



International brand strategy: Case analysis according to the Moroccan Market

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ABSTRACT

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Consumers today are not looking for a simple consumption, but they are looking for sense. The brand strategy is situated at a higher level of closeness to the consumer. Indeed, the brand acts as a communication interface between the company and the market. The present article will discuss the topic of a brand as a principal communication interface between the company and the consumer. First, we will analyze the brand position in the marketing mix approach through a comparative study of strong international brands strategies that have retained their positions despite different trends and generations. The result shows that the coherence between the corporate, product and brand strategy leads to build strong international brands.

1. Introduction

The 1950s were characterized by mass consumption, and this phenomenon has increased with the thirty glorious to create a new model of society, said the consumer society. At the 80's, we assist to a hyper-consumption due to globalization (Sempirini 1991). In the 21st century, the market of consumption became complex. Indeed, several offers and abundant information have changed the balance of the consumption system. We are, therefore, faced to an active consumer.

Looking for the meaning, consumers reflect an increasing demand according to their physiological, psychological and sociological needs, hence the importance of the brand which acts as an inimitable competitive advantage to ensure the sustainability of companies. In a marketing context, the existence of a company is reflected by the detection and response to changing needs expressed by the consumption market.

To synthesize this situation, companies are between two spheres, on one hand, the strong standardized production characterized by mass production, and on the other hand, the consumer market characterized by mass consumption. The brand is considered as a strategic tool of management in a company. Things have taken greater consideration, mainly with the opening of markets, the increase of transactions and trade flows, and the development of technological tools. The importance of developing an international strategy in such a context becomes a necessity.

The objective of this article is to point out the importance occupied by the brand in a company and how the strategy is built, especially in a market characterized by a sense of consumption. The analysis of the brand strategy will be done according to a marketing and semiotic approach. The companies studied are selected by the strong notoriety among the Moroccan market. The objective is to study their internationalization strategies and to evaluate the degree of coherence between the corporate and the brand strategy. Without forgetting the product component which represents the concrete aspect that unifies the two strategies on the market.

2. Literature review

2.1 Managing the company in a foreign market:

Managing a company across borders needs a specific interest to the cultural variables of the hosted market. According to J. Hurn Brian, (2013), international managers are facing four challenges issues. First, the strategic geopolitical issue, as Hurn Brian said, the global trade depends on a stable financial climate and security which build business confidence. Indeed, the insecurity, economic crisis, political situation all those have an impact on the internationalization process. Managers have to be more informed and flexible to deal with this context.

The second issue is about working in multinational teams; in this section, the cultural variable has an important impact on the internal strategy. The aim of each international structure is to unify forces to build a high cultural synergy despite the

differences. The third issue developed the ethical and environmental consideration, in this part; the focus is about exploring the resources of countries. Companies and managers are looking for optimizing their production and increasing their sales.

And finally the fourth issue developed is the vulnerability of global supply chains, 80% of the world's trade is carried by sea, however, because of some economic politic and environmental constraints, managers have to develop strategies to deal with such interruptions using alternative sources of supply J. Hurn Brian, (2013). In this situation, managers have to develop their language skills to understand the culture of the foreign market, and response perfectly to the local preferences and build an adaptable strategy.

2.2. Managing the Brand

According to (Culliton, 1948), the manager is seen as a "mixer of ingredients," one who is constantly engaged in the creative structuring of procedures and marketing policies to produce a profitable business. Borden (1964), in his article about the "marketing mix concept" developed twelve elements of the mixed approach: product planning, pricing, branding, distribution channels, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, presentation, service, handling, research and analysis of facts and data.

Borden also certifies that each company has the freedom to determine the variables of the marketing mix in depend on the market forces and the objective to attend, taking into consideration the availability of resources. A synthetic combination was developed subsequently by (McCarthy, 1960), to group the twelve original elements proposed by Borden to four elements: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, known by the "4Ps".

