**Corporate Branding in Logistics and Transport Sector: The Concept, History, Current and Future Trends**

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**Abstract**

This Chapter explores the role of corporate branding in the logistics industry. It mainly explores related concepts, history, and trends. Here, the core characteristics of corporate branding are examined, such as ethereality, intricacies, and culture. Corporate social responsibility and digitalisation were also highlighted as current trends. Future trends include emotions such as the minimalist approach and integration of equality, diversity, and inclusion in corporate branding strategies.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Corporate branding is strategic. It defines a firm's unique distinctiveness, product offerings and core values. It relates to how various stakeholders interact with a firm, including its employees, shareholders, and competitors, to create and sustain favourable perceptions for achieving a competitive gain (Foroudi, 2020). Corporate branding highlights the criticality of corporate brands (Sevel et al., 2018; Iglesias et al., 2019; Balmer et al., 2020). The nature of corporate branding has been widely contested. Some authors attest to its multidisciplinary scope involving firm-wide commitment, corporate identity, and stakeholder focus (Balmer et al., 2012). Corporate branding extends beyond a name or logo to include a firm's mission, culture, and image (Hatch and Schultz, 2013). It represents an unwritten contract, a brand promise, and a mark of assurance from a firm to its stakeholders (Balmer and Gray, 2003).

Historically, corporate branding focused on goods industries (Balmer, 2001). However, academics have argued that it differs significantly from simply changing a name to how associating with the name impacts business strategies and customer loyalty (Balmer et al., 2020). Therefore, it highlights the importance of corporate branding in the services sector, including logistics service providers.

* 1. **THE LOGISTIC INDUSTRY**

The logistics service sector has witnessed tremendous growth due to globalisation and economic growth (Kherbash and Mocan, 2015). A report predicted that by 2024, the estimated global value of the logistics service industry would be USD 6.88 trillion (Statista, 2018).

Logistics firms comprise logistics service providers (LSPs), couriers, and express and postal operators (CEP). Although these businesses overlap, their focus is on efficiently planning and executing the transportation, storage, and distribution of goods between stakeholders in a timely and cost-effective manner (Fernie and Sparks, 2018). The logistic function involves developing techniques and procedures that facilitate the movement and storage of goods, sustainable and timely delivery, service quality and cost efficiency. Transportation is vital in logistics as it effectively moves goods across entities. In the logistics service sector, the ultimate customer solutions are service offerings. It is also important to note that customer focus in the logistics industry consists of businesses (B2B) and customers (B2C), depending on their position in the supply chain. An overview is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Distinguishing logistic firms

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus** | **Business Model** | **Supply Chain Stakeholders** |
| Businesses | Freight forwarders, third and fourth-party logistics service provider | Manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers |
| Carriers | Freight (road, rail, sea, and air) |
| Courier / Express / Parcel companies | Manufacturers, wholesalers, and other private firms |
| Customers | Courier / Express / Parcel companies | Private customers |

Adapted from PWC (2016)

Similarly, logistics companies usher in novel business models, including reverse logistics, crowd shipping and last-mile delivery services. However, profit margins are low due to trying to meet customers' expectations. A report by PWC (2016) estimated that the earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) of logistic firms were between (-1 and 8%). Here larger firms could make almost double-digit profits, and smaller carrier firms were sometimes in the red. It highlights the need for service differentiation, where logistic firms must stand out to gain a competitive advantage. Corporate branding allows logistic firms to compete favourably through service quality and stakeholder relationships (Davis et al., 2009). It demonstrates a firm's distinct value proposition, a commitment towards a provided level of quality and assures customers of consistent offerings. For instance, Amazon and DHL have successfully used corporate branding to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. Existing studies identify the importance of corporate branding to include enhancing value among stakeholders, increasing market share and facilitating collaboration (Serbetcioglu and Göçer, 2020). Corporate branding is necessary for firm differentiation, performance, and customer loyalty (Davis et al., 2008; Cowan and Guzman, 2020).

