

Marketing

International recognition for Dilshan Perera

MARKETING professional Dilshan Perera was listed amongst the Most Influential Marketing Leaders at the World Marketing Congress held in India in Association with CMO council USA.

This recognition is the result of an intensely research process undertaken by the research cell which consists of post graduates in history and management with a combined 100+ research experience post their studies and reviewed by a jury comprising of senior professionals from across the globe. The criteria adopted in this case are: Marketing Competencies, Strategic Perspective and Future Orientation, Track Record, Integrity and Ethics and Commitment to Sustainability.

Dilshan counts over 12 years of



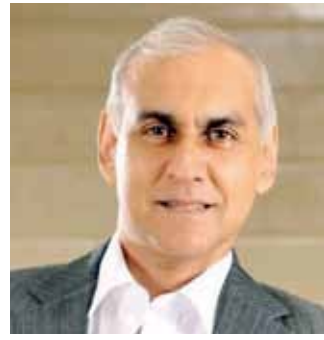
Dilshan Perera receiving the award from Cisco India and SAARC Director Marketing Nand Kishore Badami

experience in the field of marketing and brand management with leading brands in the country and awarded many local and international recognition for his contribution of brand building over the period of time.

Dilshan is an active proponent of digital marketing and also a trainer, visiting lecturer and consultant at several higher education institutes in

marketing and management.

Dilshan graduated from the University of Kelaniya with a Bachelor's degree in Business Management (Marketing). He is a Chartered Marketer and a member of CIM UK and SLIM and Completed his MBA at PIM (Postgraduate Institute of Management) - University of Sri Jayawardanepura.



BY RUCHI GUNEWARDENE AND LULU RAGHAVAN

MANY brand owners think of their brands as logos or labels. Their discussions on branding would revolve around colours, fonts, layouts, designs, sizes and locations of the logo on various touch points. Seen through this traditional and limited lens, branding is equated with producing advertisements to build equity in the brand.

Whilst logos and labels are one aspect of what a brand is, it is an extremely narrow view. This approach to brand management severely limits the potential value of the brand when it is being financially evaluated as an asset that is adding value to the business. Yet, most brands in Sri Lanka are being built this way.

Brand is a strategic platform

To realise the full potential of your brand, you must be able to conceptualise it as a strategic platform that drives your business. Brands as diverse as IBM and Coca-Cola define the brand promise through key values and attributes. They then relentlessly execute in delivering this brand promise for customers and employees alike.

For customers, the brand promise helps to shape the customer experience through the product and services being offered through various channels. For employees, the brand promise helps to shape the culture they work in and the values that guide their behaviours with customers, partners and each other. All of this creates strong relationships with stakeholders and enhance perceptions, which get captured in the intangible value of the brand.

Brand is a value-creating asset

When viewed in this way, your brand becomes a value-creating asset that if

Beyond logo

deployed correctly across the business can generate financial value, just as you would deploy land, building and machinery to create a product to generate revenue through them.

Building a brand is a long-term commitment that businesses need to make, with the objective of reaping the rewards in the future, two to three years out. This is because it takes time to establish relevant meaning throughout the business system leading to generating returns with a coherent and well-articulated brand.

This value can be financially quantified, and can be done so through a brand valuation. Current accounting practices do not allow you to incorporate your own brand value in the balance sheet. However, in the event of a sale, the acquiring company is now required to do so.

Companies such as Google that are light on assets have massive valuations primarily based on its intangible assets where the brand value is proportionately high in relation to the business value. This is the opportunity that businesses have to realise the full financial potential of their brand, by looking beyond the brand as a logo or design.

Opportunities to enhance brand value

In this context, it is worth taking a closer look at SriLankan Airlines which is one of Sri Lanka's most valuable, with a brand value of Rs. 16.8 billion and is primed to be restructured under the new Government's plans to stem the losses. How might SriLankan Airlines adopt this brand-as-a-value-creating-asset mind-set to increase its brand value in the restructuring process?

Brand-led customer experience

The SriLankan Airlines brand in a customer's mind is built by the experience it has at every single touch point from check-in at the airport to the in-flight entertainment system. The airline must view every consumer contact with the brand as an occasion that might enhance the brand's value or undermine it. The tonality of email communications matter as much as the



cabin interiors.