The model of the 4Ps was tilted to the 7 Ps with Booms and Bitner, 1980. Three variables were added to the 4P model, which are the processes, the people, and the physical evidence. This model is functional in the services field. Operational marketing has several purposes. According to (Laethem 2005), three objectives are presented: the development of the visibility of offers on the market; favoring the sale of offers with prospects and customers; the development of the image and reputation of the offers. The image appearance is one of the functions that address the operational marketing. For this, we will focus on the marketing mix component which allows the development of the image and notoriety dimension. Marketing has always been defined by its ability to respond to consumer's needs, however, with the increasing offer this need is exceeded, hence the role of a brand (Berry 1983, Blackston 1992). According to Lazer Kelly (1962), MC Carthy (1964), Kotler (1962), the marketing foundation reflect three realities which approve that the utmost consideration is given to the product much more than the brand.

Thus we note that the brand has a marginal function comparing to the greatness of the operational marketing.

2.3 Brand in the marketing mix

From a marketing perspective, the brand has not taken all merit compared to the greatness of the marketing discipline. According to (Lewi and Rogliano 2006), the branding is a small component of marketing mix approach.

Table 1: Brand within the marketing mix (Directed by the author)

Authors	Brand Context in the product policy
Bonnafox and Billon (2013)	The first step is the determination of product characteristics: the materials, ingredients, a method of manufacture ... The second step consists in determining the products and promises to indicate information about the location frequency- and the time of use. The third step is about the brand associated with the design and image. The fourth step involves the annexes services that meet consumer demands namely training, technical support, warranty, service, installation ...
Masterson and Pickton (2014)	Among the variables of the product policy: The characteristics, range, associated services, branding, design and the packaging
Laethem (2005)	The core product is the product itself (or service) with its features, functions, and benefits it brings. The "off-tangible product" is what surrounds the product closely, what we buy with the product. It is at this level brand, quality, style, and packaging. The "out-produced intangible" includes variables that help to sell the product and associated services such as service delivery, training, time, and support.
Kotler and Amstrong 2014	The product comes in three political levels, the key heart of the product is good or service as a first level, the second level includes packaging, design, quality, brand and features. And the third level includes installation, after sales services, warranty and delivery.

Through this different author's reflection, we note that the brand is a component of the product policy. The success of many modern products is linked to their brand strategy; however, it can also cause their failure (Haig, 2003). We can notice that the brand is the driving part of the marketing mix. The choice of communication tools, price, and distribution channels remains on the selected brand strategy.

2.4. Company – Brand relationship in the context of internationalization

Internationalization is a complex phenomenon where several study topics are to be considered. And consistency should be ensured between company strategy and the host country. In a marketing vision, the internationalization of the company is reflected by the internationalization of goods (Product / Service) to a potential market beyond the borders to satisfy a request, or to reply to an existing or anticipated need (Ghilane & Aomari 2016).

According to Pasco-Berho (2002), product internationalization is a sequence of steps that allows a company to achieve a progressive learning in a foreign market. Nowadays, the majority of products are facing to a standardization of production criteria in compliance with quality standards. However, how can we differentiate between the different products in a unified approach? In this situation, the importance of developing an inimitable competitive advantage such as brand became a necessity.

3. Methodology

On a practical level, to identify brands that will be an object of analysis, we conducted a study of the notoriety of international brands refereeing to the Moroccan consumer's spirit. The study focus on three sectors: food, soft drinks and automotive sectors. The survey covered a sample of 202 people, 69% women and 31% men. The sample is nonexhaustive. We used the method of propriety. Data collection is done through social networks, mailing, and distribution of the paper version in public spaces. The support used is the Google drive.

The questionnaire is organized in two main sections; the first is dealing with the agro-food sector and more specifically the area of biscuits and soft drinks. The second relates to the automotive industry. Each section provides an open question for identifying spontaneously five names of international brands. The second question is related to the aided awareness to choose the recognized brands from a list.

