

Identifying Product Values in the Corporate Sphere and Instilling these Values in Employees

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the identification and instilling of core product and service values in the corporate sphere, with a focus on the communicating of key values and messages to important stakeholder groups such as consumers and company employees. It examines the effectiveness of core value-based, brand identity strategies in a range of economic fields and individual corporations and organisations, looking particularly closely at the development of core values as a vehicle for projecting brand image and ensuring long-term business success through their use as a tool to motivate staff and create employee and customer loyalty.

The thesis reviews the literature available in order to define the terms “product” and “service” and explores the types of values that may be attributed to products and services at different perception levels: namely, the core product, actual product and augmented product (Kotler et al, 2002). It then examines how core values manifest themselves within corporations, with examples of case studies at Sweden’s Volvo and Ikea (Urde, 2009) before exploring the concept of “true” core values and how such brand messages require a track record in a company’s history to be accepted by stakeholders. A further aspect of this subject to be examined is the necessity to install some form of management-employee transmission system to get messages across more effectively (Hutchinson and Bennett, 2012). It looks at how different types of management -- from top-down transactional relationships to sharing transformational relationships -- can impact the reception of brand messages in staff (Wallace et al, 2011) and also discusses the possible use of storytelling to convey corporate messages to both employees and other stakeholders (Spear and Roper, 2013).

The thesis includes a case study on the German furniture manufacturer and retailer COR Sitzmöbel Helmut Lübke GmbH & Co. KG, which designs, makes and sells high-end furniture and furnishings at its eight own studios and at approximately 450 third-party stores in a number of different countries including Austria and Germany. The research focuses on the issue of core-value identification and evaluation among company employees and management, and includes in-depth interviews on the importance of key core values among staff members, their supervisors and senior

management, which leads findings relating to core value identification, the communication of core values between different actors within the organisation and a discussion of methods to improve employee reception of important corporate messages.

The paper concludes with a summary of the findings from the interviews at the furniture manufacturer and retailer and with recommendations for improving the effectiveness of e value usage and transmission at the company and what can be gleaned from this example for the corporate sphere as a whole.