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**THE CONCEPT OF "BRAND" AND ITS CONTENT**

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The term "brand" comes from the Old Norse verb "brando", which the ancient Vikings used to refer to the brand, certifying the ownership of livestock and household utensils. Until now, in some regions, this term is called a sign that owners brand cattle [1].

Several decades ago, the term "brand" began to be actively used in relation to goods and services, so, in our opinion, it is worth starting to study this term in the context of the activities of companies producing goods and services for consumers, since this is the area where the concept of "brand" in its modern meaning was formed, such types of professional activities as marketing, branding, brand management appeared. In fact, to some extent, the state, an international organization or an integration association is also engaged in the production of goods for people who are citizens or participants in these structures.

There are quite a lot of definitions of the concept of "brand". R. Clifton, former chairman of the Board of Interbrand, defines a brand as a synthesis of real and imaginary opinions embodied in a trademark, which, with proper management, creates an influential image and value [2]. In the opinion of F. A brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of the two, used to identify the goods or services of manufacturers and to define their differences" [3].

The brand is based on the material aspect - a product with a certain functionality, designed to meet the needs and needs of consumers. At the same time, unlike a product, a brand is not limited only to the physical satisfaction of a person's desires and is not limited to the functional context of consumption. On the contrary, the brand is more meaningful in essence and includes images, associations and traditions. Thus, D. Aaker, a specialist in advertising, marketing and branding, describes the brand as a two-level system based equally on the quality characteristics of the product and a large associative series. Aaker defines the physical characteristics of a product or service as its capabilities, properties, quality, and scope of application.

The extended associative level helps to establish close relationships with consumers in the emotional plane. It includes the personality (brand character), the emotional benefit, the relationship between the brand and the consumer, the symbols, the country of origin, the self-expressed benefits, the image perceived by consumers, and the associations associated with the organization [4].

E. A. Rudaya, a specialist in marketing communications, notes that the modern interpretation of the concept of "brand" includes all consumer associations that arise in connection with a particular product. Unlike products, brands are not created in production, they are formed and exist in the minds of consumers, providing an emotional connection between their perception and the functionality of the product.

E. A. Rudaya identifies four levels of quality at which the brand meets different expectations and preferences of consumers:

- 1) functional (performs the main purpose of the product),
- 2) individual (the ability to meet the consumer's life values),
- 3) social (defines belonging to a social group,
- 4) communicative (ability to maintain relationships with clients) [5].

Thus, summarizing all the above, in our opinion, the most complete definition of a brand was given by the employees of the Brand Aid agency: "A brand is a consistent set of functional, emotional, psychological and social promises to the target consumer, which are unique and significant for him and best meet his needs" [6].

In today's competitive world, brands are a powerful weapon in the fight for consumer loyalty, a tool for building reputation, image and trust. Branding is a strategically important tool in modern business models. In the opinion of F. According to Kotler, "a good brand is the only thing that can provide above-average income for a long time" [7]. When talking about brand promotion, it is important to understand that a brand is not just about advertising messages and PR campaigns. First of all, it is the management of the system of relations with consumers by integrating all the marketing

components of the product - the product, price, packaging, sales features, placement in the sales floor, the attention of the company's employees to consumers and other factors [8].

As the author of numerous business books D. D'Alessandro wrote: "A brand is more than just advertising or marketing. This is all that comes to a person's mind about a product when he sees its logo or hears its name. " [9]

In Russian practice, brands are often identified with all trademarks. Russian top managers define a brand simply as a logo, some distinctive sign of a product. This approach, of course, leads to failure. A brand is a broader and more multidimensional concept than a brand. A brand is a mental construct, an image in the consumer's mind that combines the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of a person in relation to a particular "brand" object.

A brand is a managed value system associated with a particular product, service, company, organization, or even state, which is shared and perceived equally by a large part of the target audience. A brand is a promise to the consumer, an assurance that it is this brand that will meet his needs in the best way, that it is this brand that corresponds to the values, principles and habits of this buyer, that it is this brand that will give the customer the most necessary sensations and impressions. The brand should carry a unique idea that will attract the right target audience.

Thus, the content of the brand is much broader and deeper than the usual understanding of the brand or logo. We can only consider a brand that is perceived and appreciated by the audience as a brand. "Small" brands can support one "big" brand (for example, the brands "Coca-Cola", "Nike", "Apple" support the attractiveness of the state brand of the United States of America). "A brand is the good name of something offered to the public" [10]. So, in the case of the state, this good name makes it the least vulnerable to any shocks and negative consequences of its own wrong actions and ill-considered policies in the eyes of the public. If we talk about the state as a brand, then, in our opinion, it is fair to say that the state has reached the highest level of attractiveness. We can also say that branding is an image policy tool. If the brand of the state is attractive and recognized by most of the world community, then the image of the state will definitely be positive.

A country's brand is a rather complex construct. The brand of a supranational structure is an even more incomprehensible and poorly studied phenomenon, which, nevertheless, is becoming more and more relevant in the XXI century.

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