

Magdalena Grębosz  
Politechnika Łódzka

## The Character of Brands Positioning Messages of Selected Innovative Companies

### Summary

The aim of this article is to present the character of the brands positioning messages as well as the possibilities of using the marketing communication tools in different stages of lifecycle of innovative brand. The study is based on literature studies and international cases studies - carried out in chosen innovative companies in 2016 in France and Poland. The analysed brands were the companies brands. The analyses show that the character of executed communication strategy has changed in different stages of lifecycle of innovative brand. In the launching and consolidation stages, companies emphasize especially the products physical characteristics, while during the acceptance and culmination stages, the intangible brand values are crucial.

**Key words:** brand management, brand lifecycle, communication, innovative brand.

**JEL codes:** M3, O3

### Introduction

The marketing communication in case of innovative brands – that are engaged in the process of intensive, systematic and repeated innovation – includes creation of brand positioning message that presents special added value for consumer. Information about this value should be correctly transmitted to the customer to become the basis for building competitive advantage.

Today's new communications environment has vastly expanded the capabilities of companies. In particular, the emergence of a wide array of different types of communication options has improved marketers' communication possibilities. In addition to advertising, sales promotion, and other traditional forms of marketing communications, marketers can now employ websites with detailed brand and product information, reviews and recommendations, send e-mails and text messages, place banner and rich media ads, and engage in paid search, among the many new online marketing communication options (Keller 2016).

The aim of this article is to present the character of the brands positioning messages as well as the possibilities of using the marketing communication tools in different stages of lifecycle of innovative brand. The research is based on literature studies and international cases studies - carried out in chosen companies in 2016 in France and Poland. The analysed brands are companies brands.

## Concept of innovative brand

The search for added value by consumers and the requirement to be competitive, more and more often push the contemporary companies to introduce innovative solutions. As a result, the innovative brands are created and developed. On the market, we distinguish more and more often companies that represent innovation-based culture. It is a corporate culture where employees work together to reinforce best practices that systematically and continuously churn out valued new products to customers (Kahn 2005). These companies implement the concept of innovative marketing and develop the innovative brands. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014), the principle of innovative marketing requires that the company continuously seek real product and marketing improvements.

If we consider, that a brand is a reference point which makes it possible for the consumer to evaluate the quality, material features, and fundamental intangible values represented by it, and thus assess his or her level of identification with it and compare it with other offerings on the market (Grębosz 2013), we can define innovative brand as a brand that in addition is engaged in the process of intensive, systematic and repeated innovation. This brand is an element of the innovation culture and is related with the permanent innovation.

An innovative brand can be both – a company brand or product brand. In majority, the innovative companies apply a strategy of a company brand to develop one innovative brand and by the strategy of extension constantly introduce new products and services. To classify the company brand as innovative, the following classification's criteria (based on the characteristics of innovative companies described among others by Stawasz 2005; Jasiński 1992; Sosnowska *et al.* 2000; Oslo Manual 2005) can be apply:

- a company conducts activity in the area of R&D (or purchases new products or technologies),
- a company systematically implements new scientific and technological solutions,
- a company continuously introduces innovations on the market,
- a company represents a high share of novelty (products and technologies) in the totality of production and services,
- a company brand positioning underlines its innovative character,
- a company underlines the innovative brand character in marketing communication activities,
- a company uses innovative potential to develop innovative marketing communication,
- a company communicates with its customers to effectively identify their current and future needs,
- a company exploits innovative potential to create added value for customers,
- a company exploits innovative potential to maintain a high competitive position,
- a company is able to predict the future, represents a perspective thinking,
- a company is able to adapt to the changing operating conditions.

In case of the innovative brand, in majority, the brand identity is based often on the physical, original and advanced characteristics related to product or products. Companies, that manage the innovative brands, introduce systematically the new pioneering products or

modify the existing ones. As a result, innovative brand identity is reinforced in consequence of brand extension or repositioning. However, the managers of innovative brands should not ignore emotional benefits, closely related to the brand features, that in symbolic manner differentiate innovative brand. Observation of the market confirms that innovative brands often represent also strong personality, expressed through the particular associations, brand culture and intangible values (Grębosz 2016). Consequently, in case of innovative brands, the brand image refers to the modern characteristics of the product, symbolic brand values, as well as aspirations and desires of users. All these elements can be expressed by correctly developed marketing communication strategy.

