

Rebranding of Professional Services: Three Case Studies

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except that which appears in the citations and acknowledgements. Nor does it contain material which to a substantial extent I have submitted for the qualification for any other degree of another university or other institution of higher learning.

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Date

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Ethical Approval

AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) approved the ethics application for this research on 25th September 2017. Application number 17/313 (see Appendix A).

Abstract

In recent decades, corporate rebranding has been receiving a lot of attention by the organizations which tend to strive on achieving a competitive advantage by developing a distinguished brand identity in the minds of their customers. The extant rebranding literature lacks understanding of the effects of rebranding strategies on the brand equity of professional service firms. This dissertation helps to fill this gap; its findings offer useful insights for managers of businesses considering rebranding as a strategic option. The study investigates the crucial factors that affect an organization when it plans to rebrand itself. The aim of the dissertation is to understand the rebranding process undertaken by three professional service organizations studied and the strategies they adopted for the rebranding process. The data collection is guided by employing a qualitative technique involving a multiple case study approach of three cases providing professional services. The data was collected by the means of semi-structured interviews with marketing professionals of the professional services firms, supported with the use of secondary sources. The findings suggest brand communication and the ownership support as the two main pillars that enhance the effectiveness of rebranding strategies. The theoretical contribution of this report is to suggest an addition of a sub-process named ownership support in the corporate rebranding framework. The findings provide context for managers to gain crucial insights in the context of different kinds of rebranding strategies they can consider and the effectiveness of these rebranding strategies on brand equity and its dimensions when an organization plans to rebrand itself.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research investigating the rebranding processes that professional service firms are undertaking to rebrand their firms and the effects of rebranding strategies on different dimensions of brand equity. First, a research background to the study will be presented. Second, the research aim and objectives will be discussed, followed by the justification and purpose of the research. Third, the research methodology will be described, and finally, this chapter closes with an overall outline of the other chapters of this dissertation.

1.1 Background to the research

This section briefly outlines the background to the research. In our day-to-day life, everything around us is connected to brands in some way or other; brands that have a label or a brand name that resembles not only the name of the manufacturer, but also a corporate identity which has a greater value and is often used as a marketing tool (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). Brands also give a competitive advantage to the company and are built through lots of effort over a period. The brand value of an organization resembles a huge proportion of an organization's total value (Koku, 1997). To create great brand value, it is very important for organizations to carefully build an effective branding strategy. Despite having an effective branding strategy in place, most organizations feel the need to rebrand themselves to be in line with the current trends of the business environment.

So, the main question that arises here is, why would a business, after putting so much effort into building the brand, start from scratch by rebranding their well-established identity? The reasons for rebranding can be many. Globally, companies are now focusing on creating a very strong brand image in the customers' minds and are trying to create loyalty through the brand. At times, it seems difficult for companies to achieve this with their existing brand or existing identity and they choose to undertake a marketing strategy to change their brand image called "rebranding" (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). When a company plans to shift their business areas or plans to enter a new market, old brand names might seem outdated to them (Lomax & Mador, 2006; Muzellec, Doogan, & Lambkin, 2003). Mergers and acquisitions, changes in various other aspects of an organization such as name change and disinvestment are a few of the reasons why an organization will decide to rebrand itself (Muzellec et al., 2003).

Rebranding is a very interesting concept as it also goes against the thinking of traditional marketers of building long-term brand equity. Rebranding, though an important concept nowadays for organizations to grow, still involves a risk in terms of loss of an organization's market share due to the negative effect of rebranding on brand image and brand awareness (Kapferer & Pierre, 2016). Rebranding should be planned very carefully, and all the aspects should be taken into consideration and thought of properly prior to implementation. Rebranding, being a very costly and time-consuming exercise, should not be taken lightly (Lomax, Mador, & Fitzhenry, 2002). Despite all the risks involved, recent trends suggest that the number of organizations rebranding themselves are gradually increasing every year (Kapferer & Pierre, 2016).

In the following section, the research aim of the current study is presented.

1.2 Research Aim and Research Questions

This study investigates the crucial factors that affect a professional services organization when it plans to rebrand itself. Rebranding is a very costly and complex process and therefore it needs to be implemented very carefully. This report serves as a guide to corporate managers to understand what factors need to be taken into consideration while forming rebranding strategies. This dissertation will also help managers to understand what signs they should look for while evaluating the execution of the strategies adopted for a rebranding process and to check whether they are on the right track.

The aim of the dissertation is to understand the rebranding process undertaken by three professional services organizations studied and the strategies they adopted for the rebranding process. This report also serves as a guide to corporate managers to gain crucial insights in the context of different kinds of rebranding strategies they can consider and the effectiveness of these rebranding strategies on brand equity and its dimensions when an organization plans to rebrand itself. To achieve this goal, the first step will be to conduct a literature review which will define the main pillars of theoretical knowledge that are of crucial importance: Branding; Brand Equity; and Rebranding.

For the study, the following research questions are posed:

- 1) How are professional services firms using rebranding strategies to change their brand images?
- 2) What is the impact of the chosen rebranding strategy on:
 - a) Brand loyalty;

- b) Brand awareness;
 - c) Brand association; and
 - d) Brand equity?
- 3) What are the factors influencing the effectiveness of rebranding strategies?

In the next section, justification for the research is presented.

1.3 Justification

Though the concept of rebranding has been in existence for a number of years, it is surprising to note that there is a lack of literature available on the topic. Rebranding represents an important issue for two main reasons. First, the frequency of companies using rebranding strategies has increased markedly and almost every company after a few years of existence, has started thinking about rebranding. A second critical issue is the cost associated with these decisions. There are tremendous costs involved while planning for rebranding, and therefore it is at times very risky due to the costs involved.

Rebranding refers to various changes undertaken to a brand, but various researchers have different views on rebranding which will be explained in the literature review chapter. This dissertation focuses on rebranding processes undertaken by three professional service organizations and the effect of rebranding on brand equity and its dimensions on these organizations.

Past literature on rebranding focuses mainly on defining different theoretical frameworks (Daly & Moloney, 2004; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). Few of the published studies focus on the rebranding processes by ways of case studies (Daly & Moloney, 2004; Kaikati, 2003; Lomax & Mador, 2006). The corporate rebranding literature needs a broader focus within the organization compared to that of product level rebranding (Abratt, Kleyn, & Balmer, 2016; Fiona & Leslie, 2001). Indeed, it has been observed that academic research focusing on the effectiveness of these strategies lags well behind current practices, resulting in several gaps in the literature.

Very few studies have focused on rebranding strategies. Rebranding has been proposed as a strategy consisting of similar tangible and intangible brand elements with three levels of change – namely, minor change, intermediate change, and complete change – involved in both tangible as well as intangible elements of the brand (Daly & Moloney, 2004). Kaikati and Kaikati (2003) propose six different strategies for corporate rebranding which are helpful in the execution of

rebranding campaigns. However, one of the aspects missing from this study is an understanding of the effects of these strategies on brand equity of the firm and its dimensions. This dissertation helps to fill in this gap and its findings will offer useful insights to the managers of companies considering rebranding as a strategic option. This study uncovers the strategic options professional services organizations are considering for rebranding campaigns and the effects on brand equity of the firm and can therefore serve as a guide to managers to understand how a rebranding campaign should be implemented and which strategy should be considered for rebranding. This study also investigates the effect of rebranding strategies on brand equity, helping to make companies aware of the different kinds of risks involved and how to reduce these risks during implementation of these strategies.

The research methodology used in the study is outlined in the next section.

1.4 Methodology

The research uses a case study approach to investigate the research problem in the context of rebranding. A multiple holistic case study design is used by presenting three case studies which focuses on professional services firms in Auckland, New Zealand, that have each rebranded in the last five years.

Two different sources of data collection were applied: primary data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews; and secondary data was collected from various sources which will be described in detail in Chapter Three. The collected data was analyzed using the qualitative approach of thematic analysis whereby the collected data was classified into different themes as described in the Chapter Four of this dissertation. The combination of two different types of data collected, i.e. semi-structured interviews and secondary documents, helped to achieve triangulation of the findings.

In Chapter Three, a detailed description of the research methodology used in the current dissertation is presented.

1.5 Outline

This dissertation is focused on the rebranding of professional service firms. It is divided into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the background of the current study and research aims and provides justification for the methodology used. The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the context of rebranding and its importance and to show what part of the literature is lacking in this area.

Chapter Two of this dissertation provides an overview of past academic literature on rebranding through a comprehensive literature review which also works as the theoretical framework for this dissertation.

In Chapter Three, a detailed description of the research methodology employed in the current dissertation is presented, followed by presenting the results from the empirical part of the study, which is presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by presenting the significant findings and implications of the study. These implications will describe how this dissertation contributes to rebranding and the professional services rebranding research literature. In addition, suggestions for future research are provided along with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the basis of the theoretical framework for the study. The aim of the study is to understand the effects and effectiveness of rebranding strategies on brand equity and its dimensions for firms providing professional services. In this chapter, a detailed discussion of past literature in the context of rebranding is provided. By the end of this chapter, the reader will have an overview of the past literature on rebranding and the gaps in this literature will be identified.

The first section will discuss the concept of branding domains to provide a proper understanding of the branding literature. In the second section, branding from the services perspective and various characteristics of services are presented. As the current study is mainly related to services, it is very important to understand the service-branding perspective.

The third section is the most important part of this chapter as the concept of brand equity, which is the core part of this study, is presented. Different viewpoints on brand equity are discussed and the concept of Customer -based brand equity and its dimensions are explained in a detailed way. Brand equity as a multi-dimensional concept is discussed in this chapter.

The fourth section gives a brief outlook of the professional service brands and current trends in the professional service sector with regards to the New Zealand business environment.

The fifth section presents the core concept of this study, i.e., rebranding. Rebranding has been studied by various researchers who have mixed views on the topic. The various views of researchers are presented in this section.

The sixth section introduces the types and process of rebranding and key theoretical frameworks are presented, along with the viewpoints of different researchers in the context of the rebranding process.

The seventh section presents views on different strategies used for rebranding. This is a very important part as the main aim of this study is to understand the effectiveness of these rebranding strategies on brand equity and its dimensions.