4. Results

4.1 Agro-food sector

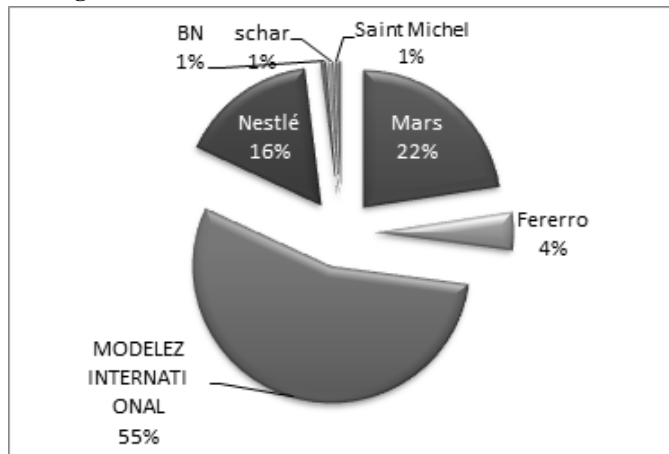


Figure 1: Top of mind notoriety of International biscuits Brands (Directed by the author)

The Mondelez group has a strong notoriety with OREO which has a recognition rate of 47%, followed by his brand LU with a percentage of 46% and Milka and Kraft with a recognition rate of 7%. Mars group is positioned in the 2nd degree of notoriety with the Mars chocolate in the first place, followed by Snickers and Twix and Galaxy at the same degree in the second place, and Nestlé and the Ferrero group in the third place.

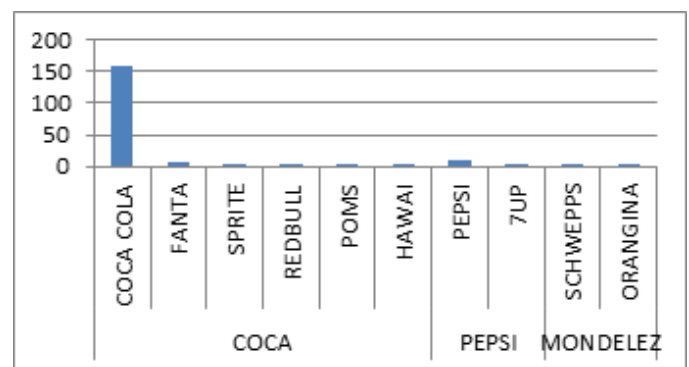
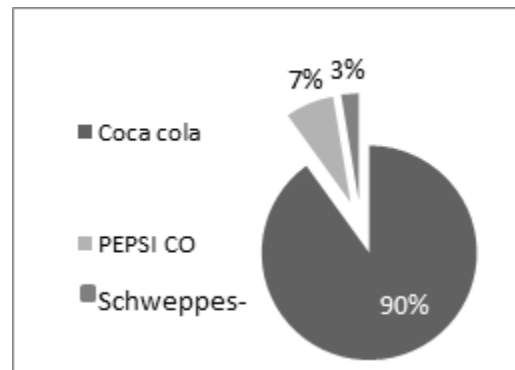


Figure 2: Top of mind notoriety of international soft drinks brands (Directed by the author)

In the field of soft drinks, Coca-Cola has the highest percentage of notoriety 90%, followed by the Pepsico group which owns 7% and Schweppes-Orangina products with 3%.

4.2 Automotive Sector:

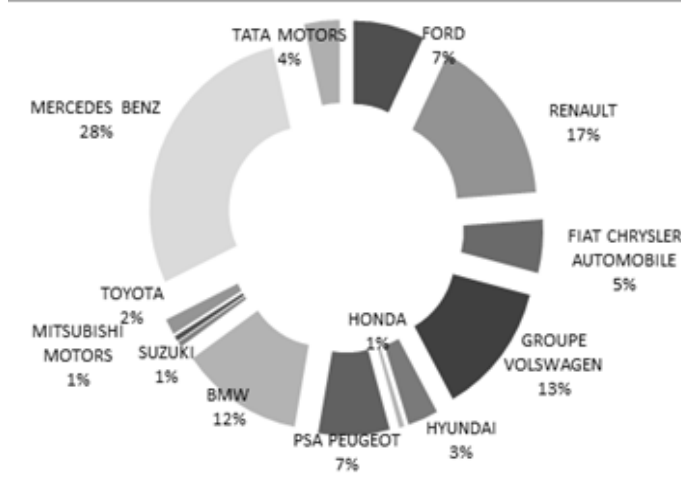


Figure 3: Top of mind notoriety of international brands in the Automotive sector (Directed by the author)

The results of the analysis of the Top of Mind notoriety, place the Mercedes-Benz in the first rank with a rate of 27%, followed by the Renault group with a rate of 15%, the Volkswagen group with 12.3%, BMW with 12%, then Ford and PSA Peugeot group with 7%.

