

BRANDING ACTIVITIES OF RESIDENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AS A MARKETING STRATEGY

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Brands characterize the lifestyle, the value system of an individual or group, reflecting and influencing social processes. The results of the brand value assessment show the effectiveness of branding in the organization. For the company, the presence of a brand is the basis of competitiveness and development in the market. This article analyses the branding activities of residents of the Republic of Belarus.

«A brand is the intangible sum of the properties of a product: its name, packaging and price, history, reputation and method of advertising. A brand is also a combination of the impression it makes on consumers and the result of their experience in using the brand» [1, p. 11].

The brand is an effective economic tool that allows companies to generate high revenue and ensure the expansion of sales markets. The brand is, first of all, the guarantee of a certain set of positive properties of the product, reliability, convenience and simplicity of choice for the buyer, as well as the benefit that a person buys together with the product or service.

The modern interpretation of the concept of «brand» includes all consumer associations that arise in connection with the product because of the acquisition of their own experience, public approval and advice from others. The consumer's consciousness forms an image that combines various characteristics of the brand associated with its name, symbol (e.g. Nike logo), packaging (the shape of a bottle of Coca-Cola), advertising character (rabbit Quiky, Nesquik), melody (Intel, Eignore +). Some of the other crucial characteristics are the organization of communications at the point of sale, the experience of previous purchases and the degree of satisfaction with the quality of the product, as well as feelings and emotions caused by advertising slogans («After all, you deserve it», L'oreal or «We make the world a better place», Philips). This is the extended definition of the concept of brand, offered by the American Marketing Association.

In every country of the world, different brands may be positioned differently, but national brands have more influence on the consumer than imported ones.

The development and formation of brands in the Republic of Belarus began in the 90s of the last century, when the country received the status of independence, and the economy began to transition to a market system. The first stage, which dates back to the 90s of the twentieth century, was mainly devoted to familiarization with the concepts of «brand», «branding», understanding the practical meaning of branding, and training specialists. Moreover, in the XXI century, branding has received widespread development in our country – organizations of various industries, forms of ownership, and sizes began using it.

Originally, the leaders of branding were organizations of the B2C sector (mainly food and cosmetics industry organisations, as well as light industry ones), and then their example was followed by organisations of the B2B sector and the service sector. Belarusian food industry enterprises have always been leaders in exports, so they needed to ensure competitiveness in foreign markets, where branding was already a significant factor in the competition.

Since 2010, MPP Consulting [3] has been conducting annual research on the value of brands in Belarus. Table 1 shows the indicators of Belarusian brands for 2017-2018.

Table 1. – The cost of Belarusian brands according to Belbrand [4]

Brand name	Cost in 2018, USD million	Cost in 2017, USD million	Industry	Place in the rating, 2018	Place in the rating, 2017
1	2	3	4	5	6
Santa Bremor	61,2	57,8	Food production	1	3
Babushkina krynka	56,5	60,5	Dairy industry	2	2
World of Tanks	54,0	78,5	IT	3	1
Savushkin product	49,8	51,2	Dairy industry	4	4
Milavitsa	44,1	51,0	Consumer goods industry	5	5
Krinita	40,2	37,5	Beer and non-alcoholic industry	6	8

The ending of table 1

1	2	3	4	5	6
Alivaria	39,7	44,6	Beer and non-alcoholic industry	7	6
Spartac	37,0	41,7	Confectionery industry	8	7
Kommunarka	36,4	33,1	Confectionery industry	9	9
Lidskoe	29,0	23,6	Beer and non-alcoholic industry	10	13

The data obtained showed that 8 out of 10 positions are occupied by brands whose activities are related to food products: food, dairy industry, beer and non-alcoholic industry and confectionery industry. The high valuation of these brands is due to the significant production volumes, as well as the presence of demand and popularity outside the Republic of Belarus. The undisputed leader of the segment and the rating as a whole was estimated by the agency at \$61.2 million in 2018. The list also included one organisation from the information technology sector, whose position in 2018 compared to 2017 decreased by two points, and the total value of the brand decreased by 24.5 million US dollars. The absence of organisations of the service industries among the leading brands is typical for the Republic of Belarus, which means that the platform for developing and strengthening its positions is extensive and perhaps in the near future some industries will be able to reach a higher level.