Lastly, a summary of the literature is presented in which all of the essential findings from the literature review are discussed.

2.2 Branding

Out of all the assets an organization has, its brand is the most treasured asset it possesses and often, a brand having a strong corporate identity gives it a competitive advantage (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). The way both external and internal stakeholders measure the brand is very significant. An organization's brand is formed through a consistent use of various organizational resources over a period of time (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). In today's world, even the most well-known brands have to maintain their corporate image in a way that is desirable from the perspective of stakeholders (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003).

To get a better understanding of branding, it is very important to understand what a brand is. One of the most commonly cited definitions of a brand is "Distinguishing name and/or any symbols (such as trademark, logos, or package designs) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate those goods and service from those of competitors" (Aaker, 1991, p.7). The concept of branding in today's world is all about differentiating the product and thereby creating preferences in the minds of the consumers (Brady, Bourdeau, & Heskel, 2005). There are various views and approaches in the branding literature and often branding is referred to as one of two types: product branding, and corporate branding.

Product branding is related to creating a distinct identity for different products that a company manufactures, while the concept of corporate branding is more complex (Xie & Boggs, 2006). In corporate branding, when a company brands a product or service, the organization as a whole is also being branded. Traditionally, product branding was practiced widely as compared to corporate branding, but recent trends suggest that organizations nowadays focus more on corporate branding as compared to product rebranding (Xie & Boggs, 2006).

In the next chapter, characteristics of service branding will be described.

2.3 Characteristics of Service Branding

As compared to product branding, service branding is very different. Service branding has various characteristics which not only create a point of differentiation with product branding but also create a need for different marketing solutions (Moorthi, 2002).

Literature highlights intangibility as one of the most significant characteristics of services which differentiates services from goods (Turley & Moore, 1995). Intangibility basically means you cannot touch or feel the services while purchasing them as is the case with goods. This characteristic of services makes it very difficult for consumers to evaluate the service provided and one of the possible solutions to overcome this problem is to portray the brand with the help of its surroundings (Brady et al., 2005; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988).

Another characteristic of service is inseparability. Inseparability occurs when the service provider and the consumer create value together (Evert, 2003). Since the provider of services and the consumer are involved together in creating the service, it may happen that consumers' expectations vary depending on each service encounter (Chernatony & Riley, 1999). One of the ways to overcome this problem is for organizations to transmit such brand values to their staff, such that they produce an excellent service encounter for the consumers, one which stays consistent through each service encounter (Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003).

The third characteristic of service is heterogeneity. As compared to goods, it gets very difficult to standardize quality of services provided. To overcome this issue, organizations should use internal branding to reduce the heterogeneity aspect while providing the service (Shostack, 1977; Wasmer & Bruner, 1991). Heterogeneity provides opportunity for the services providers to offer flexibility and customization in the services which they provide (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1991)

The fourth characteristic of services highlighted in the literature is Perishability. Perishability is one of the crucial problems faced by organizations in the service industry (Bhasin, 2017). Services are perishable and cannot be stored. Services have zero inventory and once sold, they cannot be returned (Zeithaml, 1988). Services are "time dependent" and "time important" which in-turn makes them perishable (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1991).

In the next section, the concept of brand equity will be presented.

2.4 Brand Equity

In recent years, brand equity has been a major focus area for the researchers and even for the marketing managers. Brand equity is described as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand" (Keller, 1993, p. 8). One of the most cited

definitions of brand equity observed in the literature was "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (Aaker, 1991, p. 15). Though both Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) have different views on brand equity, still they had a common perspective on brand equity based on customer's brand associations.

Brand equity can be evaluated from two different perspectives namely financial based perspective and consumer based perspective. Financial based brand equity measures the financial brand value of the firms as compared to consumer based brand equity which measures brand equity as a brand value of firm in context to the consumers' perceptions about the brand (Silveira, de Oliveira, & Luce, 2012). Financial perspective defines brand equity as the 'total value of a brand which is a separable asset - when it is sold or included in a balance sheet' (Atilgan et al., 2005, p. 238).

Customer-based brand equity occurs when the customers are aware about the presence of the brand and hold strong and positive brand associations in their minds (Keller, 1993). The Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model states that customer-based brand equity is formed when the customer is well aware of the brand and holds some positive brand associations in their memory (Keller, 1993). Consumer-based brand equity can also be defined as a value derived by an organization, when a consumer associates themselves with a brand (Aaker, 1991). Consumer-based brand equity perspective helps an organization to investigate the effectiveness of their advertising and marketing campaigns. Although the major aim of the marketing campaigns is to gain higher sales and increase the profitability, it is equally important for an organization to create a positive brand image in the minds of customers.

In the next section, different dimensions of brand equity as described by Aaker (1992) will be discussed.

2.5 Dimensions of Brand Equity

Customer-Based Brand Equity model consists of five different assets namely brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets (Aaker, 1992). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) later found four dimensions of brand equity namely brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations. These set of assets and liabilities as described by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) are being termed as "dimensions of

the brand equity” in the current study. The conceptual model of Customer-based brand equity as stated by Aaker (1992) is shown below:

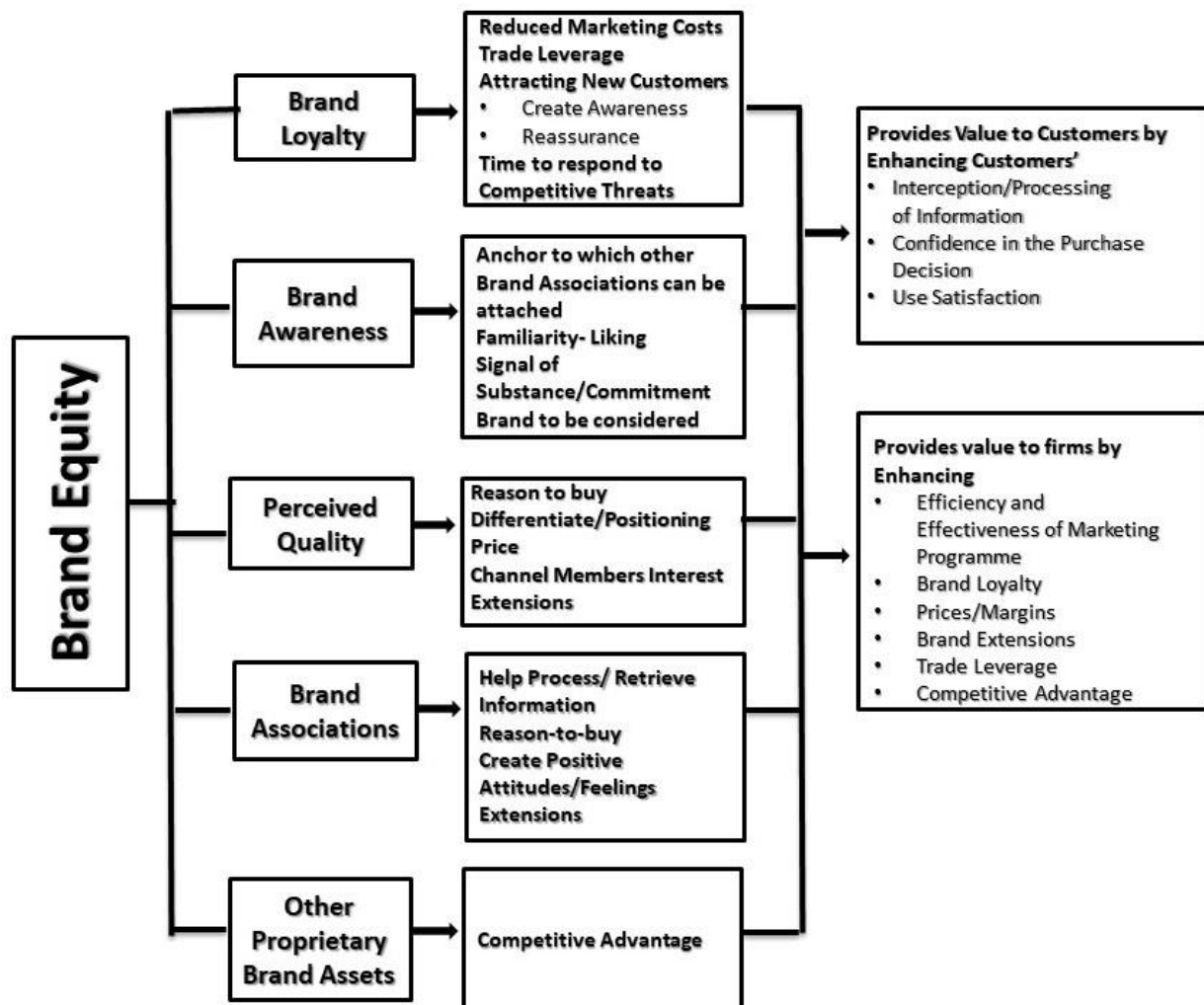


Figure 1: Dimensions of brand equity (Aaker, 1992)

2.5.1 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is one of the most important factors for an organization to be competitive in the market. Brand Loyalty can be defined as “the attachment that a customer has to a brand” (Aaker, 1991, p. 39). Constructing and maintaining brand loyalty is a major challenge for an organization. Brand loyalty can also be referred to as regular purchase of a particular brand without swapping to any other brand and is a major component of brand equity (Grover & Srinivasan, 1992).

Brand loyalty is conceptualized based on two different perspectives namely behavioral and attitudinal (Dick & Basu, 1994). Oliver (1997), in his study, focuses on behavioral perspective of brand loyalty and refers to brand loyalty as the commitment made by customers towards a brand which is shown through intentionally choosing that brand as a first choice repeatedly. Brand loyalty from an attitudinal view is defined as "the tendency to be loyal to a focal brand, which is demonstrated by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice" (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000, p.3). Brand loyalty helps to boost consumers' repeated purchase behavior and thereby prevents them from switching to the competitor's brand. The higher the customer loyalty, the greater the brand equity will be (Yoo et al., 2000). It is interesting to observe that the behavioral perspective focuses more on purchase buying behaviors of the consumers whereas the attitudinal perspective focuses on consumers purchase intentions.