The customer impact of the brand is based on SriLankan's ability to have a sustainable point of differentiation relative to competitors and its ability to provide relevance through its product or service offerings, sometimes way beyond what the customer can even imagine. This leads to establishing a closer and longer-term relationship with customers. It is this close on-going relationship that leads to increasing the frequency of interactions, purchase and greater price elasticity. British Airways, for example, was recently named the number one Superbrand in the UK because of its track record of delivering outstanding service at every touch point.

In order to strengthen the brand, SriLankan Airlines needs to be able to define its brand in a manner that will accelerate innovation leading it to be among the league of top global airline brands. This requires benchmarking with those that are providing the highest standards among what passengers have determined are the most important attributes and diligently working on enhancing these aspects. The biggest challenge in doing so is obtaining the involvement and commitment of the employees to deliver the essence of the defined brand, which can vary from one airline to another.

Brand-led employee engagement

The employee association and level of commitment and motivation is key for service organisations. Employees need to have a clear understanding of what the brand is all about if they are to consistently deliver the brand promise every single day. The brand is essentially in the hands of the employees who exert enormous power through how they deliver the defined experience. So, the more they understand the brand, better motivated they would be to deliver the defined service.

It's hard to discuss employee engagement without mentioning Southwest Airlines. Southwest has managed to create a culture where employees feel motivated and charged to carry out their responsibilities. Their CEO described it like this: "If you create an environment where the people truly participate, you don't need control. They know what needs to be done and they do it. And the more that people will devote themselves to your cause on a voluntary basis, the fewer hierarchies and control mechanisms you need."

Through well-designed internal initiatives, Southwest consistently reminds employees of its vision and purpose. Vision: to become the world's most loved, most flown, and most profitable airline. Brand purpose: we exist to connect people to what's important in their lives through friendly, reliable, and low-cost air travel.

Mastering the agility paradox

Customer experience and employee engagement are critical to increasing brand value but to truly be on the path to becoming one of the leading global brands, SriLankan must master the agility paradox. Landon's global research shows that the most successful brands across industries are demonstrating a remarkable willingness to change and bring innovations to the mar-

ket while staying true to the brand. Whether it is Samsung or Disney, these brands are managing to be quick AND nimble without wavering on the core tenets of what the brand means.

The strongest brands possess two seemingly contradictory dimensions, which are Leading and True. Leading is about being visionary and innovative. True relates to authenticity and excellence in performance.

Emirates - the world's most valuable brand according to the Brand Finance Airlines 2015 Study - beautifully embraces this paradox. Emirates continues to reinforce its positioning of "enabling discovery" through new campaigns like Hello Tomorrow on the one hand while constantly innovating the experience for business and economy class travellers on the other.

The role of the modern brand manager

Thought of this way, branding becomes the quest to constantly find new ways to deliver what the brand stands for in different parts of the customer experience. A brand manager at Delta Airlines would spend much less time today on making sure the logo is consistently reproduced or on a promotion campaign and instead would spend much more time on collaborating with the HR team members to ensure how new initiatives can be introduced to the training module for the cabin staff in order to enhance the customer experience even more.

The focus of the modern day brand manager is no longer on just creating awareness or communicating, but it is all about driving relevance with both customers and employees in a holistic sense.

The old rigidity in the construct of the brand has given way to agility in how the brand is being managed every day... way beyond the logo.

(Ruchi Gunewardene is the Managing Director of Brand Finance Lanka and Founder of STING Consultants. Lulu Raghavan is the Managing Director of Landon Mumbai.)



Sajitha de Mel

Sajitha De Mel excels at World Marketing Congress

Awarded 'Young Marketer of the Year'

SAJITHA De Mel, Manager-Growth and Innovations of Expolanka Freight, a member of Expolanka Holdings PLC, was awarded the Young Marketer of the Year award at the recently concluded Global Marketing Excellence Awards 2015. This was hosted by the World Marketing Congress in partnership with the CMO Asia and was held at Hotel Taj Lands End, Mumbai on 27 November. He is the first Sri Lankan to win this category award launched this year.

The prestigious award for 'Young Marketer of the Year' is given to individuals below the age of 35 who have displayed outstanding marketing skills throughout the early stages of their careers.

