sales automation and CRM systems. Such linkage would ensure, in turn, that corporate and personal brands are aligned, furthermore that consistent key-messages about strengths and expertise are promoted through all channels.

4.1.1 *Six strategic drivers for integrating social media into B2B selling*

Econsultancy, founded in 1999, is a UK company providing training, reports, research, case studies, buyer guides and advice for the digital marketing sector. The CEO and co-founder of Econsultancy, Ashley Friedlein, have over 100,000 members to date. The company won the Association of Online Publishers' award for Specialist Digital Publisher 2009, and nowadays is still the milestone of digital marketing campaigns, helping practitioners to be comfortable with the integration of social media into their communication programs. During 2010, Econsultancy has carried on a study on one of the most complex high-value service markets, that of professional services (lawyers, accountants, consultants and surveyors). Thus it has developed a series of key-points, guiding service providers to integrate different social media tools into their relationship management process. The professional were given guidance for various stages of the sales cycle and the entire chain of business related activity.

The strategic tips provided by Econsultancy are listed below:

- Understand the sales and relationship development processes utilized by the organization, people and the general environment in order to choose the most appropriate social media to support them;
- Develop standard procedures and policies to protect yourself against inadvertent problems with client confidentiality, brand and reputation management, the ownership of crucial networks and the disclosure of valuable know-how;

- Asses which vertical markets, externally, and which professionals, internally, are most enthusiastic about social media, and consequently work with them in a pilot project;
- Look at existing marketing, sales and account plans to develop some measures by which assessing social media activity;
- Provide introductory training on appropriate social media tools, as well as working alongside the professionals as the perform their day job;
- Monitor activity and results carefully, provide regular support and encouragement, promote successes and use social media to update the best practice devices and systems regularly.

4.1.2 ***Few tips for successfully promote corporate brands in B2B***

Stop underestimating the power of brands in B2B! Branding should be the thread running through the subject of Marketing. An important aspect of a successful brand strategy is to completely align it to the business strategy and build lasting brand-conscious customer relationships. Here there's a list of nine tips every firm operating in B2B should never forget, when promoting its corporate brand in such environment:

1) Make a consistent impression with all your stakeholders at every single point of interaction, and do not forget that one of the most important things in B2B brand management is to reduce complexity for the customer.

2) Build a strategic brand architecture that supports and enhances the type and nature of your company and distinguish between Corporate, Product, and Family Branding.

3) The most common brand strategy in B2B is a corporate brand in combination with a few product brands. But also, Ingredient Branding as a form of multi-stage branding, becomes

increasingly relevant for supplies and OEMs.

4) The major communication instruments in B2B are Direct Sales, Direct Marketing, PR, Specialized Press, Sponsorships, Trade Shows and Exhibitions, Advertising, Sales Promotion, and E-Marketing.

5) It is essential for every brand to implement a comprehensive and adequate measurement system to gauge and guide brand success.

6) It is crucial to effectively communicate the values of your brands to your own people; making sure that employees understand these values and thereby leading them to become the best ambassadors of your company and its products.

7) Time-strapped decision makers prefer to buy, or at least research, products and services online. Therefore, Online Branding is a crucial part of B2B brand building.

8) Social Branding is a great way for B2B companies to receive high marks for social responsibility.

9) Building Brand through Word-of-Mouth is a common approach in the industrial world. Recently, this old fashioned method has been enhanced by Internet technology called Weblogs.

4.2 Future research

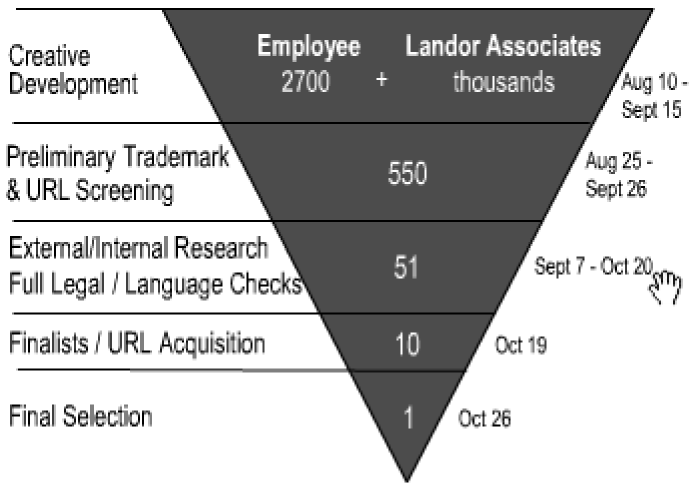
4.2.1 *The impact on business strategies*