However, limited studies have explored its contribution to the logistics and service industry (Balmer et al., 2020). This paper contributes to the knowledge gap by exploring the concept of corporate branding and its importance in the logistics and transport sector. More specifically, the history, trends and areas for future research are identified. The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: Sections Two and Three present the concept of corporate branding and its history in the logistics and transport industry. Section four examines the concept of corporate branding in developed and developing countries. The Chapter concludes by identifying areas for further research.

2. **THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE BRANDING IN THE LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT SECTOR**

The term corporate branding was first presented in the literature in the mid-1980s, sparking an ongoing plethora of research and definitions of the concept (Balmer, 1995; Balmer, 2020). corporate branding is a significant part of corporation management (Singh and Crisafulli, 2020). It extends beyond what an organisation does and answers the question of who it is (Keller and Richey, 2006). Corporate branding is an effective strategy for competitor advantage over comparative organisations as it presents the mega-corporation as a brand. Regardless of the strength of the individual product brands, corporate branding has been argued to be more important due to the overall portrayal of the leading corporation's identity and image (Stuart, 2018). It is a complex but organised process that involves the firm's brand story, identity, values positioning and behaviours.

The main delineations about corporate branding found in early studies and still relevant today are the emphasis on the identity of the organisation, employees' commitment to corporate branding cause and the responsibility of senior management in its dissemination (Balmer, 1995; 2010; 2012; 2020). Corporate branding is also an overarching strategy to differentiate all offered products and services. It presents corporate aims, culture and ethos and provides a crucial point for future strategies (Foroudi et al., 2021). Values are essential to corporate branding and are reflected in firms' promises to stakeholders. It increases stakeholders' reassurance due to the explicit and implicit messages about the strategic definition of the firm, its behaviours, product offerings and reputational capacity (Balmer, 2020). It builds stronger relationships with consumers, shareholders, and stakeholders (Balmer and Gray, 2003). Therefore, the brand-related activities within the organisation should be congruent with the values expected of the brand by external partners and stakeholders (Joukanen et al., 2018).

There is significantly more responsibility in managing corporate brands than individual brands. It is tedious due to associated complexities involving a broader range of stakeholders, including the parent corporation, which can attract heightened reproval from onlookers (Balmer, 2001; Balmer and Gray, 2003). The assumption that consumers will automatically assign meaning to marketing activities such as new slogans, broader product ranges or creating logos is how firms fail in corporate branding. Therefore, scholars have created concepts such as the Corporate Branding Toolkit for organisations to implement and understand interdependent elements. These elements, including vision, culture, and image, should all be aligned when developing a corporate brand. The vision includes top management's goals and objectives for the company. Culture includes the values, behaviours and attitudes of the organisation, and the image includes outsider perceptions of the organisation, all of which hold equal importance in corporate brand development (Hatch and Schultz, 2001).

**2.1. DIMENSIONS OF CORPORATE BRANDING**

Corporate brand equity, value and image are critical components in discussions on corporate branding. Balmer et al. (2020) explained that these elements constitute firms' promises to their stakeholders. Brand equity refers to a firm's associated assets and liabilities that influence the value of its offerings (Aaker, 1991). It can be categorised as either tangible or intangible assets and includes loyalty, awareness, quality, and proprietary brand assets. Hence brand equity presents itself when consumers are aware of the brand and can link unique attributes to its image. For instance, Amazon's strategy is focused on timely delivery, where consumers are aware of the quick service in its last-mile delivery.

The brand discussion also differs in the service industry and from a logistic service perspective. Conventionally, brand equity is an ambiguous concept. Some researchers consider loyalty an intricate element of brand equity (Aaker, 1991), while others argue that loyalty is an outcome (van Riel et al., 2005). In the logistic service environment, corporate brand equity extends beyond customer awareness to how firms invest in tangible and /or intangible assets critical to logistics service delivery. It entails firms' ability to understand conditions necessary for investments in assets required to build logistic service brands.

