*Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing & Management Review*__________________________________________ **ISSN 2319-2836**
**Vol.2 (8), August (2013)**
**Online available at indianresearchjournals.com**

# STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS IN BRAND ANALYSIS USING THE GAIN BRAND AS AN EXAMPLE

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper performs a strategic brand analysis using the Gain brand of laundry detergent as an example of a product with potential to become a global super-brand. The author explores the process and purpose of branding and building brand equity in the global competitive marketspace and marketplace, explores the brand's description and use, distribution outlets, locations, pricing and consumer perceptions, and then applies the Customer-Based Brand Equity Model (CBBE) to describe how consumers feel, think, and act with respect to a brand. The author explores Gain's brand positioning and brand strategies and looks at the brand's target market and competitors, its points of parity and points of difference, the brand's core value and brand element considerations, and Proctor & Gamble's (P&G's) marketing program in terms of product, pricing, and channel strategies. In this brand analysis using the P&G Gain brand, the author explores application of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and leveraging of secondary brand knowledge, and how P&G uses brand extension to promote the Gain brand. The elements of the Gain brand is examined in relationship to the six (6) criteria for choosing brand elements: memorable, meaningful, likable, transferable, adaptable, and protectable. The paper concludes with several recommendations for future branding activities by using Keller "The Ten Commandments of Global Branding" to examine Gain's potential for becoming a global super-brand.

**KEY WORDS:** Adaptability, B2B, B2C, Brand, Brand-building blocks, Brand equity, Brand loyalty, Brand knowledge, Brand salience, Brand imagery, Consumer judgments, Consumer feelings, Brand performance, Brand resonance, Celebrity endorsement, Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), Co-Branding, Global branding, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Likability, Points of Parity, Points of Difference, Proctor & Gamble (P&G), Protectability, Memorability, Meaningfulness, Transferability, Super-brand.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Brand Marketing and Equity

Effective branding and brands serve to distinguish the goods and services of producers and when markets create new logos, symbols, names, etc., for their products and services they are engaged in branding (Keller, 2003; Keller, 1998). Branding functions set companies aside from their competitors; as a way of distinguishing a company and/or its products and services as different, and not just different, but better than competitors. Brands play an important role in helping customers distinguish what they deem to be the best products and services (Peppers & Rogers, 2004). Thus, companies strive to improve brand awareness of their products and services and increase brand preference and brand loyalty among customers for which they and other providers of goods and services compete. Brands have become major players in our globally competitive society and economy where they infiltrate all spheres of our lives and we become both consciously and unconsciously affected and influenced by them (Kapferer, 2004; Kapferer, 1992). Branding is and should be a basic decision in the marketing of any product or service (Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2009). It involves the use of a name, phrase, design, symbols, or a combination of these by marketers and organizations to identify their products and distinguish them from their competitors' (Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2009).

Brands are perceptions that result from experiences with, and information about a company or a line of products (Duncan, 2005; Arpin & Casey, 2009). As such, brands live in the minds and hearts of customers and companies and marketers who fully understand this are ever doing their best to make sure that they remain their. This means creating powerful brand awareness – communicating to customers effectively what a brand stands for, what benefits they will gain from the brand compared to competitor brands, and the perceived service, quality, and the image and price that accompany acquiring and obtaining value and satisfaction from that brand (Weinstein, 2012). Brands are competing for consumers' attention and most importantly, for their dollars. As such, companies use various strategies and approaches to develop brand equity or strong positive associations in consumers' memories in order to command a lot of loyalty from customers (Solomon, 2004). As Kapferer (2004) notes, brands are a major symbol of our economies and postmodern societies and are pervasive in their influence in all aspects of life. Distinctions in consumers' minds always exist between competitive offerings and that is why branding is important to companies (Cravens, 1982). Thus, the development of effective brand strategy can make the difference between market leaders and market drivers in the globally competitive marketspace and marketplace.