4.3 Summary of the study

Following the results, the choice of brands that will make object of study will be based on brands that represent a top of mind notoriety, and this for the two sectors. In the food sector, specifically the field of biscuits, the study will focus on the Oreo brand. Concerning the soft drinks field, we will analyze coca strategy. For the automotive sector, we will study the strategy of the Mercedes Benz.

5. Analysis of brand strategies

The analysis of brand strategies will be processed on three phases. The first step is about the business element, where we will identify the segmentation, targeting and positioning strategies as part of strategic marketing. The second step is about the marketing mix approach. And finally, we will study the brand strategy by analyzing its identity and positioning.

5.1 Agro-food sector

At this first stage of the study, we will compare the strategies adopted by each of OREO for the biscuit sector and Coca-cola for the soft drink sector.

The global strategy of the leader brand Oreo focuses on the healthy image of its products. This is related in part to its missions and values. Concerning Mars bar, the strategy is totally different. It is axed principally on the sustainable development. Concerning the product policy, both of Oreo and Mars adapt their products in function to the hosted market needs. We conduct that the cultural dimension has an important role in orienting the products offer to respond consumers taste.

Table 2: OREO strategy (Directed by the author)

OREO	
Corporate strategy	
Segmentation and Target	The target is divided into two groups: those who enjoy biscuit and those who enjoy cream
Positioning	Develop healthy product image with the cream and milk
Marketing Mix	
Product policy	Features: The form consists of a white trim called "cream," between two round chocolate cookies (7% cocoa powder) Declension of Oreo Range: Oreo has 59 variations developed on two bases: * Nabisco Oreo - sandwich cookies - chocolate * Nabisco Oreo - sandwich cookies - golden Oreo variations are about cream taste, size, and the shape.
Communication Policy	Oreo has a strong network presence through actions like the Daly twist, the brand content, and TV. Oreo fix its strategy relating to the real-time marketing
Price Policy	The prices are adapted in depend on the markets
Placement	Oreo cookies are already present in more than 100 countries.
Brand strategy	
Name	Oreo has three interpretations: Oreo is seen as a derivation of the word OR in French meaning gold. Or the Greek word Oreo means Beautiful. Or the letters "re" word of the cream was between 2 "O" chocolate sandwich
Logo	The brand axe on colors and graphic codes: blue, white and black. These colors emphasize the alliance chocolate/milk for a healthy product
Slogan	In France the slogan: "An Oreo, milk, and all smiles at you." According to Kraft, half of the consumers follow the ceremonial of advertising: "Twist, lick, dunk"
Positioning	The development of a consumption ritual.

The branding strategy of Oreo is about developing a ritual of consumption. Thus the communication strategy develops this message using different tools, but the core message is about the famous slogan "Turn, Taste, Dip". The logo blue, white, and black impact the packaging strategy to develop a healthy image. The price and distribution policies allow the accessibility of the products.

The Oreo strategy on the Moroccan market starts with its location decision on the Sherifian territory. Regarding its distribution

policy, Morocco has a network of 80,000 points of sale. The product policy approves that the process of manufacturing OREO follows the same quality standards as Mondelēz International according to the head of the biscuit segment for Morocco and Algeria. The production will focus on the original Oreo 4 rooms. However, an adjustment was made at the price policy taken for a drop of over 50% to move from 5 MAD to 2 MAD. Regarding the communication strategy, it revolves around the ritual "Turn, Taste, Dip." As Oreo Action gave an appointment to his fans in the esplanade of the Morocco Mall, to taste the biscuit simultaneously, this occasion took place the greatest tasting biscuit, in the presence of some 1,796 people who had done the ritual of the brand, in one place and at the same time simultaneously. We notice that Oreo wants to establish the same message that revolves around the ritual of eating the cookies.