**2.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF CORPORATE BRANDING: THE LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT CONTEXT**

Balmer et al. (2003) identified five characteristics of corporate brands which can be adapted to the logistics environment. They include culture, intricacies, tangibility, ethereality, and commitment (Balmer et al., 2003). A summary of these characteristics and their application to the logistics and transport sector is provided in Table 2. The commitment feature of corporate branding entails understanding what the business represents and the decisions to maintain its reputation. The cultural dimensions of corporate branding highlight organisational uniqueness and can be either at the firm, professional or national level (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2008). A misalignment between corporate brands and culture impacts performance. It stems from the positive contribution between culture and performance (Hatch and Schultz, 2008; Kim and Chang, 2019). It highlights the need to understand cultures when creating corporate brands in the logistic services industry, emphasising differentiation to achieve competitive advantage. De Chernatony and Cottam (2008) explained that merging organisational culture with societal value was critical for corporate brand success, especially in service-focused firms. Thus, for service-focused firms, especially logistic service providers, understanding cultural influences on corporate brands and developing strategies to address them is pertinent.

Corporate branding has a multi-stakeholder, multidisciplinary dimension (Jukic, 2017) referred to as intricacies. It involves the hard and soft elements of corporate brands that are publicised by controlled and uncontrolled communication. The logistics service industry provides a complex dimension which includes managing a high volume of changing components with complex details, including promises of reliable service offerings and timely information. A failure on any of these components impacts various stakeholders. For instance, Hermes was constantly blamed for poor service in its delivery which impacted its brand.

Compared to product branding, which is more narrowly focused on customer orientation, corporate branding firms need to consider the impacts of their brand on stakeholders' emotional and transactional positions. *Tangibility* refers to how firms define their scope, geographical location, logos, architecture, and profitability (Burt and Sparks, 2002). For logistics services, these include decisions on where to locate fulfilment centres and how to deliver products to make profits, especially with last-mile delivery and reverse logistics. It involves using emerging technologies, including drones and robots, for service delivery and the services offered.

At the same time, *ethereality* is intricately linked to corporate image. It includes delivery styles and brand associations (Balmer, 2001). It is a psychological illustration of a firm by consumers. It relates to the internal perception of a firm when its logo is seen, or its name heard. For instance, what comes to mind when consumers hear of Amazon is its next-day/less than 24 hours delivery service. In developing economies, foreign logistic service companies like DHL are known for their speedy delivery.

In addition to the dimensions and characteristics of corporate branding, extant literature highlights the importance of communication, differentiation, and enhanced loyalty (Jonsen et al., 2019). These are termed the pillars of corporate branding. Within the logistic service sector, communication is determined by the firm's ability to sense the information required by its stakeholders.

Table 2 Characteristics of Corporate Branding in the Logistics and Transport Sector

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristics** | **Performance** | **Implications for** **logistics** |
| Commitment | Corporate image | Reputation and representation of the logistic firms |
| Culture | Cultural roots, either at the firm or national level, | Integrating firm and national culture due to the peculiarity nature of the sector |
| Ethereal | Emotional response, internal perception of brand logo or name | Product handling, service delivery, timely delivery, accurate information on delivery, warehousing facilities |
| Intricacies | Multidimensional, including multiple stakeholders and complex details | Partnership with stakeholders, including delivery drivers. Accurate integration of information technology |
| Tangibility | Brand architecture | Last-mile delivery, dark stores and fulfilment centres, sustainable delivery platforms |

Source- adapted from Balmer (2001)

Figure 1 Characteristics of corporate brands in logistic firms

3. **HISTORY OF CORPORATE BRANDING IN THE LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT INDUSTRY**

Corporate branding emerged as a managerial concept in the 1970s, focusing on competitive advantage (Fetscherin and Usunier, 2012). However, academics formally attempted to understand the nature and impact of corporate branding in the late 1980s and 1990s. For instance, Winter (1986) examined the effect of advertising on corporate brands, and Dowling (1993) analysed the antecedents of corporate rebranding and identity. Balmer (1998) identified the strategic significance of corporate branding.