## Brand Description and Uses

Gain is a brand of cleaning and washing product; clothes washing detergent that is a product or brand of Proctor & Gamble, and is well known among households, especially mothers and women who are extremely particular about the kind of detergent they use. Gain was first seen in the market as a stain-removing detergent which was driven by enzymes. In 1981, Procter & Gamble made a huge decision to reposition Gain for its scented detergents (gainlaundrydetergent.com, 2013). The product has been around since 1968 but has become well recognized as one of the most powerful and highest quality brands of laundry detergent in the American market today. The Gain laundry detergent comes in both powder and liquid forms and is used by people to wash their clothes and other linens, to clean up after different activities, and even used by businesses such as restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the Gain brand has both regular consumers and B2B customers; thus operating in the B2C and B2B markets. **Figures 1-3** show examples of the Gain brand in liquid and powdered packaging forms.


**Figure 1: Gain Laundry Detergent (Powdered Package)**


**Figure 2: Gain Laundry Detergent (Liquid and Powdered Packages)**


**Figure 3: Gain Laundry Detergent (Liquid bottled packaging)**

*Source*: gainlaundrydetergent.com, 2013.

According to Target Market News (2007), "Gain has also grown its business by distinguishing itself in the laundry aisle around a scent equity that addresses the continually growing trend in scents across a variety of household goods" (p. 1). The Gain laundry detergent brand comes in several different flavors: lemon zest, honeyberry hula, apple berry twist, sunflower, sunshine, icy fresh, ocean escape, apple mango, lavender, original scents and a host of many other odors (gainlaundrydetergent.com, 2013). The above packages are only few of the various packages of the Gain brand in terms of product offerings, as Proctor & Gamble packages the gain in several different sizes for different customers in terms of use and need, as well as in terms of affordability. Whatever the case, the quality is uniform and gain has made itself a household name by using different promotional activities and marketing strategies and tools.

## Distribution Outlets, Locations, Pricing and Consumer Perceptions

The Gain brand of laundry detergent is normally purchased at regular supermarkets and retail chains such as Publix, Winn Dixie, Wal-Mart, Target, Bravo, and Sedano, etc, and is widely distributed in almost every retail spot that has supermarkets and grocers. In North America, the most popular locations for the distribution and purchasing of the Gain brand are retail and supermarket chains such as those mentioned above. However, Gain can be bought at other wholesale and retail locations such as Sam's Club, BJs, Costco, as well as at convenient stores and small grocery stores in diverse locations. Gain has become such a popular brand and its well-recognized name and high demand add value to businesses. Therefore, many business owners stock Gain among their laundry and household cleaning items.

Gain is a wonderful detergent with a reasonable price. The price of the Gain brand varies according to packaging size, but usually range between $5.97 (50 fl oz) and $20 (96 Loads 150 fluid oz). This means that shoppers have a variety of sizes and packages to choose from according to their personal needs. The prices can vary depending on purchase locations. At Wal-Mart the prices are usually lower, as well as at Sam's Clubs, Costco, and wholesale stores. However, the prices for the Gain brand are usually higher at more specialized establishments and at convenient stores.

There are several reasons for using the Gain brand of laundry detergent. First and foremost, Gain is a high quality product that delivers satisfaction. Secondly, more than any other brand of laundry detergent, Gain comes in a variety of flavors to match each consumer's preference. A third factor is that Gain is relatively affordable compared to its competitors. Finally, gain is a strong brand because it is colorfully appealing, nostalgic, and creates a sense of homeliness and comfort. When individuals who use the Gain brand of laundry detergent are questioned as to why they use Gain rather than another detergent such as Tide, Arm & Hammer, Great Value, or others, their responses were similar. For example, majority of individuals commented on how much Gain creates a great clean and the comfort it creates. Secondly, affordability and colorfulness of the brand are cited among key factors that make Gain stand out from other laundry detergent brands. Gain comes in several favorite scents or flavors.