2.5.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is referred to as the first step in building brand equity and it plays a very crucial role in the decision-making process for the following reasons. Firstly, brand awareness plays an important role in creating consumers' perception about a brand when they think about the product category. Secondly, it influences the creation of brand association into the brand image (Baldauf, Cravens, & Binder, 2003). Brand awareness is considered as a pre-requisite for brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991).

Brand awareness refers to the recall of the brand name which comes to a consumer's mind and it consists of two aspects: brand recognition and brand recall (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness is referred as the ability of customers to recognize or recall a brand in a specific product group. Brand recognition provides the brand with familiarity aspects with its consumers, whereas brand recall impacts the purchase behavior by influencing the consumers' consideration for the brand (Aaker, 1991).

2.5.3 Brand Association

Brand association can be defined as anything which links consumers' memory to a brand (Sanaz & Hongyi, 2015). Brand association facilitates formation of brand image, enhances purchase decisions, and is directly associated to different characteristics of the brand (Aaker, 1991; Villarejo-Ramos & Sanchez-Franco, 2005). Brand associations can be useful to both marketers as well as consumers. It helps the marketers by creating positive attitudes and positive feelings

for the brand, whereas it helps consumers by recalling the brand's message, thereby facilitating the decision-making process (Keller, 2010).

Brand association and brand awareness, as mentioned earlier, are highly correlated but they are not necessarily linked since there is a possibility that a consumer may be aware of a brand but still might not have any links in their memory (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995). Brand associations are informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory that contains the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller, 2000). These associations include perceptions of brand quality and attitudes towards the brand and convey either the concept or the meaning of the product in terms of fulfilling the consumers' need (Washburn & Plank, 2002).

2.5.4 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is defined as “the consumers judgement about a product's overall excellence or superiority” (Zeithaml, 1988, p.3). Customers use different quality attributes to judge quality of the products and thereby it is crucial for the organizations to recognize these quality attributes (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993). A strong brand equity is created when product quality, service quality, consumer satisfaction and profitability go hand-in-hand (Kotler, 2000).

In this study, this dimension of brand equity was not taken into consideration as it was not relevant to the aim of the study.

2.6 Professional Services

In recent decades, the transformation of firms from goods-driven logic to knowledge-based logic shows the kind of role professional services play towards significant growth of an economy (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). In professional service firms, professionals share similar ethical approaches to their peers, showing dignity and respect to each other and creating a good level of understanding with the other members of the professional clan, thereby helping in efficient functioning of the professional clan (Freidson, 1984; Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Newell, 2002).

A professional person is often referred to as one having a certain expertise, skill set, higher academic education, and appropriate knowledge base (Wang, Malthouse, Calder, & Uzunoglu, 2017). Professional service firm is defined as a firm wherein employees of the firm deliver specific services to the clients, which consist of a specific knowledge-based logic (Løwendahl, Revang, & Fosstenløkken, 2001). Professional services are often considered as relying largely on

efficient communication between knowledge buyers and service providers wherein both are engaged in some kind of problem-solving activity (Nordenflycht, 2010).

A professional service provider's professional status is often dependent on various factors such as quality and scope of services provided, their expertise, and the extent to which the services provided by them are considered crucial (Thakor & Kumar, 2000).

Traditionally, very less emphasis was given by the professional service firms on their marketing activities, but recent trends exhibit tremendous change in the approach of the professional service firms. Nowadays, professional service firms have started concentrating more on continuously increasing their competitive strengths, exploring new segments and new markets, and have started engaging themselves in aggressive branding and promotional activities.

Professional service firms contribute immensely towards providing employment, thereby contributing towards growth in the economy. A survey conducted by Statistics NZ in the year 2017, in the context of the New Zealand business environment shows that the professional service firms were the greatest contributor in 2017 towards the employment rate in Auckland (see Figure 2).

Professional service firms employed about 34,400 professionals throughout the year, which was the highest in the overall industrial scenario, followed by the construction industry at 22,300 employees, and public, admin and safety at 12,500 employees. Professional service firms contributed the most (12%) to the overall employment rate (67.8%).

Also, it was interesting to see that Auckland contributed the most towards the overall employment growth rate at about 5.5%, adding about 46,800 employees. As the current study is based on professional service firms within Auckland, this survey report from Statistics NZ proves how immensely professional service firms contribute to the economy and why they are considered so important for the growth of the economy especially in a country like New Zealand where the service sector is dominant over the manufacturing sector.

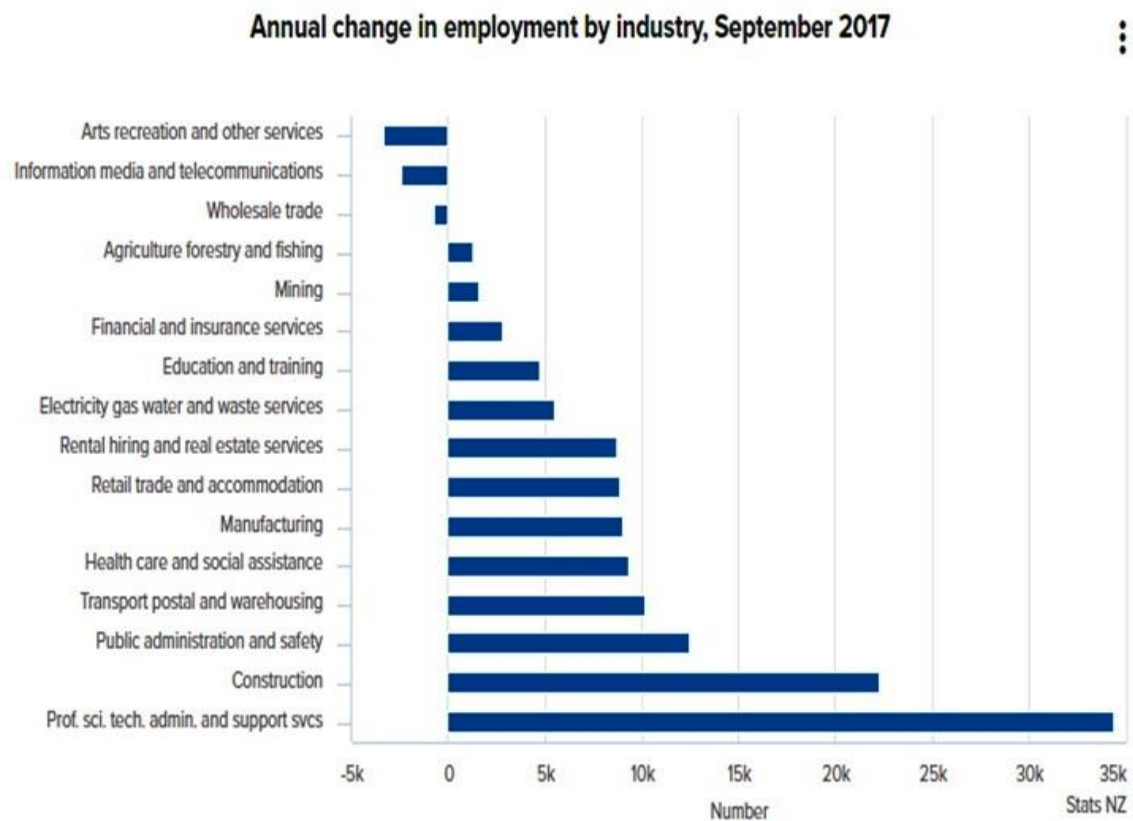


Figure 2: Professional service sector contribution towards employment in Auckland, New Zealand ("Labour market statistics: September 2017 quarter | Stats NZ," 2018).

2.6.1 Professional Service Brands

It is very important for a professional service brand to maintain good communication with their clients. Lack of good communication with clients can prove fatal for the firm as it may create a negative image in the minds of clients, thereby overturning all the branding efforts taken by the firm (Hoffman & Turley, 2002). Nowadays, professional service brands revolve around customers ambitions (i.e. what customers want to do or want to become rather than revolving around what services offer). Professional service brands must constantly keep changing in the context of current trends as markets and customers evolve (Sreekumar, 2015).

A few of the common brand elements found in professional services which are very important to establish communication platforms are: client focus, trustworthy, result driven, service quality, and long-term relationships (Amonini, McColl-Kennedy, Soutar, & Sweeney, 2010). Success of the professional service firms depend a lot on how confidently they communicate and announce these elements to the stakeholders, both internal as well as external stakeholders. If they want to

increase the prospects of attracting clients, it is important that they have prospective employees and good quality consultants to deliver quality services to the clients (Wang et al., 2017). Wang et al. (2017) also advises to follow some steps to create a strong and successful professional service brand. Firstly, a professional service firm should convey a strong and well-defined brand positioning statement providing some unique value to its clients, and thereby attaining a competitive advantage over the firm's competitors (Wang et al., 2017). Secondly, a professional service firm should carefully use a proper mix of all the brand elements such as brand name, logo, slogan, different types of marketing materials, and they should make sure that all these brand elements are in line with the brand (Wang et al., 2017). It is very important to maintain a level of consistency across all mediums of communication to both internal customers as well as external customers. Lastly, it is very important for a brand to keep all the promises it has committed to. Success of professional services depends a lot on trust, which it creates within customers and therefore, professional service brands should try to consistently develop a strong brand which always delivers its commitment to the customers to gain their trust and eventually convert them into brand loyal customers (Wang et al., 2017).

Professional service brands should undertake various activities such as employ high quality service providers and provide customized tailored services in order to meet the customer's expectation of the brand, to attain a competitive advantage over their competitors. They also need to keep their employees motivated enough to deliver quality services. If they want to be successful, it is very important for professional service brands to build an environment where high-quality service is provided with minimal amount of risk to clients (Sreekumar, 2015).

2.7 Rebranding

Rebranding refers to changes done to various aspects of an organization. It could be changes in the brand name or repositioning related changes, and it has been considered an important factor for organizations (Muzellec et al., 2003). Despite rebranding being a very important aspect, it has received little consideration in most of the research work done until now and it remains under researched in academic literature (Daly & Moloney, 2004; Muzellec et al., 2003)

It is important to get customers' perceptions on aesthetic factors such as name changes and logo changes (Hem & Iversen, 2004; Kohli & Suri, 2002). Melewar, Hussey, and Srivoravilai (2005) studied the influence of rebranding on consumers' favorability of the newly formed image, sales, and the share price. Rebranding not only relates to changes in the brand identity of a firm but it

also relates to the overall transformation of brand image of a firm and its long-term goals (Hankinson, Lomax, & Hand, 2007).

