

BRAND IMAGE VS BRAND IMAGING: A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

Perusal of many definitions and descriptions of "brand image" suggests that they, in the main refer to what the brand denotes and connotes - the structure of the brand. How a brand is processed in the consumer's mind is not clearly and directly addressed in the delineations of "brand image". The paper makes the vital distinction between "verbal" and "imaginal" processing modes featured in cognitive psychology. It posits that "brand imaging" should deal with how the brand is processed in the consumer's mind, either in a predominantly verbal (low mental - imagery) or imaginal (high mental - imagery) mode. It is argued that "brand image", on the other hand should address the brand's structure or content, as viewed by the consumer. Moreover, (brand) image may be viewed as a noun (viz, "I have a brand - image of X") and also as a verb (viz, "I can image the brand, X"). The paper also makes a connection between the "imaginal" and "tangible" and a distinction between "tangible" (mental) and "palpable" (physical). On this basis, it is argued that some services may be more tangible than some goods. The distinction between "brand image" and "brand imaging" will help marketers, inter alia to position their brands in the minds of consumers. "Brand imaging" is the consumer's response to stimuli presented by the marketer. It is not about stimuli per se - be they, say, visual or verbal. The paper describes twelve imaging strategies that may be employed for three particular types of brands.

Key words: Brand Image, Brand Imagery, Brand Identity, Brand Personality