## Application of a Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model

Companies are constantly striving to create brand equity and Proctor & Gamble has done so with the Gain brand, and constantly seeks to increase its positive associations in consumers' minds. The Customer-Based Brand Equity Model (CBBE) describes how consumers feel, think, and act with respect to a brand (Keller, 2003; Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2009). Proctor &

Gamble has used effective marketing programs that forge strong, favorable, and unique customer associations and experiences with the Gain brand to develop it into a highly competitive and favored brand of detergent among consumers. Using the following customer-based brand building blocks: salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance, Proctor & Gamble has effectively positioned the brand in the market and in the minds and hearts of consumers (Cravens, 1982; Keller, 2003; Keller, 1998).

In the CBBE model, Keller (2003) present six areas that companies must focus on in customer-based brand equity building and the marketers of Gain must sufficiently understand these in order to effectively build the brand. In terms of the first factor, *brand salience*, Gain is well recognized and when many consumers think about cleanliness and laundry, they automatically think about Gain because it means so much to them and it is an almost daily used product in doing laundry and other household cleaning chores. In terms of *performance*, when compared to other brands such as Tide, Purex, and others, Gain does an exceptionally great job. In the past many consumers who used several detergents have communicated how Gain seems to produce better results and that is why it has become the favored brand. Gain meets is perceived to meet the basic function of the product more than any others and is a very reliable brand that lasts longer in terms of its freshness. Gain is purchased from regular stores and its prices are relatively lower than other detergent brands with comparatively less appeal and strength in cleaning.

In terms of *brand imagery*, many people value colorful freshness and the bright and cheerful feelings which Gain brings. Gain's packages and power to clean laundry have earned the respect of many people. This brand is especially liked because of all these qualities and the many flavors or scenting types it gives the customers. The Gain brand is highly reliable and successful and can be purchased conveniently at many different locations. Furthermore, Gain is not just a laundry detergent as it is also used for general household cleaning chores and work. Gain brings back pleasant memories of childhood to many users as they can reminisce on the days of fresh and clean clothes with Gain's great scents flowed in the breeze.

In terms of the CBBE factor of *consumer judgments*, Gain has one of the highest quality ratings in the market for laundry detergents. The quality is extremely apparent when one uses this product as it leaves clothes fresh and like brand new. Gain satisfies consumers' need for affordability and freshness, and Proctor & Gamble is a very knowledgeable company that has carefully developed a superior brand in the laundry detergent industry. It is a company that is well-trusted and that has earned this trust through quality products such as Gain. Proctor & Gamble cares about what Gain users think and therefore strives to produce an excellent product that does more than just laundry – it is pleasing to the senses in terms of the variety of great odors or scents, and the maker of Gain understands how much having fresh clean clothes means to households. Gain is highly recommended across households and by many different sources and the brand is very meaningful to families. Additionally, several companies depend on the brand for its superior cleaning power. Gain is uniquely competitive because it delivers high on its promise or value proposition.

In terms of the *consumer feelings* component of the CBBE, Gain gives a feeling of warmth to its users and is fun to wash with, especially when kids use Gain to play and make bubbles. Gain makes consumers and families feel secure that their clothes are clean and smell really fresh and pleasant. With regards to the factor of *consumer-brand resonance*, Gain's customers seem to be extremely loyal to the Gain brand of detergent and will be most unlikely to switch even when there is a significant increase in the price of Gain. The brand has acquired great meaning and has captured their loyalty through a combination of personal and impersonal experiences. This brand can be bought easily and almost anywhere when needed and is special to families and households as they develop structural bonds with the brand. It then becomes more than a product – it is sharing and caring for others through laundry care. People who use Gain are confident and feel comfortable in their clothes as they feel that they are cleaner and smell fresher than others. Proctor & Gamble must continually and effectively enhance brand equity of the Gain brand by using all the six areas of the CBBE as described by Keller (2003).