Some of the previous literature on rebranding has focused on changes to brand elements. Particularly, researchers have characterized rebranding as a change to the brand name, slogan, and logo (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). Post rebranding, it is very important that at least some part of the original brand remains with the brand irrespective of increase or decline observed in the brand equity (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003; Miller & Merrilees, 2013). A change in brand name directly affects the way a brand is perceived by the consumers and it may cause a decline in brand equity which the organizations have built over a period of time from marketing their brand (Aaker, 1996; Balmer & Muzellec, 2006).

Few of the researchers have also focused on the repositioning of the brand concept. Brand repositioning also directly impacts the consumers' perceptions which in turn effects brand awareness and the customers' relationship with the brand (Keller, 2000). When a firm moves towards a new direction through rebranding, repositioning of the brand is the best option (Miller, Merrilees, & Yakimova, 2014). Consumers' perception of the brand post rebranding depends on the interaction of consumers with the employees of the firm. Internal stakeholders are very essential for the success of the brand's rebranding. Firms need to gain support from employees with the new brand or face resistance to the rebranding (Gotsi, Andriopoulos, & Wilson, 2008).

2.7.1 Types of Rebranding

Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) present a model (see Figure 3) that considers rebranding on a continuum where it can be classified into two dimensions namely, change in positioning and change in marketing aesthetics, based on the degree of changes that can be observed in terms of the relationship between both the dimensions. In this model, degree of change is characterized into two aspects: evolutionary change and revolutionary change.

The authors describe rebranding according to the degree of change observed in both elements – marketing aesthetics and brand positioning. Evolutionary rebranding refers to a minor change in an organization's positioning or marketing aesthetics. Evolutionary rebranding is so gradual that it is hardly visible or may appear identical to the stakeholders. On the other hand, revolutionary rebranding refers to a major change that an organization has undertaken in positioning or marketing aesthetics that redefines the organization completely, such as name change of an

organization. Revolutionary rebranding can never be invisible as it gives a complete new identity to a company.

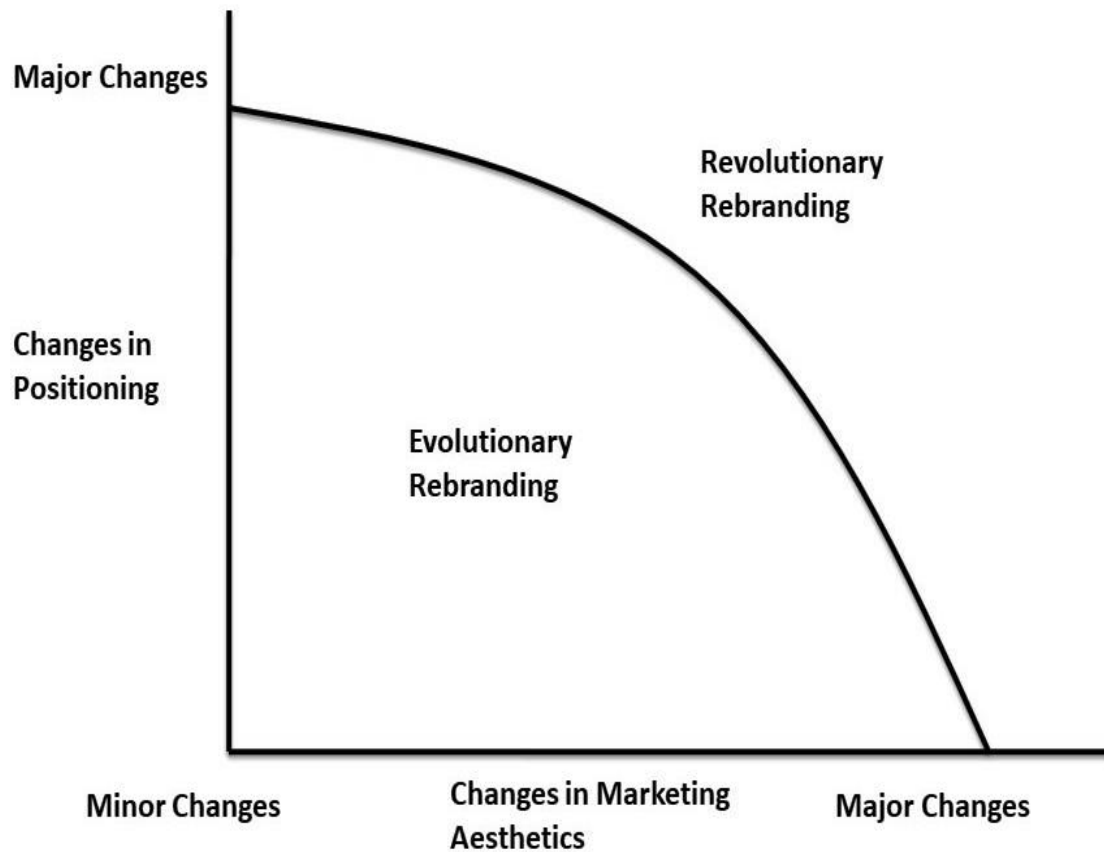


Figure 3: Rebranding as a Continuum (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006)

Keller (2000) categorizes rebranding according to the corporate hierarchy in the context of the different levels at which it occurs. Keller argues that rebranding can occur at any of the three levels of an organization, whether it be the corporate level, business unit level, or product level. Figure 4 illustrates the different levels at which rebranding can occur.

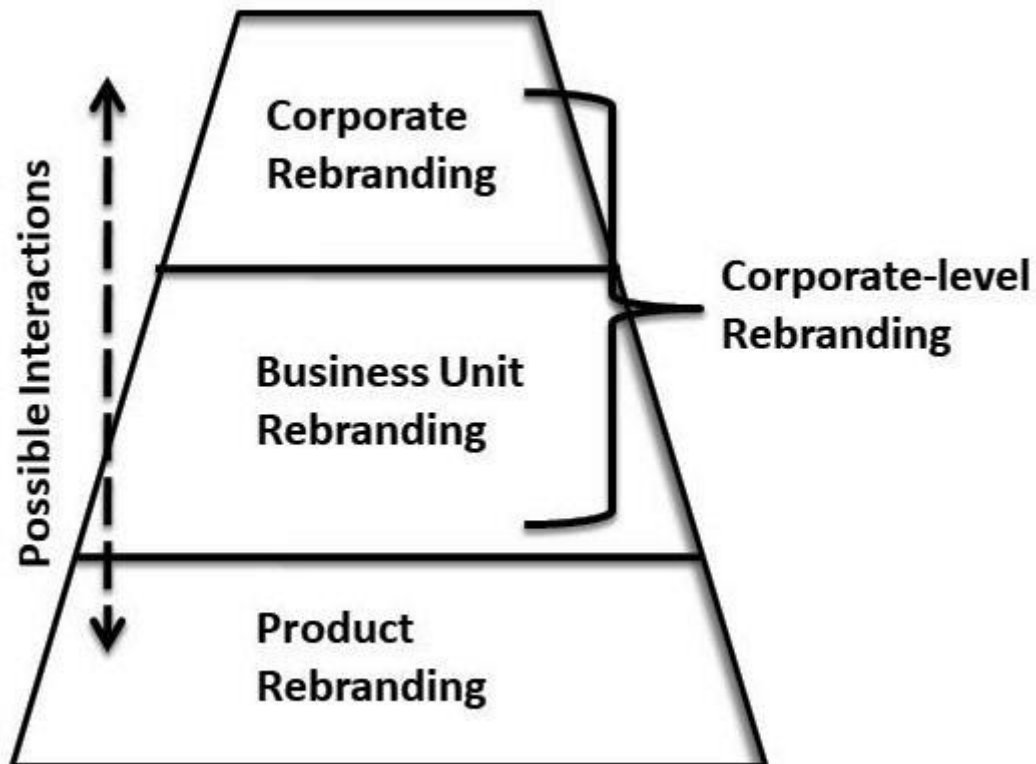


Figure 4: Levels of Rebranding (Keller, 2000)

Muzellec et al. (2003) cite Keller's model in their study, referring corporate rebranding as changes which affect the organization as a whole corporate body by the means of major change in strategies or by repositioning at a corporate level. They define business unit rebranding as rebranding at business unit level when subsidiaries of larger organizations are being given completely distinct brand identity as compared to their parent company. Product rebranding refers to changes undertaken at product level by changing the brand name of products separately especially in cases of branding globally.

2.7.2 Rebranding Process

The literature shows that the rebranding process includes participants from both sides of an organization – both the internal participants as well as the external participants (Juntunen, Saraniemi, & Jussila, 2009). Rebranding is also considered to be a holistic and multilevel activity in which several processes, perspectives, actions, and actors are involved. For a rebranding process to be successful, it is very important to establish a connection between marketing, human resources, and strategic aspects of an organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Often the rebranding

process is complex and time-consuming and involves different stakeholder groups like staff, customers, and branding agencies (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

Daly and Moloney (2004) propose a corporate rebranding framework based on their study with the management, staff, and customers of an organization which has rebranded itself. This framework was proposed with the aim to guide marketing managers to manage their rebranding process. The framework consists of three key steps: analysis, planning, and evaluation. The key elements of this framework are situation analysis, renaming strategy, communication and training strategies and lastly, the overall marketing plan (see Figure 5).