Although a distinguishing feature of corporate branding is its multidisciplinary nature, the concept is scarce and fragmented in the logistics and transport sector (Balmer et al., 2020). A summary is provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Historical Overview of Corporate Branding in the Logistics and Transport Sector

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research focus** | **Methodology** | **Country** | **Authors** |
| Brand awareness, image, equity, and loyalty | Quantitative techniques / Structural equation modelling | US, Finland | Davis et al., (2008); Grant et al., (2009); Juntunen et al., (2011) |
| Scale development for measuring corporate branding | Quantitative | US | Davis et al., (2009); |
| Brand image and stakeholder relationships | Quantitative techniques/Web-based survey | China | Balmer et al., (2020) |
| Social media | Machine learning algorithms, content analysis | Turkey | Serbetcioglu and Göçer (2020) |
| Halal technology | Quantitative/survey | Malaysia | Fernando et al., (2022) |
| Stakeholder engagement | Machine Learning/literature review | Global | Marvi et al. (2022) |
| Brand reputation | Qualitative | Malaysia | Rahman and Moin (2022) |
| Technical analysis of website development and corporate brands | Quantitative techniques regression analysis | Global | Sakas et al. (2022) |

Source: Authors

Table 2 shows that the first empirical discussions on corporate branding in the logistics and transport sector began over a decade ago. Davis and colleagues, in 2008, investigated if brand image and loyalty affected corporate branding among logistic service providers. It was followed by an attempt to measure corporate branding in 2009. It thus suggests that although the benefits of corporate branding in the services sector have been primarily discussed, there is limited research in the logistics sector. Fetscherin and Usunier (2012) further confirmed this in their literature review using bibliometric analysis where there was no focus on the logistic services. Recent studies have begun examining the contributions of technology in facilitating corporate branding among LSPs. For instance, Serbetcioglu and Göçer (2020) examined social media platforms, and Sakas et al. (2022) investigated websites' contributions to corporate branding. It demonstrates that firms are seeking innovative ways to gain a competitive advantage due to the intensifying competition in the logistics industry. Ozdemir et al. (2020) provided a case study of UPS, were trustworthiness, technology, innovations, and consistent delivery of promises as their brand's critical and robust aspects. As such, their senior management emphasises these aspects to differentiate the UPS corporate brand from its competitors. The table above also demonstrates the limited research of corporate branding in logistics in developing economies and the absence of a scale to measure the peculiarities of developing economies.

**4. CURRENT CORPORATE BRANDING TRENDS**

Corporate branding trends include corporate branding, corporate social responsibility (CSR), digitalisation, and sustainability (Cowan and Guzman, 2020).

4.1. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) IN THE **LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT INDUSTRY**

CSR refers to corporate brands' activities to improve their reputation and/or brand image (Torelli et al., 2012). On the other hand, sustainability emphasises corporate brands' ethical approaches to conducting business. It transcends economic goals to include societal and environmental concerns (Chabowski et al., 2011). Many organisations integrate the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is essential in developing the brand reputation and consumers' favourable perception towards the brand. CSR has long been a part of the corporate culture since the 1950s.

However, the ideology of CSR's purpose and activities could adapt to the timebound (Stoyanova and Stoyanov, 2019). Initially, CSR in corporate branding served the functions of corporate public relations (PR) by initiating the approaches for protecting the environment, corporate ethics, relations with the competition, and duties before society and the state. Since then, the role of CSR in corporate brand management has become a matter of PR act between the firms and the public but also a firm's practices of social responsibility through its principles, activities, and accountable actions.

Stakeholders, including the consumers, favour firms that focus on product performance and management efficacy and conduct social and cultural responsibility regarding the environment and the interested parties. Over the years, the ideas of CSR have expanded into corporate sustainability, corporate citizenship, and corporate ethics, which are vital in building a robust corporate identity. In doing so, firms invest in developing numerous social programs and constructive cooperation in the public area among the government authorities, the suppliers, the employees, and other stakeholders in its value chain system. A good CSR strategy can differentiate the brand and provide customer value. As a result, it can develop a solid corporate identity that, in turn, creates a positive image of the organisation.

**4.2. DIGITALISATION AND CORPORATE BRANDS**

The logistics and transport sector has also embraced emerging technology, including the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, Industry 4.0 and blockchain technologies (Holubčík et al., 2021). For instance, DHL uses IoT technologies to monitor, in real-time, its warehouse operational activities. They are also experimenting with using Robotics and Automated Guided Vehicles (AGV) in their warehouse and distribution centres.

