

CONSUMER PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP
OF
SYNONYMY BRANDS
IN COMPARISON TO
GENERIC, PROTOTYPICAL, OR ME-TOO BRANDS



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Consumer Perceived Leadership of Synonymity Brands

ABSTRACT

Brand synonymity is a prime position a brand reaches, when its name becomes a word (noun or verb or adjective), in the consumer vocabulary that is used as a synonym to represent their individual references or actions. The brand name gains word strength, that triggers natural word of mouth, transforms into a well-positioned brand by planting a word in consumer minds (Ries & Trout, 1993), becomes highly prototypical to its category, and remains part of consumer lexicon and discourse. However, extant research focuses on brand prototypicality that explains a brand representing its category (Eleanor Rosch & Mervis, 1975; Nedungadi & Hutchinson, 1985), eponymous brands that derives name from its founder or celebrity, and antonomasia or generic brands that becomes common names (Munteanu & Lupan, 2011) losing trademarks. The prototypical brand leadership literature is the foundation to our concept, as all the synonymity brands spotted are prototypical to their respective categories, though the reverse is not true. Our research expands on prototypical brand becoming a word used by consumers in their day to day discussions, and explores into consumer leadership perceptions, due to the affective meaning of the word. The research opens a new leaf in prototypical brand literature; Synonymity Brands – and a way to measure it empirically.

The thesis is structured in a three-essay approach with each of them unveiling a specific aspect of synonymity brand nature, its impact, and implications. Essay 1 of the research analyzes the synonymity brand nature, identifies dimensions, aggregates scale items from extant research, measures the synonymity brand and compares it with generic, prototypical and me-too brands. A brand chosen from each type is rated using scales representing four dimensions of synonymity; (1) word strength, (2) WOM strength, (3) prototypicality, and (4) brand positioning. Essay 2

expands on the first study, by correlating the synonymity brand dimensions on consumer perceived brand leadership. It also examines external validity of the synonymity brand scales, by rating a new set of consumer brands from each of the brand types. Results confirm external validity and shows a positive influence of synonymity brand dimensions over consumer perceived brand leadership. Essay 3 was designed as a vignette to check signs of a synonymity brand sustaining leadership, and the signs that indicate loss of its word strength, becomes a generic brand name and poses risk to turn into a defunct trademark. It is learnt that congruence of the brand name (noun) to the synonymity word (verb) sustains leadership, and incongruence between the two, points to the generic brands of lost leadership.

Keywords: Brand Synonymity, Prototypicality, Word strength, Word of Mouth, Brand Positioning, Consumer Perceived Brand Leadership, Leadership sustenance, Speech-Act verbs, Brand verbs, Generic Brands.

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