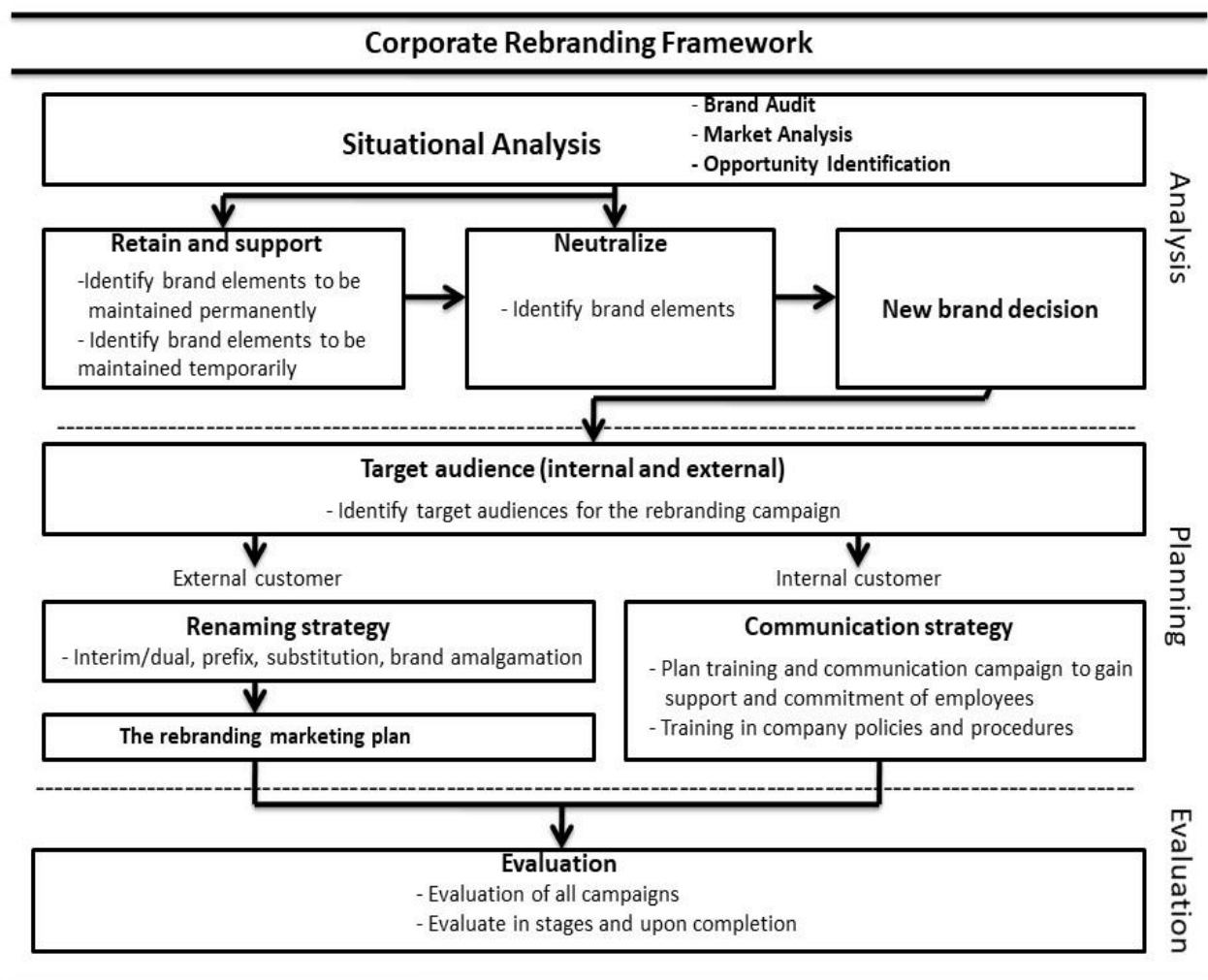


Figure 5: Corporate Rebranding Process (Daly & Moloney, 2004)

Stage One: Analysis

Analysis is the first step in the rebranding process. The new identity a brand wants to create should be based on thorough analysis. All the basic aspects of a marketing plan should be connected to or developed from a situational analysis or market analysis (Daly & Moloney, 2004). This kind of analysis should be focused on exploring both quantitative as well as qualitative issues, such as the current size of the market, customers' attitudes and preferences, and strengths and weaknesses of competitors. The analysis stage starts with an overall current market analysis which determines scope and potential of market, analysis of competitors' strengths and weaknesses, analysis with regards to preferences, and attitudes towards the brand (Daly & Moloney, 2004). This kind of analysis is very important for the rebranding process and should be conducted by the management internal to the organization where views of both management and staff should be taken into consideration.

At this stage, brand audit also plays a very important role. Brand audit helps the firm to get an overall perspective of brands which need to be rebranded and helps to compare the strength and weakness of the firm's brand with that of competitors (Daly & Moloney, 2004). So, the next step is to do a brand audit and, according to the brand audit, the decision for the new brand is made. This decision is taken after identifying all the brand elements and sorting out which brand elements need to be kept permanently and which brand elements need to be retained temporarily. Once a firm identifies these brand elements, the firm is now in clear position to decide which brand elements needs to be removed in the process of rebranding.

It would be very immature to think that an organization can just normally pick any of the elements of the old brand identity it wants to keep. Instead, it would be better if an organization focuses on identifying which elements it wants to associate with the new brand. These elements, which the organization identifies, can be then included into the marketing communications of the new brand.

In the analysis stage, one should try to gain information about perceptions, attitudes, fears and aspirations of the individual. A major change in organization like rebranding creates a certain level of uncertainty in the minds of employees regarding their future within the organization. This raises the question of whether the changes within the organization mean a threat to employees or that there will be increased chances of progression for them within the organization?

Stage Two: Planning

The next step in the framework is the planning stage. (Daly & Moloney, 2004) state the importance of both type of customers (internal and external customers) when communicating the new brand identity. This view of Daly and Moloney (2004) is also strongly emphasized by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) in their study on rebranding processes. They argue that rebranding processes should have a visible effect on both internal and external sides. Training the employees and managers of the organization is very important as both the employees and managers should be in line with the new brand and should not be resistant to the changes that are to be made in the organization post rebranding. The planning stage also involves changes made in the brand elements such as renaming, redesigning, restructuring and repositioning (Ahonen, 2008)

One of the aspects which seems interesting in the framework is that, re-naming strategy is grouped under external customers in the planning stage. The author somewhat disagrees with this as a renaming is very much relevant to both types of customers. If the organization wants its employees to be committed towards the brand, should the employees not be in line with the brand while planning the renaming strategies?

The planning stage ends with building the rebranding marketing plan based on analysis and different scenarios. This step involves determining which resources are available for the campaigns. It has been observed that many companies make customers aware of the rebranding well in advance to assure customers that the rebranding is being done to give more value to the customers and thereby avoiding any negative reactions from them, as well making customers familiar with the new brand. This is similar to the translucent warning strategy (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003).

Stage Three: Evaluation

Evaluation is the last stage of this framework. Though evaluation is the last stage of this model, still it should be done continuously throughout all stages of the rebranding process (Daly & Moloney, 2004). At the end of the rebranding process, a final evaluation should take place. This raises the question: when does a rebranding process end? It is possible to achieve a perfectly accurate evaluation only after few years have passed?

An interesting aspect of this framework is that the effects of rebranding on external stakeholders have been neglected. Rebranding not only affects the customers but it also affects the external

stakeholders. The authors do talk about external audiences, but they limit it to customers. They could have broadened the category by adding the external stakeholders into this framework.

Ahonen (2008) added one more stage to the framework by Daly and Moloney (2004), the implementation stage. The author places the implementation stage after the planning stage, and it refers to re-launching the new corporate brand as planned in the prior stage. Launching the brand involves launching first for internal stakeholders and then launching for the external stakeholders. Apart from the communications aspect, the planning stage also involves changes done in the brand elements such as renaming, redesigning, restructuring and repositioning (Ahonen, 2008). All the stages of the rebranding process are interconnected and do not necessarily follow each other in the same way as outlined in the model (Ahonen, 2008).

Communication towards both internal and external audiences in an interconnected way and not as two separate strategies as seen in the corporate rebranding framework (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). The aspect which was lacking in the framework by Daly and Moloney (2004) is in the model by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) as they included all the stakeholders in the external dimensions (see Figure 6).

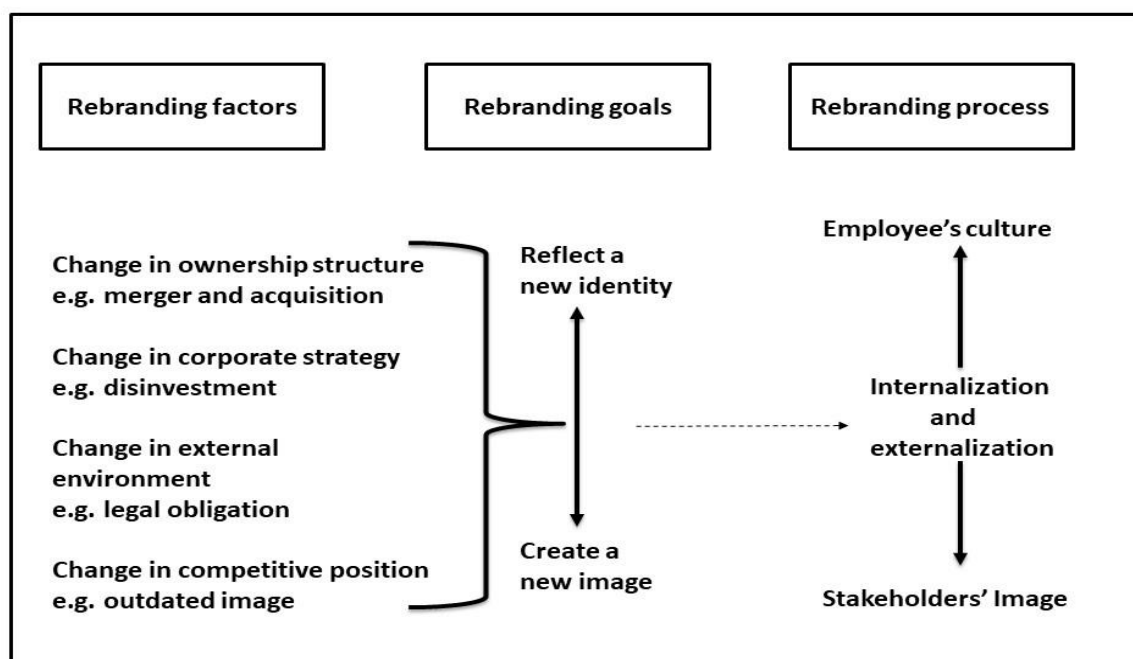


Figure 6: Rebranding Process (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006)

A major difference between these two models is that Daly and Moloney (2004) emphasize the first two stages – analysis and planning stages – whereas Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) include factors which lead to rebranding in their model. Discussion regarding rebranding factors in general was not observed in the framework by Daly and Moloney (2004).