Within a short period, Belarusian organizations have accumulated significant practical experience, which allows us to conclude that there is such a phenomenon as branding in Belarus. Many of the brands created are well known and respected by customers not only in Belarus and the CIS countries, but also in foreign countries. The leading Belarusian brands are "Savushkin product" (currently "Savushkin"), "Babushkina Krynka", "Milavitsa", "Santa Bremor", "Spartak", "Kommunarka". Due to the efforts of the IT company Wargaming, the brand of the computer game World of Tanks has become known all over the world.

The heads of Belarusian organizations understand that the presence of a strong brand gives a significant advantage, allowing them to ensure a stable position in the domestic and foreign markets, to prove their worth in the competition.

The specific features of the national branding activity include the absence of fierce competition in many product categories and, as a result, the possibility of rapid emergence of new brands, as well as their increasing popularity due to a small number of successfully conducted advertising campaigns.

The positive trends include the rapid growth of interest in the branding of domestic manufacturers of goods.

Considering the negative trends, I would like to note the almost complete absence of socially significant new brands. The status of the leaders is also of concern. Thus, according to the same survey conducted by the Novak laboratory, the leaders in the category "Brand - property of the Republic" were "Atlant", "Horizon", "Vityaz", "Belita", "Belvest", etc. However, there is no doubt that their real value is low in the foreign market. Would these brands have taken place if the purchasing power of Belarusians had increased? However, this is one of the most important indicators of sustainable brand loyalty.

Weak points in the formation of the image of the TM are the issues of the budget for its creation and promotion. According to the above-mentioned research on the attitude to branding of domestic manufacturers, 67% of the surveyed enterprises feel an urgent need to conduct advertising campaigns, but note that the existing norms, as well as the attribution of advertising costs to the cost of production, do not allow allocating the necessary budget.

Another negative trend is the growth of the "gray" advertising market. Trying to save money on design developments, on the production of videos, the customer does not always think about the transfer of property copyrights to him, which the agency is obliged to properly issue. In addition, the agency really should own the same rights to the development. Otherwise, eventually, especially when entering foreign markets, the advertiser's losses can reach enormous amounts.

Interactive methods of brand promotion are also developing at a slow pace. If the leading enterprises already have corporate websites, then most state-owned ones still only start using e-mail.

However, I would like to note that, despite a number of constraints, the process of forming a civilized advertising and information space, including in the field of creating new TMs and transforming them into brands, is still developing. Therefore, new brands in various industries are constantly appearing in Belarus, aimed at different segments of consumers. Branding is also developing thanks to specialized marketing and branding agencies that provide services for the creation and promotion of brands, and specialists in this field.

The main factors of the rapid development of branding in the Republic of Belarus are:

- increased competition in the domestic market;
- export development;
- growing customer needs and requests;

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- improving the management of organizations;
- development of information technologies.

Currently, several professional competitions are held in Belarus, the purpose of which is to determine the best brands owned by Belarusian companies. First of all, it is necessary to talk about the domestic competition «Brand of the Year» (held by the company «Satio»). The competition «Choice of the Year» is held by the companies FestivalsInternational (USA) and EuropeanMarketingFoundation (European Foundation for Social Research, Brussels, Belgium) with the support of EuropeanChamberofCommerceIndustryandTrade, Brussels (European Chamber of Commerce, Brussels). The contest «Product of the Year» for food products is held by LLC «Publishing House Express-contact». The competition «Brand of the Year» includes, among other categories, a nomination for socially responsible brands.

At the same time, the development of branding in our country faces certain difficulties, among which are:

- lack of understanding of the meaning of branding in a number of organizations;
- insufficient branding funding;
- lack of qualified specialists in this field;
- insufficient amount of research and analysis in the field of branding;
- insufficient methodological basis.

Today, the brand consciousness in Belarus is at the stage of formation. Most manufacturers do not conduct professional marketing research in the market of Belarus and abroad, and the marketing departments of many enterprises are rather sales departments, where there are no necessary market analysts. Belarusian manufacturers underestimate such factors of brand success as stable product quality and communication with the target audience.

Thus, at this stage of branding development in Belarus, the organisation of high-quality systematic work on the development of existing brands is the most important task. High-quality branding can create a positive image and recognition of the country in the international arena. The strongest brands become such only as a result of constant and consistent actions to promote their products.

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