Speaking about this laudable achievement an elated Sajitha says, "I'm deeply humbled by this recognition by an international awarding body. My journey still lies ahead and this spurs me to achieve greater heights in Sri Lanka's corporate world in the years to come. My sincere thanks to everyone, too numerous to mention by name, who helped me achieve this. I am indebted to them for their inspiration, support and encouragement."

Sajitha's school years and his professional life are speckled with numerous prestigious and coveted awards - he won the Young Achiever Award 2014 at the Global Brands Excellence Awards held in Singapore, Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award Sri Lanka 2010, NASCO Award 2008 and was also nominated for the Young International Freight Forwarder of the Year 2013 held in UK.

Starting work as a Sales Agent at Standard Chartered Bank in 2003 at the age of 19, Sajitha continued developing his professional education hand in hand with his career. He cut teeth at han-

dling administrative functions at HSBC; then to Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing handling customer service, moving on to freight forwarding at Dellogistics. Sajitha's career advancement saw him recalled to a higher post at the same company after a short stint at Hemas Group. Promoted to Sales and Marketing Manager a year and half later, he left to join the Expolanka group and re-launch UCL Logistics a subsidiary of Expolanka Freight in 2008, where he was the General Manager. Currently he is the Manager - Growth and Innovations at Expolanka Freight. He is also the President for Expolanka "A" Team Management group. Sajitha is also the President of Advent Global Sports and team - Principal for Advent Rally Sport Team.

His professional education continued unabated, gaining qualifications in Human Resource Management, Import-Export, Custom House Agents Examination, Shipping, International Freight Management, Dangerous Goods Handling, Logistics, International Trade and Transport.

He was the youngest Lions Club President in Sri Lanka at the age of 25 to head 'Inspire 1 million Sri Lanka project', he was a committee member of Effies Awards 2012, he was the Secretary for Sri Lanka-America Society, Asst Secretary for Sri Lanka-UK society, Executive member Lanka-Japan Friendship Society, President Junior Chamber International Sri Lanka, Colombo South, Vice President Education-Expolanka Toastmasters Club and a Paul Harris Fellow from the Rotary Clubs International. He is a member of Young Members Forum of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

In 2013, he was conferred the title of Certified Professional Marketer by the Asia Marketing Federation and he is an All island Justice of Peace.

SLIM inaugurates National Diploma in Sales Management latest intake

SRI Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM) recently concluded the inauguration of the National Diploma in Sales Management (NDSM), with the aim of educating the students about the NDSM program and SLIM.

The inauguration was carried out with the participation of a large gathering of enthusiastic sales personnel at SLIM Home recently. Important insights were given to them about sales management and the advantages. One specialty was that, a number of students from the participants were jubilant winners of NASCO 2015.

The informational session provided the students an opportunity to gain a wealth of knowledge about NDSM. This paved the way for them to make an informed decision to pur-



SLIM Secretary Pradeep Edward welcoming the gathering

sue this highly recognised qualification from SLIM, the national body for marketing. Students who enrol for this diploma program of one year duration, can complete the course at SLIM Home.

SLIM President Ruwan Liyanagamage stated:



Participants at the NDSM Inauguration held recently at SLIM Home Colombo

"SLIMs objective and indeed my personal vision is to aggressively promote sales management among the working crowd engaged in the sales field in Sri Lanka, and provide a proper environment and necessary tools for the students to be exposed to it. I am

confident that this diploma will enhance the sales skills of these students enabling them to drive growth in sales of their respective organisations."

Pradeep Edward and Sanjeewa Samarasinghe graced this event as invitees and Pradeep

Edward welcomed the gathering mentioning that, "The return is higher for students from NDSM who are in the sales field and even for those who are not, as it is a methodical and productive program. Students will have the confidence to move forward in the real world due to the emphasis on practicality within NDSM and I highly recommend the program."

SLIM CEO/Executive Director Sanath Senanayake said: "The success of the program so far has been extremely pleasing and I would like to thank all invitees for the encouraging messages shared by them and their resounding recommendations."

NDSM is a program which caters to sales career minded candidates seeking to acquire specific competencies to differentiate themselves from conventional sales personnel. It is also suitable for those in the marketing or business development force intending to enhance their skills in sales management and move up the career ladder.