Table 3: COCA COLA strategy (Directed by the author)

COCA COLA	
Corporate strategy	
Segmentation and Target	The target: middle-class population. An adjustment was made: diet coke for women, black for young...
Positioning	Coca developed an image variable associated with a lifestyle
Marketing Mix	
Product policy	Features: A non-alcoholic drink made from coca nuts of Damiana, inspired by the Mariani wine. Declination range COCA: Coca-Cola wanted to continue in its variants by creating the Coca-Cola Vanilla Coca Cola Black, Coca-Cola Zero, Diet Coca-cola
Communication Policy	Coca uses an interactive advertising. The introduction of bottles "Personalized". Music and sport have promoted the product by being present in sports and music events.
Price Policy	Coca set a low price; the aim is to reach everyone.
Placement	Coke has developed 100,000 sales points and 40,000 refrigerators
Brand strategy	
Name	This name comes from two ingredients used for its original composition: the coca leaf and kola nut.
Logo	Frank Robinson, the accountant of Pemberton, named the Coca-Cola beverage. The name is developed with a neat handwriting.
Slogan	After the first war, the goal is to restore desire to consume. After World War II the product is presented as a family member. Today the campaign is centered on the product with: "Taste the Feeling"
Positioning	Focused on the notion of freedom and happiness

The success of Coca-Cola is a worldwide success. The objective of the Company is about developing a lifestyle. The introduction

of Coca-Cola in Morocco has required a cultural development. For this, the company has worked towards political communication that tends toward social actions. The company has participated in donations for associations fighting against AIDS; they worked on access to drinking water in marginalized villages in Africa. Thus the image of Coca Company is linked to the image of happiness. This image was quickly reinforced by the famous slogan "Open a Coke, Open Happiness."

For its product policy, Coca Morocco has 14 brands:

- Sparkling beverage: Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola Light, Coca-Cola Zero, Fanta, Sprite, Schweppes, Pom's, Hawai, et Top's
- Juice: The range Miami Orange, Peach, Mango, Multivitamins, Orange-Mango and juice with orange pulp «Pulpy»
- Table waters: Ciel
- Sports drink: Aquarius
- Energetic drink: Burn

In Africa, the company has established itself in Casablanca, the economic capital of the kingdom for stability reasons. Casablanca platform covers 29 countries. For its distribution policy, Coke has developed 100,000 sales points and 40,000 refrigerators. Three bottlers do coverage of different regions:

- North Africa bottling company covers Casablanca - Fez-Marrakech.
- Atlas Bottling Company: covers the territory of northern Tangier to Oujda.
- Company Soft drink Souss holding covers the south.

5.2 The Automotive Sector

Table 4: Mercedes strategy (Directed by the author)

MERCEDES	
Corporate strategy	
Segmentation and Target	The target has been oriented towards a customer always wealthy but also much younger (30-40).
Positioning	Mercedes embodies the tradition of luxury automotive combined with the Germanic rigor.
Marketing Mix	
Product policy	Automobiles sport and luxury, tractors, trucks, and buses. The group decided to change its image by offering innovative and clean designs
Communication Policy	Communication is through commercials videos but also has the magazine press, radio or display advertising. 2.0 sides, Mercedes have a website and creates "mini websites buzz" for the launch of its models.
Price Policy	Mercedes-Benz used a combination of price and product to reach its younger target audience.
Placement	The distribution policy is based on the branch office system

Brand strategy	
Name	"Mercedes", the nickname of the founder's daughter aged 13
Logo	The Mercedes logo, a star with three branches, symbolizes three elements: Earth, Air, and Water.
Slogan	"The best or nothing"; "If you are asking for the best, it is Mercedes", "If you would only settle for the best, you would only settle for a Mercedes car"
Positioning	Mercedes has taken a new position by seeking to rejuvenate its models for a younger image.