Like in case of traditional brands, we can distinguish five stages of innovative brand lifecycle: stage of launching a brand, stage of getting consumer acceptance (called also confirmation stage), consolidation stage that is a stage of reinforcing brand position in the market, stage of brand expansion (called also deployment stage) and culmination stage when a brand gains a strong position in the market and an orbital position (Caron 1996). The length of an innovative brand lifecycle is to a great extent influenced by technological progress and the necessity of innovation as well as by the way in which a brand is promoted on the market. The unique character of the products enhances the innovative brand's chances for a long lifecycle. This uniqueness may result from the limited area of land where a brand is developed, the specific location of a product, original history, original prescription and technology or invariable methods of manufacturing a product (Grębosz 2016).

One of the brand characteristic that can generate the innovative brand communication competitiveness is a brand's affinity that is a reason consumers feel attracted to it, why they desire it, why they feel a kinship with it. Brand affinity influences directly the character of the marketing communication campaign, especially the brand positioning message.

Brand affinity can be based on one or more aspects. Affinity specialists usually make use of brand personality traits as a means of brand expression. Van Gelder (2003) defines four main dimensions of brand affinity, among others: functional versus emotional, native versus cosmopolitan, ego- versus society-oriented or association versus empathy affinity.

According S. Van Gelder (2003):

- cosmopolitan affinity expresses personality traits such as sophistication, superiority, uniqueness and originality and typically these brands are perceived as a global or international brands,
- native brand affinity is regarded as regional and traditional,
- ego-oriented brand affinity is based on issues such as pleasure, individualism, ambition, originality,
- society-oriented affinity uses values that are common across various societies such as the environment, social justice, fair trade or workers' rights,
- functional affinity is typical for the brands that focus on what consumers perceive as important in terms of functionalities of products and services,
- emotional affinity is based on positive emotional aspects,

- empathy affinity is typical for the brands that build their relationships with consumers based on empathy and employ such personality traits as caring, thoughtfulness, friendliness and independence,
- association affinity is typical for brands that rely on consumer association and tend to express the brand through personality traits such as being exiting, ambitious, cool, off-beat and aspirational.

Brand affinity is today important element of the brand identity that is created during implementation and development of the marketing communication campaign. By different tools, the companies have the possibility to underline the brand character and expressed values that improved the final brand image.

## Research – methodology, analysis and results

### *Research methodology*

The research had international character and based on cases studies. A case study is used to look into certain phenomenon, person, group or any subject that requires studies. The case study can be both based on information already available and provide analysis for that or it might need some additional scientific research in order to investigate a problem. Cases have become a source of reliable data and often provide important observations (Ragin and Becker 2016). The choice of companies to be studied was a deliberate one. The study was completed in the third and fourth quarter of 2016 in Poland and in France in cooperation with foreign partners. The study was carried in eight companies (four from Poland and four from France) that operate in the food and cosmetic industry and manage the innovative companies brands. To classify the companies that manage innovative brands, the criteria presented in the section “Concept of innovative brand” were applied. All analysed companies represent production sector, employ more than 250 employees and direct offerings to the individual customers (B2C market). Four of the studied brands are currently in the consolidation stage, two in the stage of expansion and two in the stage of culmination. During realisation of research, the managers from the companies indicated themselves the stage in which – in their opinion – a brand is currently. The theoretical characteristic of each stage<sup>1</sup> was delivered by researcher.

<sup>1</sup> Caron (1996) identifies five stages of brand life:

- stage of launching a brand, consisting of creating its personality, image, and characteristics; At this stage it is possible to create a unique image of a brand with respect to other brands in the market and to distinguish it,
- stage of getting consumer acceptance called also confirmation stage,
- consolidation stage that is a stage of reinforcing brand position in the market; Brands which have achieved a high level of consumer acceptance may pass to the consecutive stage of strengthening the brand position in the market,
- stage of brand expansion (called also deployment stage); This stage may last as long as several dozens of years and is based on the constant development of a brand; It may end up in achieving a solid and strong position in consumers’ minds or in losing the market position and in the disappearance of the brand,
- culmination stage (orbital position stage): a brand gains a strong position in the market; In such a situation companies often decide to expand into foreign markets.