**Brand Positioning and Gain Brand Strategies**

Brand positioning strategy describes an organization's use of the elements in the marketing mix to influence consumers' interpretation of a product's meaning vis-à-vis competitors (Solomon, 2004). In order to launch an effective and successful brand positioning strategy that will increase brand equity and loyalty, Gain needs to fully understand its target market and cater exclusively and closely to its needs. According to Procter & Gamble Company [P&G's] Gain(R) has become the company's 23$^{rd}$ brand with more than one billion dollars in sales as of 2007. While many of P&G's other billion dollar brands are sold globally, as a solely North American brand, Gain is the company's 8$^{th}$ largest brand in dollar sales in the United States. Gain is also the 2$^{nd}$ largest selling laundry detergent in the U.S. Gain's significant business growth was supported by its successes with ethnic consumers and scent equity (Target Market News, 2007, p. 1), and the company continues its focus on this market.

**Target Market for Gain Brand**

The primary target market for Gain brand laundry detergent is moms who are responsible for cleaning and washing and related domestic duties. The secondary target market includes all individuals in need of affordable and high quality detergent to wash their clothes. Gain also targets industrial cleaners who find Gain detergent as an effective cleaner or cleaner additive. There demographics is very diverse. According to Target Market News (2007),

> Gain has been exceptionally successful in understanding and meeting the needs of the increasing population of ethnic consumers, primarily African Americans and Hispanics. Gain is P&G's fastest growing brand amongst African Americans. As ethnic markets continue to develop rapidly, Gain will continue to strive to lead the way in maintaining ethnic consumer relationships through caring for their fabrics (p. 1).

Gain's target market is very hard to define because of the diverse group using the product, but it is certainly dominant among Latinos and Blacks, especially women 30 years and older who run a household.

**Gain Brand Competitors**

Gain's major competitors are also Proctor & Gamble's (P&G's) products and include the following: Tide, Cheer, Bold, Era, Dreft, Febreeze, and Ivory Snow – all made by Proctor & Gamble. The company competes against itself because different consumers want different mixes of benefits from the products that they buy and thus, consumers prioritize the benefits that they want from each type of product. Thus, in catering for the diverse needs of consumers by offering competing products, Proctor & Gamble can target several different consumers from diverse cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Points of Parity and Points of Difference in the Gain Brand

Points of parity (POPs) refers to those associations that are not necessarily unique to the Gain brand in question, but may in fact be shared with the brands of competitors. There are two types of associations as such: category and competitive (Keller, 2003). With category points of parity the marketing department must consider emphasizing those associations that consumers view as necessary to be legitimate and credible in terms of the product offer. Competitive points of parity are those associations designed to negate competitors' points of difference. For example, the marketing department must select the strongest competitor and demonstrates that a particular feature is as strongly held by Gain as by the competitor, but that Gain has something even more favorable and unique such as its many different scents and extraordinary cleaning power. This will then place Gain in a stronger brand position. Gain does indeed have scent variety as a POP and its price and cleaning power function to differentiate from other detergents.

Points of difference (PODs) are strong, favorable and unique brand associations for the Gain brand (Keller, 2003). This means that the when advertising or marketing Gain, Proctor & Gamble needs to emphasize benefits association. For example, the marketing department could demonstrate that Gain indeed makes clothes brighter and that this brightness is associated with happiness, compliments from others, favorable responses from love interests, and other significant individuals. This will be an association with acceptance and admiration that consumers understand and appreciate. The marketing department for Gain needs to focus on attributes or benefits that consumers strongly associate with its brand of detergent such as acceptance and admiration and show that people who use Gain are more successful in all ways.

The competitive brands of laundry detergents including Tide and the rest also have strong points of parity and points of difference because they have been on the market for a long time as well and are high quality cleaning detergents or cleaning agents. Moreover, like Gain, Tide, Cheer, and the other competitors also have reasonable prices and favorability among consumers.