Mercedes strategy targets a younger population. The vision of Mercedes is to review the design of its models and rejuvenate to seduce the market. The goal is to "evoke emotion".

In Morocco, the Mercedes brand is marketed by Auto Nejma, the exclusive importer. The company now has six dealerships centers in different cities of the kingdom of which Tetouan, Meknes, Marrakech, Fez, El Jadida, Agadir and three branch offices in Rabat, Casablanca, and Tangier without forgetting the seat of El Jadida. For its product policy, Mercedes Morocco has five ranges: Sedans- Rotate- CUT - Cabriolets/roadster - Suv/terrain. The image taken by Mercedes internationally is the same as on Moroccan territory. We concluded that Mercedes adopt a standardization strategy.

6. Discussion and conclusion

On the two sectors, we can argue that each brand leaves a special imprint on its market. Through this section, we will analyze the common points that made the success of its brands in different sectors.

To start with the food industry, the top of mind brands is OREO in the biscuits sector and Coca-Cola for soft drinks sector. The introduction of Oreo and Coca in the Moroccan market has materialized through a local presence, with the determination of its position, Oreo as a healthy product and Coca-Cola as a drink which develops a lifestyle. The cultural dimension is taken into account mainly by Coca-Cola that worked on its image on the African territory to replace the image of the colonizer and war by the image of happiness. For Oreo cases, the cultural side was easier to manage, for its launch strategy, Oreo gathers consumers for a moment of tasting. Products marketed on the territory are selected based on the destination country. As the case with Oreo, they selected Oreo original, concerning Coca-Cola, the company chooses only 14 brands on Moroccan territory to constitute a limited brand portfolio. The choice of names remained the same. Oreo with its ritual consumption and Coca with his image associated with happiness. The communication strategy adopted by Oreo focuses mainly on how to consume an Oreo, whether in the social networks, TV.... The famous slogan is always the same "Turn, Taste, And Dip." In the case Coca-Cola, the communication strategy revolves around the happiness and sharing whether on TV commercials, or other networks.

For the automotive sector, the introduction of Mercedes was made by an import exclusive contract for the Auto Nejma Company; its mission is to follow the overall strategy of Mercedes with their standards and vision. It is, therefore, a standardization strategy. On the strategic side, the positioning of Mercedes products has seen a turning point. Indeed the brand wants to get out of this luxurious identity for a rich person to reach young people. Hence its product policy was revised to rejuvenate its models. The image of Mercedes was reproduced in all elements of the mix, whether it's pricing policy which was combined with the product policy to adapt to the new young target.

To reproduce the common points adopted by brands from different sectors, we can link the success of brands to the harmony with her overall strategy. Each company has a set of variables or ingredients, and the manager has the mission to mix all the ingredients that will make the company's success (Culliton 1948). If we analyze the brands that were the object of study, each one has a particular story, but all are strong brands.

The internationalization in a marketing vision begins with a definition of segments and positioning by following a strategic internal and external diagnostic of the company. Therefore, the company should adapt her marketing mix, starting by the product policy, through the analysis of the cultural dimension. The company subsequently decides the strategy for introducing its products on the market. It was the case of the Coca-Cola Company when she decides to launch ranges on the host territory. The third step is about the brand strategy, to present the identity and positioning of the product. The elements of the mix that come later are developed based on the branding strategy. This is how we can summarize the three major variables of brands internationalization success to Company - Product - Brand. A model called triadic (Ghilane and Aomari 2015). This model uses the reflection of a group of authors on the subject of the company's internationalization variables Company - Product and Brand. The concept is that the internationalization of a company seen by the consumer is reflected by the product internationalization that stands out in the market by its brand strategy. The other components of the mixes have the mission to translate the strategy set at the trio and maintain harmony and cohesion to ensure success. Here is the link between the internationalization of corporate strategy and the internationalization of brand strategy.

6.1. Limitations and future research

We should note some limitations for this research. The study is general and covers an overview concerning the strategy, and it does not contain details. It will be interesting to study the brand image to compare with the brand identity and corporate strategy to evaluate the degree of coherence according to the consumer spirit.

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