2.7.3 Rebranding Strategies

A brand must continuously evolve to consistently maintain its desirability in the market. Daly and Moloney (2004) describe rebranding as a strategy consisting of similar tangible and intangible elements which are present in brands, with three levels of change involved in both tangible as well as intangible elements. These three changes are described as follows:

Minor changes: The first category of change is minor changes, which encompasses different aspects from simple face lifting to uplifting the brand's appearance and includes other aesthetics of brands as well which have become outdated or are in urgent need of change. Minor changes are more related to the re-vitalizing aspect of branding.

Intermediate changes: The second category is intermediate changes, which refers to use of different kinds of marketing and customer service tactics. Intermediate change helps the brand in creating a new, favorable brand image to attach to an existing brand name. Intermediate changes are related to the repositioning aspect of branding.

Complete change: The third category is complete changes, which refers to total change or complete makeover of brands. In complete change, the brand name of an organization is completely new, which the stakeholders are not aware of. Therefore, it is very important for an organization to clearly communicate the values of the new brand and create a favorable brand image by using various integrated marketing communication campaigns.

Kaikati and Kaikati (2003) propose six different kinds of strategies for corporate rebranding which are helpful in execution of rebranding campaigns. These strategies are referred as rebranding strategy for success and are mainly helpful for corporations who are looking to explore options with regards to rebranding strategies during the implementation of changeover. These strategies help to gain a better understanding of the various ways a rebranding campaign could be implemented (Goi & Goi, 2011). The six strategies are outlined in the following subchapters.

2.7.3.1 The Phase-in / Phase-out Strategy

In this strategy, the new brand is kept linked in some way with the existing brand, which is already established but needs rebranding. After some time, once the transition period is over, the old brand is eventually phased out. This strategy is implemented in several stages and it helps the new brand to take its time to get established and consumers also get time to get connected to the new brand.

2.7.3.2 Combined Branding Strategy

In a combined strategy, the new brand is tied to the existing brand. This strategy is more related to an umbrella branding strategy. In this strategy, the new brand is directly connected to the existing main brand. This existing brand acts as global brand or endorsee brand which endorses the new brand. This strategy helps the new brand to get well established quickly as it already enjoys the brand awareness created by the existing brand.

2.7.3.3 Translucent Warning Strategy

In a translucent warning strategy, the consumers are informed well before the brand name change is about to happen through various aggressive marketing and advertising campaigns. This strategy is more useful when there is only brand name change involved and other factors like packaging and the product are the same. Consumers are aware of the changes that are going to happen, so they are already prepared for it and they don't get confused when the actual changes are done to the brand. This strategy is more time consuming and more expensive.

2.7.3.4 Sudden Eradication Strategy

In a sudden eradication strategy, the existing brand name is changed overnight without any previous warnings or any previous information passed to the consumers. The changes are done to the existing brand name with a new brand name immediately and in this strategy, there is no transition period involved.

This kind of strategy is more suitable when the company wants to disassociate itself with one of its brand which is not doing that great in the market and thus company wants a complete brand image change for a product. Also, this kind of strategy is very risky and should be used very carefully as the message is forwarded to customers all of a sudden with no transition period involved.

2.7.3.5 Counter Takeover Rebranding

Counter takeover strategy is most relevant when mergers and acquisitions take place. In this strategy, the main brand, after acquiring another brand, abandons their own brand identity to adopt the brand identity of the acquired brand. This is mainly done when the acquired brand is well established and has a very good brand identity. This kind of strategy is somewhat risky though, although it may be very useful when the brand being acquired enjoys a reputation of being a reputable brand in the market.

2.7.3.6 Retro Branding

Retro branding strategy is more relevant when companies, after rebranding, realize that rebranding has not worked in favor of the brand and in such case, they reinstall the previous brand identity which was already there prior to rebranding (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003).

2.8 Summary of the Literature review

This chapter presents a short summary of literature review, on which this study's empirical parts are based upon. Despite the lack of literature on rebranding aspects, many companies are focusing on rebranding their respective brands to align with the current trends. This growth observed in number of companies opting for rebranding is mainly due to external factors such as mergers and acquisitions, globalization..

Rebranding can be done at three different levels within an organization namely at the corporate level, business unit level, and product level. There are various reasons why a company chooses to rebrand itself and there are various drivers within an organization which motivate the organization to rebrand (Muzellec et al., 2003). Brand image is often seen as one of the leading drivers which influence an organization to rebrand itself (Lomax & Mador, 2006; Muzellec et al., 2003; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). Issues with regards to current reputation of an organization are also seen as one of the reasons why an organization rebrands itself (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004).

The corporate rebranding framework is divided into three parts: analysis, planning, and evaluation (Daly & Moloney, 2004). Initially in the rebranding process, analysis needs to be done to form a base for making various decisions about the new brand. At this stage, an organization also needs to decide which brand elements need to be kept and which unfavorable brand elements need to be removed while undertaking the rebranding process.

The planning stage mainly focuses on building marketing plans with regards to the rebranding process. At this stage, planning regarding the introduction of new brand takes place and is executed accordingly. While planning, it is necessary to take into consideration both the internal and external customers. While making a marketing plan, it is also important to keep the internal staff and managers of the organization in line with the rebranding process. It is important to take into consideration views of all the stakeholders while planning the marketing communication (Daly & Moloney, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2003). The last and most crucial stage of the rebranding process is the evaluation of the rebranding process. Though it is the last stage of the process, evaluation should be done regularly throughout the whole process (Lomax & Mador, 2006).

Kaikati and Kaikati (2003) suggest six strategies which act as a guide for marketing managers in planning the rebranding campaigns. These strategies also help managers of an organization through the various ways a rebranding campaign can be implemented. In phase-in/phase-out strategy, the new brand is kept in line with the old brand and as the time passes the old brand is discarded. Combined branding strategy is more related to umbrella branding strategy, wherein the new brand is kept tied up with the old brand and they both operate together. In translucent warning strategy, customers are made aware well ahead of time about the changes that are being made to the brand, whereas it is the other way around in the case of sudden eradication strategy where customers are not informed in advance and the changes are communicated seemingly out of the blue. Translucent warning strategy helps the brand to create familiarity with the new brand whereas sudden eradication strategy is helpful for the organization to avoid the unwanted speculation that may arise from the rebranding activities which may be hazardous to the brand image.

As observed in literature review, it can be concluded that while external communication is very important for an organization while communicating the new brand, companies should pay equal importance to internal communication (Gotsi et al., 2008; Miller & Merrilees, 2013). They state that it is important to inform and train both internal and external customers about the changes that are planned for the organization. Internal staff and managers are an integral part of an organization and therefore they should form an integral part of rebranding process as well and taking their views into consideration is very important as they act as first touchpoint of interaction with the customers as well and thereby they represent the face of the organization.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, a detailed description of the research methodology used for the current dissertation is presented.

3.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters investigated the relevant literature on the topic of rebranding and its strategies. In this chapter, a detailed methodology utilized for the current study is presented. The dissertation uses a case study approach to investigate the research problem. The research strategy consists of a multiple holistic case study design strategy. It is very important to describe the overall methodology to provide an appropriate justification for the research paradigm and various research approaches used for the data collection. First, methodological aspects are discussed including the process used for conducting the research, choice of methodology selected, along with a justification for each of the above factors.

Subsequently, the data collection and research design methods are presented followed by the sampling method for selecting the cases for the current study. Two different sources of data have been used in the current study: semi-structured interviews and documents. The source for collection of primary data for the current study is semi-structured interviews, details of which will be described in the following subchapter. After discussing primary data, the secondary data sources will be described, followed by the description of processes and tools used for data analysis and data interpretation.

The chapter closes with a discussion on research quality for the current study in terms of different quality criteria.

3.2 The Research Process

The research process is often described as a scheme of activities, undertaken by researchers to develop knowledge and gain information (Malhotra, 2002). The exact number of stages in a research process often varies depending on the research, but some of the common trends observed in the literature include explaining the topic, formulating the problem, reviewing the literature, selecting a strategy, collecting the data, analyzing it, and, finally, writing it up in the form of a report.

For the current study, the author followed the seven-stage research process (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). The research process starts with formulating a problem and ends with generalization, which presents a new research problem. Therefore, this process is cyclical in nature as it tends to continue infinitely and is also self-correcting.

3.3 Research Paradigms

Paradigms are the ways of distilling the complexity of the world and to advise people what to do in a particular situation (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2002) . In general, research paradigms can be divided into two main categories: positivism and interpretivism. The positivist paradigm is objective in nature and strictly adheres to scientific methods. As compared to the positivist paradigm, the interpretivist paradigm is subjective in nature and is based around qualitative research (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

The positivist approach is more suitable for studies related to quantitative research methods as the researcher is completely independent from the study and has no direct influence at all over the results. On the other hand, an interpretivist approach is a technique where inter-relationships are investigated and researchers can have a great amount of influence while constructing the data and thereby is more suitable for studies related to qualitative research methods (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, & Locke, 2008; Weber, 2004).

In the current study, an interpretivist approach was adhered to by the researcher as it was more suitable considering the exploratory nature of the research questions. As discussed in the literature review chapter, not enough information is available on the topic of rebranding. The researcher wanted an in-depth understanding of the effects of rebranding strategies in a natural setting and as the researcher was looking for the totality of the situation, an interpretivist approach was more justified as compared to a positivist approach.

After discussing the paradigms, the next step is to justify the methodological procedures. As mentioned earlier, an interpretivist approach is best for qualitative studies, so qualitative research methodology was being used for the current research.

3.4 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is often described as a method which is more concerned with a person's behaviour and motives (Hakim, 2000). Qualitative research provides rich descriptive data of an individual's own belief, views, feelings in relation to different events and things experienced by him in a natural setting. Qualitative research is mainly used in this type of situation where the emphasis of the researcher is on describing or explaining the situation or events rather than predicting the situation or event.