The development of new technologies, globalization and diminishing regulatory environments have had significant impact on business strategies of several companies.[48]It's

[48] Duane E. Knapp, The brand Mindset 2000, p.182

common sense that in B2B, brand management will become intensively significant. The future of brands thus, is the future of business; they should no longer be seen as logos or icons, but rather as components of a holistic experience in which all activities are integrated. A combined approach is therefore the best solution: strong internal resources and commitment, advice from brand consultants or knowledgeable individuals and eventually use of excellent advertisement specialists, are all functionally related. In 1992, Andersen Consulting spent approximately US $ 10 million globally on advertising. Accenture is the example of how each company can successfully rebranding that way. The switch from Andersen Consulting to Accenture was the fastest, most expensive re-branding effort ever done in history, as every single thing was changed to fit the new logo in a matter of days. Today, although Arthur Andersen is history, Accenture had more than 126.000 employees (more than 4.200 senior executives included), based in more than 110 offices in 48 countries, delivering a wide range of US $ 15.55 billion for fiscal 2005. However, Accenture could rely on a solid brand heritage, provided by the previous company's brand. The old Andersen Consulting, in fact, already had a set of new standard for marketing a professional service company, moreover it was widely credited as being the first professional services firm to advertise aggressively. As the Global Managing Director, Jim Murphy, stated, Andersen Consulting not only created an innovative management and technology organization, but also created a new category for professional services. The service provider gave marketing a strategic meaning, also having the courage to invest in brand at a time when it wasn't a priority at all for B2B sector. Such a breakthrough approach, aimed at transforming the whole organization, was divided in several phases. The first one concerned the re-branding. In order to create a new brand identity it was used a double approach, both inside-out and outside-in. Top management used that Business-to-Employee (B2E) Portal to communicate the renaming task. 47 teams were formed, out of 65.000 professionals, and 2.700 suggestions were created through a 'brand-storming' exercise. The picture below shows how the process has been implemented, considering both the timeline and the internal resources of the company.

Fig. 1. Naming development in 2000 from Andersen Consulting to Accenture



Source: Kotler and Pföertsch, 2006

In addition to that, intensive market researches were also conducted for the purpose of acquiring possible client judgements and reactions. The company engaged Landor Associates to ensure that the repositioning in the marketplace better reflected the new vision of market maker, architect as well as builder of the new economy. It was crucial to make sure that by executing such a new business strategy the company could refocus its capabilities. Moving away from the IT-driven company image to business and technology consulting, Accenture successfully become one of the leading service providers, worldwide.

4.2.2 *Developing a path of growth*

The table below describes the different strategies, which future-oriented companies aim to implement, to ensure themselves a successful path of growth. In particular, what they care about is the creation of geographic options as the means to reach a double objective. On one hand, in fact, B2B firms look for local autonomy; on the other hand, they work hard to span a network of linkages and relationships with external entities. These moves will enable their organizations to act globally, while staying linked to the territory. Further steps need to be implemented:

- The creation of channels which enable the circulation of know-how and learning across different geographic regions;
- A global structure of data, systems and standardized processes;
- A multi-polar leadership sprit to promote a top-down approach.

Fig. 2. Five macro-strategy competitive areas of success for future-oriented companies

NEW CONSUMERS	TALENTS	INNOVATION	SUSTAINABILITY OF RESOURCES	CAPITAL
Trigger the foreing demand by offering new channels and new business models of infrastructures	Acquire talents wherever they are, especially among wemen and rural workers segments	Identify new centers of excellence considering different technologies, products and processes, worldwide	Make sure that critical inputs are gathered through long-term contracts and integration of different activitiies	Improving the access to capital while diversify the risk by using new models of financing global investments
Identify critical local differences among clients and adapt the products/services to new segments	Invest on skills and competences to create local talent for future-oriented development	Operate in synergy with the local environment, especially for R&D, customer relantionships and policy makers	Optimize the acquisition of resources, owing cultural and normative boundaries, also exployting incentives	Organize a wide array of investment models, tailored and conceived to satisfy different market needs

Source: Accenture 2010

Social Branding

In recent years, an interest in demonstrating ethical and socially responsible marketing appeared. Famous buzzwords like “corporate citizenship” and “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are proof of this.