The research methodology was chosen based on the classification proposed by Czakon (2013) and Kaczmarczyk (2011). During the realisation of the research, data were obtained from secondary sources (analysis of web content, internal materials, industry reports) and from primary sources (semi-structured interviews among companies representatives addressed directly to the managerial staff, active and passive observation). Interviews allowed asking open-ended questions to a small sample of responders and exploring individual experiences or opinions regarding the researched problem. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews mostly focus on the interviewee's opinion and experience, aiming to get rich and in-depth data (Bryman 2008). This kind of qualitative research might be perceived as rather subjective, due to the personal involvement of the researcher in an open study and difficult to be an object of generalization. On the other hand, generalizing to a population is not the main goal of qualitative research. It aims at understanding and discovering deeply a particular case and perspective.

Two research questions were formulated:

- How does the positioning message character change in different stages of the innovative brand lifecycle?
- Which tools of marketing communication are applied in different stages of the innovative brand lifecycle?

### ***Research results***

Below the selected research results are presented. It should be noted that due to editorial restrictions, only some aspects of the problem have been presented.

In the stage of launching, in all analysed cases, the companies stressed the physical characteristics of the product, which were the basis for informing about the brand and distinguishing the brand on the market. Functional affinity with cosmopolitan character was created to underline such traits as sophistication, superiority and uniqueness. Both, Polish and French companies have underlined the brands cosmopolitan personality even if the scope of activity had national character. Majority of brands were presented as ego-oriented, based on original and aspirational issues. Advertising messages at this stage tried to convince the user about the innovative features of the product, and based on beliefs about specific product characteristics and technological assets that create added value for customers. Among the most popular tools of marketing communication applied by companies in the launching stage, we can distinguish advertising, online marketing and sales promotion. The differences between French and Polish companies were not noticed in this area. In the acceptance stage, in majority of cases, the brand communication appealed to the aspirations of users, and to the brand intangible values, in particular the benefits, both functional and emotional, related to the use of the brand's products. The brand affinity stayed functional, cosmopolitan, ego-oriented and association-based but the companies concentrated less on the product and more on the modern, pleasant, ambitious and exiting lifestyle. French companies more often underlined brand intangible values than the Polish ones that concentrated on functional benefits. It can be a result of better financial situation of the French customers. Among the

most popular tools of marketing communication – applied by companies in the acceptance stage – online marketing and public relation activities were indicated (Table 1 and 2).

**Table 1**  
**Character of marketing communication in different stages of innovative brand lifecycle**

Stage of brand lifecycle	Stage of launching	Stage of acceptance	Stage of consolidation	Stage of expansion	Stage of culmination
Values expressed in the advertising message	Physical features of the innovative product(s)	Functional and emotional benefits associated with the use of the products of innovative brand	Physical features of the innovative products and symbolic values	Symbolic values; Functional and emotional benefits associated with the use of the new products of innovative brand	Symbolic values; Emotional relations with the brand; Functional and emotional benefits associated with the use of the new products of innovative brand
Type of the brand affinity presented during marketing communication activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• functional</li> <li>• cosmopolitan</li> <li>• ego-oriented</li> <li>• association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• functional</li> <li>• cosmopolitan</li> <li>• ego-oriented</li> <li>• association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• functional</li> <li>• cosmopolitan</li> <li>• ego-oriented</li> <li>• empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional</li> <li>• cosmopolitan</li> <li>• ego-oriented</li> <li>• empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional</li> <li>• cosmopolitan</li> <li>• society-oriented</li> <li>• empathy</li> </ul>

Source: own elaboration based on the research results.