Emerging technologies also influence corporate brands as companies integrate their use of technology to enhance their brand position. It is considered the evolution of corporate brands (Essamri et al., 2019). For instance, Fernando et al. (2022) showed how Halal traceability technology facilitated the establishment of Halal logistic brands. As such, technologies such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and Robots can be integrated into logistic companies' corporate brands. It can increase brand image and awareness, especially in last-mile delivery services, as in the case of Amazon.

Social media (SM) platforms have also emerged as a digital technology trend in corporate branding. Using social media to enhance corporate brands is vital for service-offering firms as it demonstrates the company's strategic promises. Thus, SM permits logistic firms to build stronger corporate brand values and meaningful relationships (Swani et al., 2021). Serbetcioglu and Göçer (2020) showed that SM contributes to an organisation's differentiation and enhanced corporate branding image. However, logistic firms used SM for different elements of corporate brand development. Logistic firms can use SM platforms to evoke ethereality and enhance competitive advantage.

**4.3. SUSTAINABILITY AND CORPORATE BRANDS**

Many logistics organisations communicate their commitment to sustainable goals by producing eco-friendly brands. It has become essential for many firms to have effective and scheduled corporate branding strategies that specify their focus on sustainability (Ishaq and Di Maria, 2019). For example, the logistics company, UPS, immerses their corporate brand in CSR practices by adopting a culture of sustainability to ensure its impact on the environment is minimal. The sustainability strategy is evident throughout all their business activities, including road vehicles, aviation, and operational tasks. Reducing carbon emissions is high on UPS's agenda for aviation and road, where analysts have been employed to strictly monitor their behaviours as environmentally friendly as possible (Ozdemir et al., 2020).

Further, in the shipping industry, firms consider the development and impact of corporate branding in operational decisions, such as fuel choice. It is pertinent to ensure that the environmental and stakeholder expectations are satisfied (Svanberg et al.,2018). In addition, some organisations require substantial energy resources in their production process, which can impact CO2 emissions. Therefore, it is beneficial to consider the practical implication of logistics system modelling towards net-zero carbon emissions.

**4.4. REVERSE LOGISTICS AND CORPORATE BRANDS**

Reverse logistics entails the movement of goods from the consumer back to the final consumer. This process is complex and requires careful handling procedures at minimum costs. The ability of logistic firms to successfully initiate reverse logistics offers a distinct advantage. Also, using digital technologies to facilitate reverse technologies is a new trend. For example, logistic firms now use automatic data capture to collect essential data about a returned parcel by scanning barcodes or RFID (radio frequency identifiers) tags. This process facilitates the returns process, especially customer refunds, enhancing service quality. As a service quality commitment, logistic firms involved in top-notch reverse logistic services offer ethereality.

**5. FUTURE CORPORATE BRANDING TRENDS IN THE LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT SECTOR**

Since Balmer's seminal paper (2001) on the introduction of the concept, the corporate branding literature has gradually evolved, evident by the research's multiple theoretical underpinnings and expanding research scope. The implications of the corporate branding concept can be bounded into four main themes in its literature (i) corporate brand as differentiation; (ii) corporate brand as corporate communication; (iii) corporate brand as a values-based approach; and (iv) corporate brand as internal branding approaches (Gyrd-Jones, Merrilees, and Miller, 2013). Schroeder (2017) introduced these perspectives as 'the four Cs of branding. It was derived from the initial branding strategy stream (Aaker, 1991; Balmer, 2012; Balmer and Gray, 2003; Kornberger, 2010) and the new stream on ethical and societal aspects of brands (Click here to enter text. Balmer and Gray, 2003; Balmer, 2010; Borgerson et al., 2009; Jeanes, 2013).

**5.1. MINIMALIST APPROACH TO CORPORATE BRANDS**

A future trend for logistic firms will be using emotions, such as the minimalist approach, in their corporate branding strategy. Corporate brands aligned with emotions produce better results (Nielsen, 2017) and improve the possibility of enhancing customer trust. In recent years, minimalism has become a new trend among consumers. This movement has influenced businesses across various industries to approach branding from a minimalist perspective. For example, Google, Airbnb, Balmain, Yves Saint Laurent, and Balenciaga updated their logo using a minimalistic approach. This branding approach offers the firms to become iconic.