## Brand Core Values and Brand Mantra

The core values of the Gain brand include affordability (offering an affordable detergent to its customers), exceptional quality (offering one of the highest quality detergents in what is a competitive market), and superior value (a detergent product that creates and shows better results than competing brands). Gain's core values include offering exceptional service and quality. This is supported by Weinstein's assertion that service and quality are core offerings that change customers' perception of value (Weinstein, 2012).

Weinstein (2012) believes that a strong and effective value proposition is important in successful branding of products and services. A value proposition (VP) is a statement matching up a firm's distinctive competencies with the needs and preferences of a carefully identified and designed set of prospective customers (Weinstein, 2012). Some companies call this statement a slogan or a mantra, though the value proposition communicates a much stronger connection. The mantra for Gain is to leave you feeling clean and fresh after using its detergent to wash your clothes. The company emphasizes freshness and superior cleaning power.

## Brand Element Considerations for Gain

According to Keller (2003), there are a number of options available as well as a number of criteria that are important in choosing brand elements. Keller (2003) and Keller (1998) describe six (6) criteria for choosing brand elements to build brand equity:

(1) *Memorability*: memorability means that the brand must achieve a high level of brand awareness to build brand equity. This engenders choosing brand elements that are inherently memorable and can facilitate recall or recognition in purchasing or consumption settings – that is, using certain names or symbols that make the brand more attention getting.
(2) *Meaningfulness*: Meaningfulness means that the Proctor & Gamble Company will choose brand elements whose inherent meaning enhances the formation of brand associations.
(3) *Likability*: Likability is another factor the Proctor & Gamble Company can choose to build brand equity. This could mean choosing brand elements that are rich in visual and verbal imagery and that are inherently fun and interesting.
(4) *Transferability*: Transferability is one of the criteria for choosing brand elements that build brand equity. It concerns the transferability of the brand element in both product category and geographic sense. This means focusing on brand elements that are transferable to other products sharing this element.
(5) *Adaptability*: This fifth consideration concerns the adaptability of the brand element over time because consumer values, tastes and opinions change, and the brand needs to remain contemporary.
(6) *Protectability*: This final criterion refers to whether the brand element is protectable in both legal and competitive sense.

The Gain brand has used each of these elements to develop equity for the product in the minds and hearts or memories of consumers.

**1. Name**: The name "Gain" is indeed one of the first important elements in branding the detergent because the name is both meaningful and positive in the eyes of consumers. Consumers always want to gain something and "gaining" is good. Therefore, using Gain can only create something good and desirable for the consumer. Moreover, the name is both unique and easily pronounced and recognized and brings a pleasant feeling to consumers. The name "Gain" is memorable, as well as it is a word that is consciously in our hearts and minds as we go about our daily business to gain something. It is likable and can be transferred to almost any of our desires or activities. Thus, when we use Gain, we gain not only clean and fresh clothes, but also compliments, security, and happiness. The name is adaptable in many ways as Gain is affordable, and there is the flexibility of using a name which without being attached to a detergent can be used fluidly in consumer experiences. In terms of protectability, the name "Gain" is a registered trademark of Proctor & Gamble Company. Over time the name and its meaning will hardly be affected by changes as it is highly adaptable.

**2. URL**: Gain currently has several URLs that are very interesting and colorful. For example: http://www.ilovegain.com/home.do, and www.gainlaundrydetergent.com, which provide customers with important product information and prices. The first URL is very colorful and offers coupons, purchase transactions, as well as product descriptions. The second URL or Website contains information on Gain's history, growth, product description, use, as well as some pricing information. The first URL is especially likable because it is colorful and is a full-service brand Website that allows for transactions. The first URL is more memorable and more meaningful because it has more variety descriptions and is fully interactive compared to the second URL. Both URLs are protectable because of copyright laws and the product specific information contained on them. Gain's websites can be updated and changed at will to include new and valuable information and data.

