

From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation

By Leslie de Chernatony (2001) Butterworth Heinemann Oxford in Association with the Chartered Institute of Marketing, ISBN 0 7506 4614 4, 293 pages, £19.99 (sb)

Review by David McCaskey Centre for Management Studies, Colchester Institute

As one might anticipate from an academic Brand Master, Leslie de Chernatony's latest tome both extends and endorses his authority as a guru of brand thinking.

In an environment where marketing and brand management are more critical than ever before, he widens the argument by calling for a more balanced perspective where the brand needs to be managed internally, to ensure that staff (the team) are energised and, through discussion, share a consensus on all issues pertaining to the brand and its values and are thus more able to fully support the promise made to the customer and to ensure the delivery of that promise.

This represents a move away from the traditional role of brand management with its inevitable tunnel vision towards the customer and his behaviour as it fully recognises the potential to be unlocked through staff teams who are brought on side through the sharing of a super ordinate goal for the brand. Through organisational strategy, they are persuaded by its commercial logic, its distinctive competence, its positioning, and thus its source of competitive advantage which are seen as coherent and achievable. Inspiring the team requires policies and behavioural standards which are explicit, are transparent, are upheld by training and management example and are based on shared moral and value-based reasons.

The book progresses through the incremental stages of brand building and strengthening. It includes some thought provoking exercises and debates at the end of each chapter. The arguments presented are well grounded and illustrated by a wealth of contemporary examples drawn from both product and service brands. As such this should appeal to a wide audience - students, academics and practitioners will all find rewards within its pages.

By way of limitation, it fails to address the challenges being presented to many successful brands today where their success may be evidenced by their very ubiquity. One critic used the term metastasising (the spreading of disease, especially cancer, from one part of a body to another) to describe this proliferation of global brands. Many of the brands cited have been found guilty of unethical conduct or at very least failing to be good corporate citizens. Some clearly continue to 'out-source' from the world's most appalling poverty-stricken sweatshops yet charge over-inflated prices for their 'display brands' in UK high streets.

These are emergent 21st Century issues, which still may seem as Thomas Mann described 'A small black cloud on the horizon the size of a man's fist'; they need urgent and essential consideration by those who promote branding as a means and a meaning for life.

Book Review by invitation from the Academy of Marketing to be published in the October 2001 edition of, the 'Journal of Marketing Management'.