Building brands through Word-of-Mouth: Word-of-Mouth can spread the message.

The following types of products have this power to create high involvement among customers:

- Exciting products
- Innovative products
- Personal experience products (Hotels, airlines, cars)
- Complex products (Software, medical devices)
- Expensive products

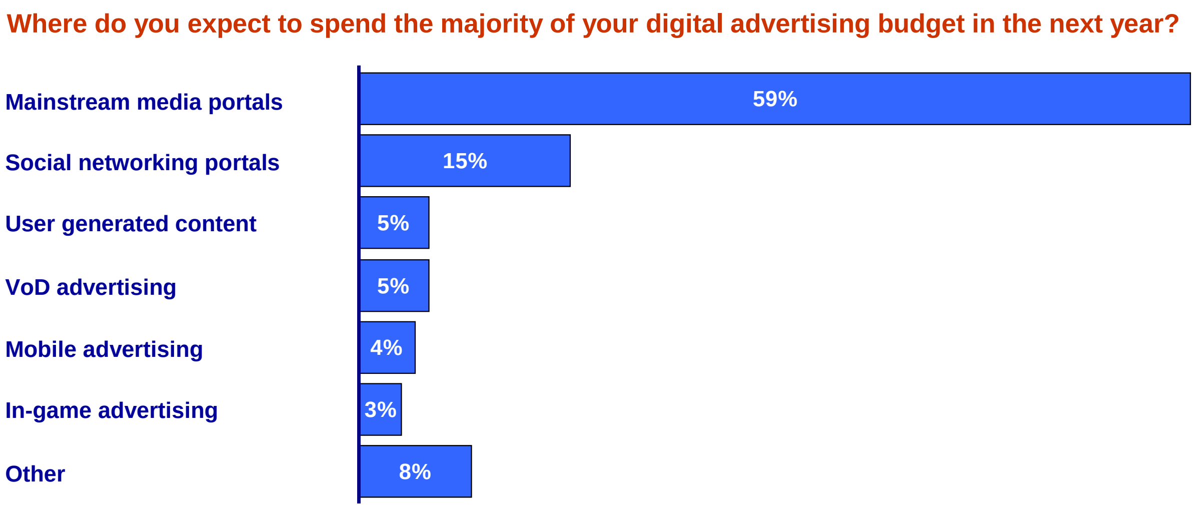
Therefore, blogging should be taken seriously in B2B too as the next most influential form of spreading brand influence.

Online branding capitalizes on the two major advantages that the Internet offers for individuals and corporations:

Informative - The distribution of current information.

Simplifying - The possibility of business transaction at any time any place.

Fig. 3. The digital expenses



Source: Accenture 2010

Aware of these potentials, Accenture has set up a global learning management system, also called ‘myLearning’, which is in charge of providing:

1) Intuitive access to comprehensive information resources that enable company’s professionals to be effective consumers of enterprise learning programs based on both organization’s and individual’s needs;

2) Common, standardized delivery platforms for distributed education to minimize delivery costs and to allow different parts of the global organization to focus on education content;

3) Common, consistent feedback about all learning assets which help Accenture manage actively the quality of the content it delivers to employees;

4) Comprehensive reporting, to improve management decision making and better align

the overall education investment with business needs.

