

CROATIAN BRANDING CHALLENGES

Branding has been recognized as the management philosophy, and the critical agenda for the Executive Board in industries all over the world. More and more firms have come to the realization that one of their most valuable assets is the brand name associated with their products or services. In an increasingly complex world, individuals and businesses are faced with more and more choices but seemingly have less and less time to make those choices. The ability of a strong brand to simplify consumer decision making, reduce risk, and set expectations is thus invaluable. Creating strong brands that deliver on that promise, and maintaining and enhancing the strength of those brands over time, is thus a management imperative.

When brand equity became the hot topic of the late 1980s in the US, it may have seemed like another management fad that would last only a few years. Instead, one industry after another has discovered that brand awareness, perceived brand quality, customer brand loyalty, and strong brand associations and personality are necessary to compete in the marketplace. Some organizations, such as hospitals, oil field suppliers, and software firms, are discovering brands for the first time. Others, such as banks, packaged-goods markets and automobile manufacturers, are realizing that they need to revitalize their brands and their brand management system to keep pace with the ever-changing competitive scene.

However, the knowledge and use of the branding as the crucial strategic tool, is to some extent limited to highly developed countries. The use of branding tools in the Croatian market is by far not sufficient. This could partly explain why there are not many Croatian brands existing in the international market, while for example Swedish brands are well known all over the world (IKEA, Volvo, Absolut, etc.). In order to change this situation a close cooperation between researchers and the industry is needed to develop, distribute, and implement such knowledge and skills.

Croatia is soon to become a member of the EU, with several crucial question remaining to be answered: How will Croatian companies make their brands recognizable in the market characterized by demanding consumers, overcapacity, vicious price competition, strong proliferation of similar products and powerful retailers? What enhancement branding strategies should be applied for already strong domestic brands in order to protect them from the ever increasing foreign competition?

Therefore, the purpose of this training is to:

- (1) Develop more knowledge within branding in general
- (2) Explain the strategic process of developing new brands
- (3) Explain the growth strategies necessary for further enhancement of already strong brand or master brand in the market

In this training we are going to use the experience from other transitional economies, already members of the EU, exploring the issues and challenges they have been facing as the new EU member countries.

The training is designed for brand managers and all other marketing and strategic experts (top and mid-level managers) in the companies interested in the topic of creating and developing powerful market brands.

ABOUT THE LECTURER:



Leif Hem, PhD

Dr. Hem is a director of the prestigious MBA program in Brand Management, held at his home university, Norwegian school of economics and business administration (NHH). He also works as the researcher at the Norwegian institute for economics and business administration in Bergen, and as an associate professor of Brand Management and Marketing at his home university.

Dr. Hem is a leading Norwegian marketing specialist within the field of advertising and brand management with over 50 published articles. He is a founder of so called Branding schools, a tailor made corporate brand programs for leading Norwegian companies, such as Rieber and Mills (food-processing), Sparebanken Vest (bank), Hansa (beer and beverages).