**5.2. EXTENDING COLLABORATION**

The interaction between firms in logistics networks is complex. It includes numerous services in the logistics mix, such as warehousing, distribution channels, information flow, pricing, and transportation. The increased operations and evolution of customers' expectation highlights the need to adopt innovative and sustainable interactive strategies in logistic firms. The configurations for these interaction strategies have been described by the 4 C's: communicative, coordinated, collaborative, co-opetitive (Bhattacharjya et al., 2016). Communicative configuration relates to the market pricing relational form, characterised by shallow dependence. Deep and shallow dependencies characterise coordinated and collaborative configuration. The former is related to authority ranking, and the latter equality-matching relational form. Meanwhile, Co-opetitive configuration relates to the communal sharing relational form and is marked by deep interdependence.

Future trends will see corporate brands of logistic firms engage in various forms of collaborative endeavours where their commitment to service quality is demonstrated through these collaborations.

**5.3. EQUALITY,** **DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION OF CORPORATE BRANDS**

A corporate brand typically needs to represent the company's values, identity, and image through brand communication strategies. There is an emerging trend on equality, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) elements of brand values which can enhance the corporate image subsequently. Firms are increasingly acknowledging the significance of addressing both social and cultural issues as part of their branding strategy, despite many firms still struggling to sustain the demands. For instance, personal care brand Dove, underwear company ThirdLove, and cosmetics brand Fenty Beauty are famous for their 'inclusivity' brand value. In addition, brand inclusivity can also be achieved through other means, such as economic inclusiveness (i.e., products offered at different price points) and functional inclusiveness (i.e., products designed for differently abled individuals).

Although there has been a call for diversity and inclusiveness in service delivery, these concepts are not evident among logistic firms. Future trends will see EDI included in logistic firms' corporate branding strategies. Their commitment to service delivery will be based on their EDI approach.

**5.4. SUSTAINABILITY AND CORPORATE BRANDS**

In the logistics and transport sector, 3C's or strategic triangle (the customers, the competitors, and the corporation) plays a vital role. Thus, the firm's corporate branding strategies need to be strengthened with authenticity and adaptability to the trends. Along with the fast-paced logistical environment, a firm can enhance its corporate image in several ways, such as blandification branding, brand authenticity, brand inclusivity, and purpose-driven branding.

The contemporary market atmosphere is intense for all firms, irrespective of their size. It is because consumers' knowledge is expanded through various sources as well as the vigorous market competition. Corporate brands with an authentic image can create a competitive advantage as authenticity is a distinctive factor in gaining customer trust and purchasing decisions. For instance, a consumer research report by Stackla (2020) found that 90% of millennial consumers prefer 'real and organic' companies over those that are 'perfect and packaged'. Having transparency between brands and the stakeholders allows them to tackle potential misconceptions, such as by showing a shred of manufacturing processes, supply chains, quality assurance and other aspects.

Consumers are interested in the government and businesses' actions in creating a better environment for future generations. They believe that firms can influence societal change and expect to initiate addressing environmental issues by providing more sustainable products. The emergence of conscious consumerism highlights the importance of implementing sustainable operational practices and ethical business processes. Numerous studies have found that consumers are willing to pay more (up to 5 per cent) for sustainable products (Statista, 2019). Also, 8 in 10 shoppers globally are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products (IBM, 2020). As stated previously, socially responsible firms and purpose-driven brands have become increasingly appealing to consumers, who have begun seeing products as mere commodities. Corporate brands building social impact movements (such as Toms shoes, Mary Kay, and All birds shoes) offer a sense of community and purpose amongst their stakeholders. Moreover, in recent years, many firms have been required to survive and thrive in this fast-paced market. The implication of innovative technologies assists in optimising performance.