In the consolidation stage, companies often reiterated the importance of technological assets by expanding their brand by introducing new innovative products. As a consequence, the advertising message appealed to the characteristics of these products, the aspirations of users or to the experience of consumers. The brand affinity has started to be empathic (especially in case of the French brands) – the companies have tried to build their relationships with consumers based on caring, thoughtfulness, friendliness. The brands carried about emotions, and tried to create a link between the brand and the individual consumer, by referring to the character, personality and brand values. In the consolidation stage, the companies – both French and Polish – declared using all possible tools of marketing communication, that is a consequence of competition development. In the stage of brand expansion, technological assets have become less important in marketing communication. Companies underlined especially symbolic values and brand affinity has become emotional (in case of two French companies, the affinity has started to represent emotional character already in stage of consolidation). Among the most popular tools of marketing communication applied by companies in the expansion stage, advertising, online marketing, sales promotion and public relation activities were indicated. In stage of culmination society-oriented affinity has dominated in the advertising messages. Companies stressed values related with environment, sustainability and fair trade (Table 1 and 2).

**Table 2****Tools of marketing communication used in different stages of innovative brand lifecycle**

Stage of brand lifecycle	Stage of launching	Stage of acceptance	Stage of consolidation	Stage of expansion	Stage of culmination
Tools of marketing communication that dominate in particular stages of innovative brand lifecycle	advertising, online marketing, sales promotion	online marketing, public relation	advertising, online marketing, public relation, direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling	advertising, online marketing, public relation, sales promotion	online marketing, public relation, direct marketing, sales promotion

Source: as in Table 1.

Marketing communication of innovative brands refers to join different methods to promote a product or brand among target customers. In each stage, different marketing communication activities were applied together for increased sales and creating desired brand image. The analyses show that the character of executed communication strategy has changed in different stages of lifecycle of innovative brand, as well as the mix of the marketing communication tools. Only online marketing tools were used constantly that emphasizes the importance of digital media.

Analysis of modification of the positioning message character in different stages of the innovative brand lifecycle showed that in the launching and consolidation stages, companies highlight especially the products physical characteristics, while during the acceptance and culmination stages, the symbolic brand values become important. In the stage of expansion – both – tangible and intangible brand characteristics are presented. The brand affinity evolves from functional, cosmopolitan, ego-oriented and association-based in stages of launching and acceptance, to functional, cosmopolitan, ego-oriented, empathy-based in the consolidation stage. Emotional affinity is distinctive for more advanced stages as expansion and culmination and society-oriented affinity is specific for culmination stage.

Depending on the stage of brand life-cycle, the images of innovative brands relating to product features, users' aspirations or to one's experience. There were no significant differences between the management of innovative brand image by the French and Polish companies.

## Conclusions

The companies have to inform, persuade, and remind consumers - directly or indirectly - about the products and brands to present the proposed added value and differentiate on the market. They can use different promotion mix tools as advertising, sales promotion, personal

selling, public relations or direct marketing (Wiktor 2013). In recent years the communication challenge has been made complicated by the development of new digital media. These new options offer new capabilities and hold much promise for marketers but also bring big complexity to managerial decision making (Keller 2016).

The analysis shows that, in case of innovative brands, the physical characteristics of the product are crucial for the brand positioning in the launching and consolidation stages. The new innovative brands should focus on offering functional, cosmopolitan, ego-oriented and association-based brand affinity to underline worldwide, modern and specialized character of brand. In the acceptance stage, it is important to refer to the consumer experience related to the identity of user. In the expansion stage, companies often emphasized the symbolic features of innovative brands, related to the emotional relationships with customers. At the stage of culmination, when brand is in orbital position, emotional, cosmopolitan, society-oriented and empathy-based affinity was promoted to reinforce an image of innovative brand as a set of beliefs on its innovative attributes, intangible associations and general brand culture.

The analysis help to answer on two research questions. The positioning message character changes in different stages of the innovative brand lifecycle. Diverse tools of marketing communication are applied in different stages of the innovative brand lifecycle to transmit this message. However, the differences in use of communication tools do not differentiate innovative brands from other brands on the market.

The marketers of innovative brands should concentrate on creation of original communications message that will help the brand achieve the desired positioning.