4.2.3 *The corporate culture throughout the years*

The strong commitment of the company kept Accenture at the technology consulting forefront and ready to capitalize on its investments as a new generation of easier-to-use, more affordable computers sparked renewed business interest in mainframe system. Its experience with the IT market blazed a path for Administrative Service's subsequent growth. It was able to succeed with computer installation when virtually everybody else was failing. That was a tremendous amount of satisfaction for consultants. Since the 1960s, the widespread adoption of mainframe computers, referred to as "Big Iron", powered the development of the consulting practices. The innovative system, in fact, unique for its time, provided a real-time information on the company's network of plants; moreover it enabled managers to look into the future in each functional area. Another significant event referring to that period was the first usage that Administrative Services made of CRTs, or cathode ray tubes, for online data access. As a consequence, that Division was provided all the infrastructures needed to create a platform for future expansion. At the same time the agglomeration of consulting practices, each reporting to a different office location lead audit partner, slowly shaped a cohesive spirit. Obviously, throughout the years, the company had to reinvent itself and employ a greater number of workers in order to maximize profits per partner. Customer demands were becoming more complex and the consulting practice was getting too big; it was time for Administrative Services to leverage their tremendous collective know-how and standardize installation step by step. In such a way personnel could move easily among major jobs, and clients satisfaction would be increased too.

In the early 1970s, Administrative Services undertook a unique engagement for Kraft North

America, based in Chicago, to combine online and database systems. That was the very first time that, from a software standpoint, Customer Information Control System (CICS), which was the pivotal online system, and Information Management System (IMS), which was the greatest database system, has been put together. Thanks to its reputation of tacking difficult jobs, the systems installation business was growing so rapidly that it regularly was installing larger IBM systems than IBM itself. Such track record also made it a preferred choice of governmental and non-profit entities that were struggling to modernize obsolete systems in response to a growing demand for services. This engagement helped Administrative Services broaden its scope of work to systems that were crucial to the client's survival. Susan Butler, who worked on the project, said: "This engagement foretold the future. It was large but also very complex, the mission was critical because it required the integration of operational systems with the financial ones, on a daily basis. We did the things we're doing today: reengineering and integrating processes. The company trained over 2,500 personnel and implemented an online school system-wide network composed by teams of Board of Education and Andersen personnel. Last but not least, we were on time and under budget." The Administrative Services Division had grown tremendously, totalling 3,216 people by 1979, more than three times as many consultants as were employed at the start of the decade. By 1980, seven offices had more than 100 consulting professionals and nine others had more than 50. The expansion of EDP business primarily and a series if increasingly large and complex engagements made the consulting partners confident that they deserved a greater say in running their business, along with the firm as a whole.

The dramatic changes in the business environment, made Andersen Consulting rekindle a sense among much of the consulting leadership that they needed to take wider control of their destiny, rather than continue to be dominated by the audit leadership. As a consequence, the firm dropped the Administrative Services label for its consulting business in favour of the more descriptive Management Information Consulting Division (MICD). Moreover, it reinvigorated the push for productivity using a pyramid approach, training recruits so that partners would have more staff reporting to them, and consequently drove such model throughout the consulting practice. The firm not only landed new clients, it expanded relationships with existing ones to add to their systems work or upgrade work done a decade earlier in response to changing needs and improved computer technology. These clients include Mutual of Omaha, Milliken, Mars, J.I. Case, American General, Southern California Edison and Harley-Davidson.

IBM and the consulting practice alternatively competed and cooperated during the 1980s, on a number of engagements. Because of the dominance of IBM concerning the biggest supply of computer hardware in the world, the firm exercised a tremendous influence on the IT sector. The Andersen consultants thus worked closely with IBM experts, designing as well as installing systems using their equipments and software. It turned out that IBM became the consulting division's single-largest client, generating $ 14.9 million in revenues for the consulting practice that year.

The consultants, furthermore, extended the number of their strategic alliances for jointly bidding with manufacturers on large outsourcing projects. Among these companies there are IBM (also a rival on consulting projects), Digital Equipment Corp., Tandem Computers and Amdahi Corp. in 1990, the consultants inked a 10-years, $ 200 million systems management contract with Sun Refining and Marketing Co., purchasing its Dallas computer center and hiring is employees. The group also signed an agreement in the emerging Canadian market for system management services, reaching a $ 50 million, five-year agreement with the province of Alberta's workers' compensation board, and hiring 36 of its system developers.