**3. Logo/Symbol**: Gain's symbol is its name "GAIN" and it uses this written in bold orange colors on every product that it sells. It is very memorable and meaningful and also very likable. Gain's symbol and name are protectable because of copyright laws and consumers are able to remember the easy five letter name, especially given its colorful appearance and the multiple colors surrounding it. **Figure 4** below shows the Gain symbol. The Gain symbol can be changed or adapted with changes in consumer tastes and preferences.


***Figure 4: The Gain Symbol***

**4. Slogan/Jingle**: Gain does not really have a memorable slogan, except that it tends to stress freshness and scent as part of its value proposition. However, these key words are very likable and respond well to consumers' desires and needs. They are very memorable and meaningful because they communicate to consumers that they are indeed gaining something from using Gain rather than using their competitors.

**5. Packaging**: Gain's packaging is awesome and features a combination of bright and cheerful colors so much that it looks even more cheerful than its competing brand "Cheer." The major color is light green with orange labels and writings. However, Gain has also started to distribute its detergent in violet and other colors that match with scents and flowers from which the scents are derived. These make Gain packages very pleasing and inviting and consumers can immediately remember Gain packages more than other brands. The green and bright orange and red colors are very strong and are meaningful as green represents environment and the orange and red represent the strong results that consumers derive – the brightness when they use gain. The packaging is protected by copyright and trademark laws and Gain knows that consumers are able to remember strong bright colors that cheer up their day.

## Marketing Program: Gain's Product, Pricing, and Channel Strategies

Gain's marketing strategy includes using an appropriate marketing mix – placing the product in the right place such as in supermarkets and retail stores and using a combination of traditional and electronic media such as the Internet to promote and distribute the product. Gain can be purchased on the Internet as well as in brick-and-mortar stores and the company focuses mainly on mass media marketing techniques such as television advertisements that can reach millions of consumers simultaneously. In marketing its brand Gain, Proctor & Gamble uses its current network of value providers or its current value chain to place the product in the reach of its consumers. The Gain brand is marketed as a superior brand and is often placed relative to its competitors.

The price strategy that Gain uses is comparative pricing as it prices its offerings directly in comparison to other competitors' laundry detergents and in comparison to its competing detergents offered by Proctor & Gamble. Competitive pricing by Gain ensures that it remains between the price floor and price ceiling for laundry detergents in the current market. In fact, it is moderately priced and is able to compete with other brands by offering varying prices based on packaging. Gain wants to be affordable for consumers, especially seeing that its majority and growing consumers are ethnic, including growing numbers of Hispanics and Blacks.

Gain advertises mainly through mass media and distributes mainly through popular retail venues such as supermarkets and retail stores. For example, Wal-Mart, Target, and wholesale distributors such as Sam's Club, BJs and Costco also bring the Gain brand. Using printed format media such as sales papers and in-store advertisements, Gain is able to meet a wide audience. More importantly, its television advertisements have been successful and the buzz network has worked effectively in promoting the brand such that it has acquired a unique and durable place in consumers' minds and hearts.

## Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Leveraging Secondary Brand Knowledge

Marketing communications are the means that marketers use to directly or indirectly inform, persuade, and remind customers about the brands they sell (Keller, 2003). The communications options available include advertising (television, radio, print, direct response, online, and place), promotions (consumer and trade), event marketing and sponsorship, public relations and publicity (including buzz marketing), and personal selling. Two (2) IMC strategies used by Gain are: (a) enhancing awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Gain brand in the national and global markets by formulating new strategic partnerships and using mass communication to promote the brand and offering the brand to foreign markets and domestic customers via web links and distribution networks; and (b) strengthening Gain's lead and position in the American market so that it can become the number one laundry detergent that will allow more buzz marketing opportunities for the company, and then effectively combining buzz marketing with other marketing communications (MC) strategies such as advertising, social media, and other methods. Effectively managing customer relationship to promote customer equity is also important to further promote the Gain brand (Peppers & Rogers, 2004; Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2000)).