Some of the assumptions of qualitative research are as follows:

- a) Qualitative research focuses mainly on processes rather than outcomes. The qualitative research process is inductive in nature through which researchers try to create hypotheses and theories from the details available.
- b) Qualitative research depends mainly on fieldwork as the researcher must physically go to places to examine and record the behavior.
- c) Qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding people's lives and their experiences and relating it to their behavior in natural settings. The qualitative researcher himself is the primary tool for collecting the data and interpreting it (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The chosen qualitative methodology for the current study is the case study method. The case study method was deemed appropriate to study the effects of rebranding strategies on different dimensions of brand equity and to describe the rebranding process of the chosen cases.

3.5 Case Studies

3.5.1 The Case Study Method

Case studies are considered one of the most flexible methods of all the research designs as they provide appropriate descriptive reports of one or more cases (Hakim, 2000). Case studies are also defined as the reporting of a situation in its natural setting which involves a difficulty or issue faced by an individual or in an organization (Kadushin, 2004).

The case study method is mainly used when the researcher wants to report different situations in the context of his study and in this way, it differs from other methodologies. Case study analyses also depends on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1994, 2003).

3.5.2 Case Study Design

In terms of classification of case study designs, there are various options available to researchers. The researcher can either select a single case study design or a multiple case study design, depending on the situation. Also, the researcher can select an embedded or a holistic design which reflects a unit or multiple units of interpretation within the context of the cases. These different types of case study designs are described below.

3.5.2.1 A Single Case

A single case study is like conducting a single experiment and many of the conditions that explain a single experiment may explain a single case as well (Yin, 2003). Single case studies often form the basis of research especially in critical cases (Hakim, 2000). Yin (2003) agrees with this statement and he further describes criteria to justify using a single case as follows:

- a) The single case study represents a critical case and is being used to challenge or develop an existing theory.
- b) The single case study should represent a unique situation and the occurrence of the event or situation should be so rare that it justifies the use of single case study.
- c) It should represent a revelatory case where the researcher gets an opportunity to study a situation which was inaccessible to other researchers previously.

3.5.2.2 Multiple Cases

Multiple case studies have a distinct advantage over single case study designs. Evidence from multiple case studies is considered to be more appropriate and the overall results of such studies are considered to be more reliable (Firestone & Herriott, 1983).

Single and multiple case studies are two different methodologies, however in a way, both the designs are variations within the same methodological framework. Multiple case studies always follow a replication logic and a decision to use multiple case studies should be made very carefully, and every case should serve a specific goal within the context of the study (Yin, 1994, 2003). Eisenhardt (1989) agrees with Yin, stating that multiple cases may be chosen to replicate previous situations or previous cases, or to encompass and extend some existing theories.

3.5.2.3 Holistic and Embedded

Yin (2003) adds another classification to case study designs: holistic or embedded case study designs. These are directly related to data analysis within the single case or multiple case studies.

Holistic and embedded case study designs can be of different types such as, single holistic case study design, single embedded case study design of 2 by 2 matrix, multiple holistic case study design, and multiple embedded case study design. Single holistic case study designs are those in which only one unit of analysis is being used in the study whereas single embedded case study designs are those in which more than one unit of data analysis is used. Similarly, multiple case study designs can also be holistic and embedded depending on the nature of the study and the research questions in the study.

In the current study, a multiple holistic case study design is being used as the current study examines multiple organizations' rebranding processes and observes the effects of rebranding on the dimensions of brand equity of those organizations. As the study uses a qualitative methodology, a multiple holistic case study design is more relevant compared to a multiple embedded case study design, which is mainly used for quantitative methodology analysis.

3.6 Research Design

Research designs are classified into three main categories by various researchers: descriptive, exploratory, and causal research designs (Aaker, 1991; Domegan, McHugh, Biroscak, Bryant, & Calis, 2017; Malhotra, 2002).

An exploratory research design is the most flexible research design out of all three and is mostly used for qualitative research methods. In an exploratory research design, the researcher is more interested in understanding the nature of the research problem in the study where the researcher has no control regarding the outcome of the study and objectives or goals of the research are not well defined at the beginning of the study (Gerring, 2004).

Descriptive research design is very useful to gain in-depth knowledge about particular situations with regards to individuals or organizations. Descriptive research designs mainly focus on the effect of interrelationships (Yin 2012). Causal research designs state that the nature of causal research is to go one step further than descriptive research; where descriptive research shows that two variables are related, causal research demonstrates that one variable actually determines the values of the other variables (Gerring, 2004).

Descriptive and causal research can also be combined under the heading of conclusive research (Malhotra, 2002). These three research designs are complementary to each other. Causal research

design is an extension of descriptive research design and often exploratory research design is used prior to descriptive work or causal work. They also explain the importance of selecting an appropriate research design, as selecting an inappropriate design would lead to errors in remaining parts of the study (Domegan et al., 2017).

A descriptive case study approach is being used in the current study. An inductive approach to qualitative research is being used in this study. The three cases selected for this study will represent in-depth examination and description of professional services, describing firms current branding practices and strategies adopted by them in real life situations and therefore the case study method is an appropriate method for this study as compared to other methods.

3.7 Research Questions

A research question forms the basis on which a study is to be conducted. It should be very specific and clear to ensure that the findings in the study are not ambiguous (Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 1987).

In the current study, the following research questions were investigated:

- 1) How are professional services firms using rebranding strategies to change their brand image?
- 2) What is the impact of chosen rebranding strategy on:
 - a) Brand loyalty;
 - b) Brand awareness;
 - c) Brand association; and
 - d) Brand equity?
- 3) What are the factors influencing the effectiveness of rebranding strategies?

In the next section, information on data collection from different sources is provided.

3.8 Data Collection

3.8.1 Sources of Data Collection

There are different sources through which data can be collected for the case study namely interviews, observation, documents, archival records, participant observation and physical artefacts (Iacono, Brown, & Holtham, 2009). Out of these sources, the researcher has used two for the current study: interviews and documents.

The primary data were collected using semi-structured interviews with the participants, consisting of professionals from professional service providing firms (see Table 1). Subsequently, secondary sources in the form of documents were used. Relevant information from the Internet, online forums such as rebrand.com, data from the companies' website and annual reports were utilized as a source of data.

It is always better to use multiple sources of data, especially in case studies. Using multiple sources for collecting evidence helps the researcher increase the validity of the study (Yin, 1994). One of the disadvantages of using multiple sources as evidence is that it takes a lot of time for the researcher to collect data, as they must collect different sets of data for each source. Another disadvantage of it is that the researcher needs to have adequate knowledge and techniques of collecting and analyzing data for each of the sources (Yin, 1989, 1994).

In the current study, it was not feasible to apply all the sources due to time constraints and therefore, the researcher decided to use two of the sources which was the most effective of all. The two sources selected were interviews and documents and these sources were selected based on the researcher's previous experience in conducting interviews for his professional work experience and during the studies.

Yin (2003) advises following three main guidelines while conducting case studies:

- a) During data collection, multiple sources of evidence should be used thereby creating a process of triangulation.
- b) An altogether different case study database should be created to organize and store the collected data so that evidence can be stored separately to the final report.
- c) A chain of evidence should be maintained in such a way that the research question, the data which has been collected, and the conclusions are interlinked to each other.

In the current study, all these guidelines have been followed. Multiple sources of evidence have been collected to create a process of triangulation. A computerized database was created wherein all the collected evidence such as transcripts and other online documentary evidence were kept separate to the final reports. A proper chain of evidence was created, and everything is interlinked, from the research questions to the conclusions.

In the next subchapter, the sources used for data collection are presented. First, sources for primary data collection are described followed by the sources for secondary data collection.

3.8.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are an important source of data collection, especially in case studies. Mostly open ended is preferred for case studies as compared to closed surveys (Yin, 2003). In the current study, a semi-structured interview approach was used as a research method.

Semi-structured interviews mainly consist of various topics and themes which the researcher has already predetermined and wishes to include in the interviews for the study (Patton, 2002). These topics are included in an interview guide so that the researcher can make sure that all the relevant topics and themes have been appropriately covered. A copy of the interview guide used in this research is being provided in Appendix B.

However, the researcher is free to keep the discussion flexible while conducting the interviews so as to gain in-depth information (Patton, 2002). When conducting multiple interviews, the researcher should be aware of the institutional context and should frame the interview questions accordingly (Saunders & Lewis, 2009). In the current research, semi-structured interviews were conducted in form of both personal face to face interviews and online asynchronous interview as described below.

3.8.2.1 Face-to-face synchronous interview

Face-to-face synchronous interview is one the method for data collection wherein the interviewer establishes a direct communication with the interviewee in accordance with the interview guide (Newman et al., 2002). In face-to-face interview, the interviewee and the interviewer directly communicate with each other, thereby no time delay is observed between questioning and answering the questions and spontaneous answers are obtained by the interviewer. Another major advantage of face-to-face interview is that the interviewer can obtain a lot of information from interviewee's social cues such as the interviewee's body language and tone of voice (Stephan, 2010).

3.8.2.2 Online asynchronous interview

Online Asynchronous interviewing as a type of in-depth interviewing which is conducted with the help of emails and is semi-structured in nature (Schneider, Kerwin, Frechtling, & Vivari, 2002).

Asynchronous interviews are conducted in non-real time and the overall setting up is also easy with that compared to that of synchronous interviews (James & Busher, 2009). In Asynchronous interviews, exchange of multiple emails is undertaken and is time consuming. Asynchronous online interviews help to ease the access towards a candidate as everything is conducted online or via internet. This is especially useful when it is difficult to meet a potential candidate for interviews due to geographical distance or when a potential candidate is a prominent personality and it is difficult to meet in person (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Some of the other advantages of asynchronous online interviews are as follows:

- a) It becomes very easy for interviewees to reply at their own ease as and when they get time to reply as per their own convenience.
- b) Overall costs are reduced, especially the transportation costs as no physical travelling is required.
- c) Respondents get appropriate time to think and reply and therefore in such cases, accuracy is greater. Also, it is helpful for researcher as the researchers get proper time to evaluate data collected and eventually prepare follow up questions (Opdenakker, 2006; Ratislavová & Ratislav, 2014).