## Bibliography

- Bryman A. (2008), *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York.
- Caron G. (1996), *L'avenir des marques*, "Problèmes économiques", Vol. 2497.
- Czakon W. (Ed.) (2013), *Podstawy metodologii badań w naukach o zarządzaniu*, wyd. II rozszerzone, Oficyna a Wolters Kluwer business, Warszawa.
- Grębosz M. (2013), *Co-branding. Koncepcja i uwarunkowania rozwoju*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Łódzkiej, Łódź.
- Grębosz M. (2016), *Management of the innovative brand's life-cycle*, (in:) Teczke J. (Ed.), *State, Society and Business – development of Contemporary Management*, International Management Foundation, Kraków-Saint Petersburg.
- Jasiński A. (1992), *Przedsiębiorstwo innowacyjne na rynku*, Wydawnictwo „Książka i Wiedza”, Warszawa.
- Kaczmarczyk S. (2011), *Badania marketingowe. Podstawy metodyczne*, PWE, Warszawa.
- Kahn K.B. (Ed.) (2005), *The PDMA Handbook of New Product Development*, 2nd edition, John Wiley & Sons, New York..
- Keller K.L. (2016), *Unlocking the Power of Integrated Marketing Communications: How Integrated Is Your IMC Program?*, "Journal of Advertising", Vol. 45, Iss. 3.
- Kotler Ph., Armstrong G. (2014), *Principles of Marketing*, Pearson Education, Harlow.
- OECD (2005), *Oslo Manual*, European Commission & Eurostat.



- Ragin C., Becker H. (ed.) (2016), *What Is a Case?: Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Sosnowska A., Łobejko S., Kłopotek A. (2000), *Zarządzanie firmą innowacyjną*, Difin, Warszawa.
- Stawasz E. (2005), *Przedsiębiorstwo innowacyjne*, (in:) Matusiak K.B. (Ed.), *Innowacje i transfer technologii – Słownik pojęć*, PARP, Warszawa.
- Van Gelder S. (2003), *Global Brand Strategy. Unlocking Branding Potential Across Countries, Cultures & Markets*, Kogan Page, London.
- Wiktor J.W. (2013), *Komunikacja marketingowa*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

## Charakter komunikatów pozycjonujących marki wybranych przedsiębiorstw innowacyjnych

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie charakteru komunikatów pozycjonujących marki, jak również możliwości wykorzystania narzędzi komunikacji marketingowej w poszczególnych etapach cyklu życia marek firm innowacyjnych. Badania przeprowadzono na podstawie studiów literaturowych oraz międzynarodowych studiów przypadków, zrealizowanych w trybie doboru celowego w 2016 roku we Francji i Polsce. Analizowane marki były markami firm. Przeprowadzone analizy dowodzą, że realizowana strategia komunikacji marketingowej różni się w poszczególnych fazach życia marki innowacyjnej. W fazie wprowadzania i umacniania przedsiębiorstwa podkreślają fizyczne cechy produktów marek innowacyjnych, natomiast w fazach akceptacji i kulminacji istotne są niematerialne wartości marki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zarządzanie marką, cykl życia marki, komunikacja.

**Kody JEL:** M3, O3

## Характер сообщений, позиционирующих бренды избранных инновационных предприятий

### Резюме

Цель статьи – представить характер сообщений, позиционирующих бренды, а также возможность использования инструментов маркетинговой коммуникации на отдельных этапах цикла жизни инновационных фирм. Исследования провели на основе изучения литературы и анализов конкретных случаев в международном плане, осуществленных на целевой выборке в 2016 г. во Франции и в Польше. Анализируемые марки были брендами фирм. Проведенные анализы доказывают, что осуществляемая стратегия маркетинговой коммуникации отличается по отдельным фазам жизни инновационной марки. В фазе ввода и укрепления ее предприятия подчеркивают физические черты продуктов инновационных марок, тогда как в фазах одобрения и кульминации существенными являются нематериальные активы бренда.

**Ключевые слова:** управление маркой (брендом), цикл жизни марки, коммуникация.

**Коды JEL:** M3, O3

Artykuł nadesłany do redakcji w maju 2017 roku

© All rights reserved

Afiliacja:

dr hab. inż. Magdalena Grębosz, prof. PŁ

Politechnika Łódzka

Wydział Organizacji i Zarządzania

Katedra Integracji Europejskiej i Marketingu Międzynarodowego

ul. Wólczańska 215

90-924 Łódź

e-mail: [magdalena.grebosz@p.lodz.pl](mailto:magdalena.grebosz@p.lodz.pl)