Two (2) ways in which the Gain brand leverages secondary brand knowledge are: (1) *Co-Branding*: co-branding is also known as brand alliance or brand bundling. It occurs when two or more existing brands are combined into a joint product and are marketed in the same fashion. This means that Gain co-brands its liquid detergent and powder detergent as well as its laundry and dish washing detergent. When Gain practices this form of co-branding with its liquid and powdered, and laundry and dishwashing detergents, it can generate greater sales from the target market as well as open additional opportunities with new consumers and channels; (2) *Celebrity Endorsement*: This is a practice where Gain can use well-known and admired people to promote the product as it is a widespread phenomenon which brings immediate attention to the brand and shapes the perception of the brand by virtue of the inferences. For example, Gain can use household magnates such as Martha Stuart or even Oprah Winfrey in endorsing its Gain brand and this will certainly leverage secondary brand knowledge.

## Brand Extension and the Gain Brand

Brand extension is using the leverage of a well known brand name in one category to launch a new product in a different category. Gain is an extension of the Proctor & Gamble (P&G) brand among its many brands of products including several other detergents. A common method of launching a new product is by using an existing brand name on a new product in a different category – brand extension (Keller, 2003; Keller, 1998). The Proctor & Gamble brand has done this with Gain because it already offered several detergents and has been a recognized brand that is trusted by Americans because of its many products and success. When Proctor & Gamble originally offered the Gain brand, the credibility and trust were already there and reduced perceived risks rather than if a new company had offered the product.

As an extension of the Proctor & Gamble (P&G) brand, Gain has the advantage of being launched by a company that already has an effective marketing program and which has successfully branded itself as an authority on household products. Gain is placed in the market by Proctor & Gamble (P&G) as one of its high quality detergent products and the Proctor & Gamble (P&G) brand uses its success to place Gain into the spotlight.

## Recommendations for Future Branding Activities

There are three (3) major recommendations concerning the future branding activities that would help the GAIN brand to increase or maintain brand equity. The first recommendation is to increase personalization. Personalization has become an important aspect of consumer brand marketing strategies and marketers are seeking new ways of reaching their customer (Cravens, 1982; Weinstein, 2012). In order to adapt to the increasing consumer desire for better products and services and competitive forces impelling toward personalization, markets are embracing concepts such as experiential marketing, one-on-one marketing, permission marketing, mass customization, aftermarketing, and loyalty programs (Keller, 2004; Keller, 1998; Kapferer, 2004). Proctor & Gamble (P&G) should use more of these methods to get its Gain customers closer to the brand and build stronger loyalty in the form of consumer structural bonds through strong marketing relationship practices.

The second recommendation to help the GAIN brand gain and maintain brand equity is to rapidly seek new partnerships in Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, and growing economies in order to distribute the product to a growing and industrializing population. This is especially true of China and India where millions of newly prosperous families are seeking Western products to keep up with the Jones' in their lifestyles. The marketing and business efforts to seek partnership distributors and markets in Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean can determine the future growth of Gain as a global product.

The third recommendation for the Gain brand to gain and maintain brand equity is to design and implement a marketing program to create a strong global brand to maximize the probability of realizing the advantages of a global marketing program while minimizing the probability of suffering from any potential setbacks or disadvantages resulting from globalization and its accompanying challenges and competitive forces. Keller (2003) has proposed ten guidelines or steps for building global customer-based brand equity. These will be discussed with one recommendation each for making each work or for avoiding such a pitfall for the Gain brand. These are in fact more of guidelines rather than steps in building global customer-based brand equity, and Keller (2003) describes them as “The Ten Commandments of Global Branding” (p. 697). These steps can certainly help Gain to become more than just an American favored competitive brand of detergent.