6. **CORPORATE BRANDING, THE LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT SECTOR IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES**

Extant literature suggests that corporate branding may differ among countries as the emphasis on the concept may vary (Balmer and Liao, 2007; Balmer et al., 2020). Further, culture has been highlighted as pertinent in corporate branding. Here, collectivism and individualism may influence corporate identity issues (Fetscherin and Usunier, 2012). For instance, in an Asian country, emphasis on language scripts may influence corporate branding compared to a non-Asian country. Some aspects of corporate branding will be of higher importance due to the underpinning cultural philosophies associated with the country. For example, Foroudi et al., 2021) found that in India, consumers focused more on corporate branding's values and meanings (vision, mission, CSR) than promises often considered superficial (Foroudi et al., 2021).

Similarly, corporate branding selection by management teams in the logistics sector in China stemmed from the positive influence of brand image. It, in turn, impacted brand retention and the willingness to pay premium prices (Balmer et al., 2020). Boateng (2022) showed how cultural artefacts influenced customer loyalty when designing corporate brands, including the brand name, slogan, and logo.

In developed economies, corporate branding strategies are approached differently. For instance, in the US and western European countries, the increasing number of socially aware stakeholders has made firms reconceptualise their business-stakeholders relationship. from business and society (i.e., a collateral system) to business in society (i.e., an interpenetrating system). Firms initiate corporate responsibilities (such as economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic aspects) to build and maintain a positive corporate brand image in the long term. In developed economies, consumers are more inclined to favour responsible businesses. It contrasts with developing economies, where consumers consider price and quality before philanthropic responsibility in their decision-making process (Pratihari and Uzma, 2018).

**6. CONCLUSION AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In this Chapter, we examined the concept of corporate branding in the logistics sector, its trends and how it differed in developed and developing economies. Corporate brands signify a promise by a firm that impacts its reputation. A corporate brand offers sustainable competitive advantages to a firm by establishing its identity.The review of existing studies highlights the underdeveloped nature of corporate branding in logistics. It shows a plethora of avenues for future research.

For instance, corporate branding has undergone significant changes over the past decade due to the introduction of digital technologies (Iglesias et al., 2022). The logistics services such as distribution centres, last-mile deliveries, and transportation networks have gradually introduced innovative technologies to replace traditional human processes (Qiao et al., 2020). These technological advances have significantly influenced service operations (Chung, 2021). Therefore, future research should connect the themes of how digital technologies impact corporate branding in logistics and transport. Specifically, future studies should examine how Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data, social media platforms, intelligent warehousing and robotic automation influence corporate branding in the logistics and transport sector.

In addition, many studies have focused on the gamification of production and logistics operations (Warmelink et al., 2020). Warmelink et al. (2020) explained the need for more comprehensive conceptualisations and research into gamification design, highlighting the importance of its connections to management theory and logistics operations. It is because games have become a part of a more significant cultural and societal development. Thus, gameful interaction permeates aspects of everyday life and work.

Marketing specialists spearhead corporate branding (Stoyanova and Stoyanov, 2019). Future studies should examine avenues beyond the marketing area, or the non-marketing perspectives, as the success of corporate branding not only depends on the marketing instruments. Novel ideas from other management methods and perspectives would be a much more revitalising context for future research. Since this research attempts to illustrate corporate branding from a critical perspective, future studies can focus on demonstrating other perspectives, such as corporate, consumer, and cultural perspectives.

Along with its evolution in both theoretical and practical use of corporate branding, there are many opportunities to explore its functions across various multidisciplinary roots (Knox and Bickerton, 2003). It has seen an expanding scope of the application of corporate branding to new areas, including place and city branding (Merrilees et al., 2009), not-for-profit organisations (Miller and Merrilees, 2013) and even multi-centred, decentralised organisations, such as tourist destinations (Hankinson, 2009) and so on.

On the other hand, the importance of the service sector in economic growth is increasingly stressing the need to conduct research in the services sector and service supply chain process (Thakur and Anbanandam, 2016; Nagariya et al., 2021). It is especially essential for emerging markets, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). These economies' service industries are growing and contributing to their economic growth (World Bank, 2019). Thus, an important research area will examine the effective use of corporate branding strategies in the service supply chain (SSC). According to Wang et al. (2015), SSC can be classified into two streams: service-only supply chain and product service supply chain. The first group refers to products that are pure services, i.e., telecommunication, financial services, mobile applications, tourism, and Internet services. The latter includes services such as restaurant and food, mass customisation, product design and logistics service providers.

