

ABSTRACT

The global perception of the Hungarian wine might be strengthening but, at the same time, it is far from the popularity and acknowledged level of New Zealand or Austria, the countries, which are comparable in size and production volume.

These countries strongly lean on the so called generic branding marketing feature. The role of this working paper is twofold: primarily it serves as a closing act of the fourth level of WSET studies with the objective is to examine whether a focused umbrella branding could elevate the recognition of Hungarian wine outside its border and also forms a part of a more comprehensive research paper exploring the success factors of the countries in question.

Methodically I have applied the customer based brand equity model, notably conceptualizing the value driving dimensions of the asset profile of the model. Using this frame I have discussed the linkage and implications of the value driving capability on the brand equity and on the country brand simultaneously.

I have presented the historical evolvement of different brand equity concepts, their meaning and their value. I have investigated which key milestones and recognitions were necessary to arrive at the customer-based brand equity model that disposes the most long term influences both strategically and financially.

I have made the foundation of this study with the most important arguments: namely that the brand value is born in the mind of the consumer and remains determinant factor in the consumers' memory and that value both signifies a value holder and value a maker stance. Also the brand equity is able to generate benefits all along the value chain, from the producer via the intermediaries to the consumers. In order to illustrate the dynamic character of brand equity development I have introduced the notion of reflexivity, originally a capital market concept.

The strategic aim of brand equity management is to influence the costumers' mind and with the help of customers' reflections, adapting the prevailing strategy accordingly. The strategic management has been discussed in the context of five value-driver model, primarily under the brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations. I have demonstrated that in the frame of the model, the strategic usage of the five value driver pairing with appropriate management the stakeholders are able to financially and non-financially benefit from creating and maintaining the country brand.

Brand loyalty means continuous purchase of the given brand over a longer period of time. The strategic aim at establishing and developing brand loyalty is to deepen the product-reward link within consumer('s memory) and to push the customers to a higher level of brand loyalty.

Brand awareness, as a part of brand knowledge relates to the consumers' ability to recognize or to recall a brand in a given product set. It incorporates the past experiences and the capability to pull it out from the memory in case of purchase intention. The aim of the marketing strategy is to force the

customer to keep the brand in a 'strongly held status' in its memory and consider it as a first choice from the product set.

Perceived quality in close symbiosis with the price is one of the main dominant factors behind buying decision. Sometimes it even may act as the ultimate factor, but definitely influence the product set under consideration and finally the selection too. Perceived quality efficiently functions as a value driver: the perceived higher quality allows the company to widen the profit margin, consequently the profit too. Also, stakeholders in the supply chain are more willing to deal with successful and prestigious products, providing stronger negotiation position for the producers. Finally in case of brand extension the company is in a better position to launch new products.

Brand association is the other, the associative part of brand knowledge. Contrary to the brand awareness that is rather about the availability and 'searchability' of the brand in the memory; brand association practically is the meaning of the brand. It summarizes all the impressions the consumer obtains, creates perceptions from these inputs and establishes associations concerning the brand. Brand associations can be described by different angles, depending on the level abstraction. Three types of associations can be differentiated: the attributes, the benefits and the attitudes.

Secondary brand associations are those brand associations that are not directly linking to the brand but are especially important when primary associations are not strong or decisive enough.

Brand associations should be vary according to their quality drivers: the favorability, the strength and the uniqueness. All impression of the strategy has to be built around these quality specifics.

Customer based brand equity has an essential role to positively manipulate the potential customers, to get to know the product and to become regular buyer of it via its memories and the stored and continuously building and changing associations. The better planned and managed the process, the higher the probability of the success. I have presented the six ways of managing customer based brand equity as an efficient approach to implement strategic issues.

As argued brand equity, so country brand equity too has the power to generate value all along the value chain, where every stakeholder is able to benefit by means of the growth factors, the profitability factors and other factors as well.

Finally I have presented some figures and facts on the economic performance of the highlighted countries, demonstrating that the acknowledged country image and well founded brand image is able to support the increasing export activity as well as the evolvment of the bottle prices. Utilizing the views and opinions of some winemakers I have made attempt to estimate the specific country brand value due to the wine sector.

Finally the answer for the question raised in the title: shelter or rainmaker? The answer is neither of them. Both an umbrella and a rainmaker device are able to fulfill the task for what it has been constructed and used. Brand is more a complex 'something' so the proper usage of country branding is only one but powerful element of the strategic planning.