Nevertheless, the company really got a taste of outsourcing only the following year, when they enveiled a first-of-its-kind business process outsourcing (BPO) arrangement with British Petroleum (BP). BP services as well as productivity were stabilized within nine months. The staff made tremendous progress in transitioning from an internal BP support function to s client-focused service delivery team. The change of focus, coped with the ability to leverage on global resources and knowledge base, along with the deployment of an SAP system, led to a greater than 50% reduction in costs for BP. Furthermore, between 2001 and 2004, outsourcing helped fuel a 27% increase in the total number of employees, up to more than 105,000. Consequently, the company entered into an innovative phase of business transformation outsourcing arrangement with the London Stock Exchange. The money saved from rationalizing systems architecture and staffing paid for a state-of-the-art trading mechanism. Thus, the London Stock Exchange has remained a consulting and outsourcing client through several subsequent changes in its management and major contract renewals.

The company has eventually carried out significant work for small and medium-size companies. While the work clearly benefited the clients, at the same time it aided the engagement staff, giving many of them access to senior decision maker at relatively early stages in their careers. As a result, this helped the personnel to foresee commitments in terms of the transforming benefits they provided to the companies. Accenture’s rapid expansion of its efforts to create value for clients through BPO, as well as the rebounding consulting business for both private and public sectors, created a global and diversified services industry leader. At the same time, the company maintained its core values and kept on encouraging people to reach their full potential in a world of increasing diversity. It was always sort of the Accenture culture, and especially consulting division culture, that the partners are promoters of business. As a matter of fact, if they hadn’t promoted business, they wouldn’t have had business.

"Maybe titles will change, maybe compensation will change, maybe career paths will change. But the principles, what have historically been the partnership principles, as we call them, are precious, and every day we have to work to make sure that those never change". [49]

[49] Bill Green

Conclusions

The study on B2B Branding Management and our excursus on promoting brand equity for financial service providers have finally come to an end. The mission of this research was the confirmation, thanks to the academic literary review and the contribution of thousands of papers from the Journal of Marketing and similar institutes, that Branding Management and Marketing Strategy are the keystones to turn a potential attractive company into the most outstanding and profitable one ever. Outperforming competitors becomes merely a consequence of this kind of conduct, whilst the real essence is the revival of the role of brands working in a business-to-business scenario. According to the path of analysis undertaken so far, consultancy companies as well as financial service providers, have great potential to become global agents, by deploying their marketing tools, both strategically and effectively. We have implemented such a discussion alongside the presentation of the Accenture case study, in order to prove, by the empirical evidence, the reliability of what would have otherwise been just a theoretical framework. This company, in fact, not only provides a brilliant example of re-branding and repositioning, it rather witnesses the exceptional feedback coming from a long-term strategy and a client-oriented management. This process not only implies that companies have to cope with the threat of their marketplace or the service offered, they need to be careful about the future implications of their conduct. That is the reason why nowadays Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) has become a distinctive competitive advantage for those organization committed to the environment seeking a more equal growth rate. As a matter of fact, the contribution of this thesis is to affirm that there’s a new mission for B2B firms, brand-focused and customercaring. Moreover, its implementation is mandatory if companies aim to acquire a wider customer-base and account for high level of satisfaction. What we have tried to demonstrate so far is that this isn't just a theory, but instead is a feasible as well as achievable goal. Accenture has provided, with its history and total quality management, an undeniable example of how companies, especially if operating in B2B, do have a chance to emerge as a successful market leader, worldwide. What they're requested to do, in order to maintain such a privileged position (once achieved, of course), is to stay focused on future trends and keep on nourish the demand, no matter what. All the sentences above summarize the last decades of work at Accenture, furthermore they explain its current policy. Accenture, in fact, continues to stare change in the eyes every day, and keep on challenge itself by asking: 'What do we do to remain relevant to our clients?'[50] Accenture used bold advertisings to involve its client and make them consider how technology might change the world. Moreover, it placed a very high premium on the loyalty it expected from its partners, thus it behaved accordingly. Not only a focus on client service couple with a commitment to act properly has consistently guided decision making at Accenture; such values placed the company at the forefront of the global consulting and outsourcing industry of the 21st Century.

50 Joe Forehand, the company's CEO (1997-2001)

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