Similarly, corporate brands are expected to influence the logistics and transport sector's outcomes, including image, equity, and performance. In that case, it should be positive (Foroudi et al., 2021). Therefore, it is pertinent that future studies validate these relationships to facilitate the concept's development. Also, existing studies have used scales developed for western countries to measure corporate brands in developing economies. Future studies should generate scales that consider the dimensions of developing economies, including culture. Additional focus should be on understanding how the identity of logistic service providers influences corporate branding and the role of corporate branding in culturally diverse societies. These can be achieved using big data, where hashtags on ethereality are collected from social media platforms.

**7. CASE STUDY**

EVRI is a parcel delivery company with its headquarters in Hamburg. It operates in six European countries (Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, and Italy). EVRI is among the top five parcel delivery companies in the UK (United Kingdom) by sales. The company delivers over two million parcels daily and prides itself as fast, reliable, sustainable, and cost-efficient. In 2020, it reported close to £3 billion in revenue. EVRI offers integrated solutions. Businesses hosted on eBay, Amazon, Etsy, and Shopify can integrate their solutions for seamless delivery services.

In March 2022, EVRI embarked on a major transformation programme. It included changing its name from Hermes to EVRI, opening a new UK-based customer service team, recruiting 200 experts positioned in its local depot and automatically enrolling its workers into a pension scheme. In June 2022, the company launched its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG). It was to demonstrate its commitment to becoming the UK's most sustainable parcel delivery company as part of its rebranding strategy in February 2022. The company has also invested in over 20,000 state-of-the-art technologies to support its service delivery and customer experience. For instance, in February 2022, the company bought handheld scanners worth £18 million to facilitate its local carrier network and parcel shops.

EVRI has been marred by several allegations of its drivers' mishandling parcels. For instance, complaints on the Apple App store page included poor communication service, missing products, and damaged parcels. The same can be seen on Twitter, where customers blasted the company for their poor delivery standards. For two consecutive years, EVRI ranked last on the delivery firm league report by Citizens Advice.

Questions

1. What impact does corporate branding have on logistic firms?
2. Does adopting emerging technologies contribute to building corporate brands for logistic firms?
3. What role does ethereality play in logistics firms?

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**KEY TERMINOLOGIES**

**Corporate Branding**- Promoting an organisation from a holistic perspective instead of its products and/or services.

**Corporate Identity** - or corporate image- is how a corporation, firm or business enterprise presents itself to the public. The corporate identity is typically visualised by branding and trademarks. However, it can also include product design, advertising, and public relations.

**Corporate Social Responsibility**: A business strategy that integrates an organisation's commitment to environmental, economic and social issues, including their contribution to the community in a positive way.

**Corporate Sustainability** – A business approach that aims to create long-term stakeholder value by implementing a strategy that focuses on the business's ethical, social, environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions.

**Digital Technologies**- The use of automated systems, tools, applications, services, and resources to facilitate business processes.

**Ethereality-** It is a psychological illustration of a firm by consumers. It relates to the internal perception of a firm when its logo is seen, or its name heard.

**Minimalist Approach** – A business strategy that focuses on a business's fundamental functions (e.g., marketing, sales, operations, administration) and strips away the risk.

**Proprietary Brand Assets** include copyrights, trademarks, patents, domains, software and other assets owned by an individual corporation.

**Reverse Logistics –** A formthat moves goods from customers back to the sellers or manufacturers. Once a customer receives a product, processes such as returns or recycling require reverse logistics.

**Stakeholder** - a party with an interest in a company and can either affect or be affected by the business. The primary stakeholders in a typical corporation are its investors, employees, customers, and suppliers.

**Sustainability-** Ensuring the protection of natural resources to conserve and minimise environmental effects now and in the future.

**Tangibility-**refers to how firms define their scope, geographical location, logos, architecture, and profitability

**Value Proposition** – A statement that identifies the benefits a company's products and services will deliver to its customers.