The first step or guideline in building global customer-based brand equity is to understand similarities and differences in the global branding landscape. This means understanding that variations exist in international markets as far as brand development, consumer behavior, marketing infrastructure, competitive activity, legal restrictions, and other factors are concerned. On the other hand, similarities do exist on some of these factors (Keller, 2003). The recommendation here in approaching global customer-based brand equity is to strive to gather important information and knowledge and completely understand how cultural patterns and factors as well as globalization as uniformity leverage affect brand strategy effectiveness. This means being aware of what will work and where it will work or will not as far as building brand equity is concerned. The second guideline in building global customer-based brand equity is not to take shortcuts (Keller, 2003). This means that branding takes time and there is no shortcut to building the levels of trust and recognition or customer attachment that are needed to build brand equity. As Keller (2003) relates, it is vital to build brand image and brand awareness in new territories or markets in order to have equity. One recommendation to avoid this pitfall in building global customer-based brand equity is to localize the brand by fitting it into the new market’s culture and lifestyle.

The third step in building customer-based global brand equity is to establish marketing infrastructure. According to Keller (2003), global brand building requires effective and efficient coordination of supply chain and value systems such as adequate and strategically located manufacturing and distribution-logistic systems. One recommendation for using this guideline is for companies to effectively combine both traditional and new economy platforms such as e-commerce and information technology to develop robust CRM systems and online presence in those new markets. The fourth step or guideline in building global customer-based brand equity is to embrace integrated marketing communications (IMC). Duncan (2005) points to the advantage of IMC in sending a unified message across all marketing and distribution streams or channels, thereby making increasing brand equity as the organization leverages all promotional and marketing resources to build brand equity. One recommendation for making this happen is to use new social media and other methods that link people and cultures from all over the world as bases for advertising and other communications with customers and business partners.

The fifth guideline or step recommended by Keller (2003) in building global customer-based brand equity is to cultivate brand partnerships. Most global brands that are successful have marketing partners of some kind in their international markets. This means that new companies wishing to build global customer-based brand equity must seek partnership with companies from different areas including marketing, distribution, production, transportation, etc. It is recommended that companies desiring to build global customer-based brand equity invest highly in establishing plants and skilled personnel in foreign territories that are able to drive business with governmental and other relevant stakeholders in such surroundings. This will help to develop trust level in their products and company image. The sixth guideline or step in building global customer-based brand equity is to balance standardization and customization (Keller, 2003). Balance is needed where differences prevail between home and foreign markets and customers. This can be achieved by the following recommendation: understand how standards compare in both international locations and at home and bridge the differences by offering products that are market-specific and meet the separate expectations of different geographic and political markets. Limit standardization to general product core benefits and features and make customization a value-added strategy.

The seventh step or guideline in building global customer-based brand equity is to balance global and local control (Keller, 2003). This can be rather difficult because of the existence of different social, cultural, political and social standards and the rapid changes taking place in the global market. However, it can be achieved through effective leadership and empowerment of local managers to base their decisions and practices on home-country standards where such are superior to foreign standards, and by empowering them to follow foreign country standards where such would not create customer confusion or brand dilution and legal issues. The eighth guideline or step to build global customer-based brand equity requires establishing operable guidelines or policies for operations across cultural and political, geographical and economic boundaries (Keller, 2003). This means communicating guidelines and properly enforcing them across all market channels. One recommendation for making this happen smoothly and as obstacle-free as possible is to make operating procedures and guidelines uniform across all marketing bases by requiring employees and partners to undergo company and product specific training.

The ninth step or guideline proposed by Keller (2003) in building global customer-based brand equity is to implement a global brand equity management system. This will help the company define brand equity charter in a global context. A major recommendation for this to work is to effectively coordinate all customer and product systems into a global brand network where all relevant parties can add to the process of brand equity building through co-creation of value (Weinstein, 2012). The tenth and final step or guideline for building global customer-based brand equity is to effectively and wisely leverage brand elements (Keller, 2003). This can be achieved using virtual teams to gain market-specific insights and understanding about brands and their perceptions in various markets and then strategically plan for brand integration. Gain is a strong brand in the North American U.S. market has the potential to become a powerful global brand.

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