In the context of the current study, the interview questions were kept highly flexible during the interviews. In accordance with the background of the informant, the interview questions were tailored so that they suited each informant accordingly. The interview guide was focused to cover the main topics and themes (see Appendix B) and this approach was best suitable for the research, as the researcher could get detailed in-depth information for the study using this approach.

In the next section, detailed information about collection of data from primary and secondary sources will be presented.

3.8.3 Procedure

The researcher carried out an informal meeting with the respondents prior to conducting the final interviews to create an appropriate rapport with the informant and make them feel comfortable prior to conducting the final interview. This also helped the researcher to get a brief idea about organizations rebranding practices and accordingly it also helped the researcher to prepare the interview guide prior to conducting the interviews.

The main aim of the researcher here was mainly to understand the organization's practices in terms of rebranding so that it would help in forming the interview guide and prior to conducting formal interviews, it was necessary to build a rapport with the informant to prepare the informant mentally for the formal interviews. This was very helpful for the researcher to properly reframe the interview questions in context of the study as well as in context to organizational practices as well.

The semi-structured interviews in form of face to face interviews and an email interview were conducted with the concerned authorities (see Table 1). Prior to conducting the formal interviews, the interviewees were provided with a participation information sheet (see Appendix C) and they were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix D).

Company Name	Job Title of Participant	Date of Interview	Interview Mode
K3 Corporation	Marketing Manager	10/1/2018	Face-to-face
Spark New Zealand	Communications Advisor	25/01/2018	Email
Russell McVeagh	Director of Business and Marketing	16/01/2018	Face-to-face

Table 1: Participants details

The interview guide acted as a base for the formal interviews (see Appendix B). Throughout the interview process, the researcher used the same interview guide with very less alterations made so that a similar logical structure was followed throughout and to keep it aligned to the research aim in context of the study which would also help in analyzing the data collected and thereby forming conclusions through it. The formal interviews consisted of eight questions and was conducted in two stages. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher himself, after taking necessary approvals from the informants to record it, and accordingly used for data analysis. After analyzing the data from the initial interviews, detailed feedback was given

to the informant with regard to what more information was required which was seemed lacking during the first round of interview, and accordingly a second round of interviews was conducted with Russell McVeagh and K3 Corporation.

While conducting the interview, it is very important to consider a location which is convenient to informants and also location should be such that the informant is comfortable to respond (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). In the context of the current study, the face-to-face interviews were conducted at the offices of informants, which was again suggested by themselves. Also, the date and time of the interviews were decided as per the convenience and suitability of the informants.

The research was approved by the AUTECH (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee) on 25th September 2017 with AUTECH reference number 17/313 (see Appendix A).

In the next section, the method of sampling the interviewee is being presented.

3.9 Sampling

In this section the methods used for sampling the interviewees is being described. Using purposive sampling technique, three cases were selected.

Participating cases were selected using a purposeful sampling approach, and a critical case sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study illuminates the questions under study. Studying information-rich cases yields insight and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002). Critical cases are those cases that can make a point quite dramatically or are, for some reason, particularly important in the scheme of the things (Patton, 2002). As the study is focused on rebranding in professional services, three case studies are considered, consisting of professional services firms in Auckland that have each rebranded in the last five years (see Table 1).

Using a snowball technique, the researcher personally recruited each case using personal networks and then moving on to the other persons as referred by the members of personal network. After identifying the potential participants, the first contact was initiated via phone to seek their approvals to send the participation information sheet (see Appendix C) so they could get a brief idea about the research. The potential participants were given three days to consider the invitation

and after three days, the consent sheet (see Appendix D) was given to them after getting their approvals to be part of this research project.

The cases were selected based on three criteria as follows:

Firstly, the main criteria for selecting the cases were that the cases should be professional services providing, based in Auckland, that have rebranded themselves within five years' time frame. As explained in the literature review chapter, professional services firms were selected as there was lack of literature available on rebranding of professional service firms. The time frame of five years was considered to enhance the validity and reliability of data by making it relevant to current trends.

Secondly, either the participants themselves should have been involved in the rebranding process or currently they should be handling relevant portfolio to answer the research questions. In Case One (K3 Corporation) and Case Three (Russell McVeagh), the interviewees were directly involved in the rebranding process and had led the whole process whereas in Case Two (Spark New Zealand), the interviewee was indirectly involved in the rebranding process as she handled the Communication Advisor portfolio post rebranding.

Thirdly, the participant's roles and duties in the organization was taken into consideration to get a broad view about their role in the rebranding process and their understanding about how the rebranding had affected the organization (see Table 1).

All the collected data was analyzed as presented in the next section.

3.10 Data analysis

This section will outline the data analysis method used in the study. Data collected through semi-structured interviews and secondary sources were analyzed using the qualitative approach of thematic analysis. Prior to data analysis, all the interviews were transcribed, and these transcripts were then imported into NVivo software through which common themes were created. All the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher himself (see Appendix E). The outline of the data analysis methods described below is applicable to all the three cases.

3.10.1 Justification for using thematic analysis

The researcher conducted thematic analysis of the interview transcripts with the interview guide using NVivo software. Thematic analysis helped to identify themes in the data which in-turn helped to answer the research question. The process of thematic analysis starts with coding the collected data in accordance to their content and meaning and then these codes are clustered into major themes or categories which represent a higher level of abstraction of data (Bell & Bryman, 2007).

Due to the investigatory nature of the study, thematic analysis was considered as an optimum technique for data analysis in context of the study as thematic analysis helps the researcher to investigate and understand the interviewee's perceptions and opinions.

3.10.2 Data analysis procedure

Data analysis and interpretation are two distinct processes. Data analysis is more related to organizing the collected data into different groups or categories whereas data interpretation is more related to interpreting the meaning of the data collected and also, looking for relationships in that data (Patton, 1990). There is no right or wrong way in conducting the data analysis and interpretation in qualitative research methods. The researcher should be in comfortable environment and be open minded to all the possibilities and also, the researcher should try to find alternative explanations for the findings as well (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The researcher followed the guide of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The authors suggest six steps: Familiarizing with the collected data, creating codes, identifying common themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming those themes and lastly based on the above steps, producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The above guide served as a base for the data analysis in context of the current study. Based on this guide, thematic analysis was conducted separately for each case using NVivo software. The researcher decided to use NVivo software as he was familiar with the software and he felt the software to be convenient in coding the data from the transcripts. Three NVivo files were created and thematic analysis was conducted in six phases. Table Two provides an overview of each phase.

The detailed description of all the phases are as below:

The first phase consisted of reading the interview transcripts thoroughly to get familiarized with the data. After thoroughly reading the transcripts and getting familiarized, the data was manually coded to understand the data which also facilitated coding into the NVivo software. So, the second phase of the thematic analysis was to code the interview transcripts.

After coding the transcripts, the next step was to ensure that the codes were aligned to the research questions. So, the initial codes were cross checked, and it was made sure that the codes were aligned to the research questions. Codes were reconsidered and re-coded wherever it seemed necessary and accordingly NVivo files were updated.

The next phase was to identify the common themes from the codes obtained (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process of identifying themes was done manually by using cards. Codes were written down on cards and compared against each other to identify common themes and NVivo files were updated accordingly.

The next step was to review the identified themes. The updated NVivo files were printed out and all the codes and themes were reviewed thoroughly, and it was made sure in this step that all the identified codes and themes were aligned to the research question and inter-relations between the relevant themes were established and named accordingly.

The last phase was to write the final report based on the emergent themes which also constitutes the Chapter four of this report.

Phases	Procedure
Phase 1	Reading all the transcripts thoroughly
Phase 2	Coding with NVivo
Phase 3	Cross-checking the codes and re-coding wherever necessary
Phase 4	Identifying the emergent themes
Phase 5	Recoding of themes wherever necessary
Phase 6	Writing the report

Table 2: Phases in data analysis

The next section outlines the evaluation of research quality which took place through lens of different quality criteria as described in the next section.

3.11 Research Quality

In order to evaluate the overall quality of a case study conducted for research work, Yin (2003) advises four criteria: construct validity; external validity; internal validity; and reliability. The researcher will discuss these quality criteria collectively as they have some overlapping characteristics and he also views them all to be applicable for the dissertation's quality assessment.

Construct validity states that the researcher should adopt a correct set of procedures to analyze the case study, which can also be considered very challenging in terms of qualitative research. To ensure construct validity, Yin (2003b) recommends using multiple sources of evidence for data collection, creating a chain of evidence and giving the participants of the case study an opportunity to review the case study report once prior to finalizing the content. Construct validity is similar to the credibility aspect, which states that the researcher fully comprehends the accounts of participants (Bell & Bryman, 2007).

In the current study, multiple sources of data collection have been used for data collection by the means of semi-structured interviews and documentations. Using the multiple sources helped the researcher to triangulate the data, thereby also helped to increase the credibility aspect of the data collected. A chain of evidence has been created by linking the different sections of the study together. Data collection was guided by using theoretical frameworks, proper evidence was provided for the results and conclusions were presented based on findings from the case studies. External validity is a common issue in case studies and therefore the researcher should try to generalize the results of the study to the broader theory that will also apply to future research as well (Yin, 2003). Qualitative methods of research often concentrate on developing theories, which can also be re-tested in the future and can be refined using other cases (Evert, 2003).

In the current study, existing literature guided the study to develop new information in the domain of rebranding and its effect on brand equity, including the different dimensions of brand equity with the aim of articulating implications and conclusions that can be re-tested in future research. Using theoretical frameworks in the data analysis and conducting a thorough literature review as

seen in Chapter Two of the current study helped the researcher to enhance the generalizability of the study.

Internal validity is one of the most important factors in measuring the quality of explanatory case studies, especially while making causal statements (Yin, 2003). As the current study was descriptive in nature and not explanatory, the internal validity aspect is not relevant.

In case studies, reliability is a very important quality criterion for checking the quality of the research work conducted. Reliability in this context means that if a similar study is conducted in the future by some other researcher, following similar procedures, the results and conclusions should be more or less similar to the current work (Evert, 2002).

The reliability criterion was fulfilled by describing all the research procedures clearly and transparently to the best of the researcher's ability. Also, all the documentary evidence, including the interview transcripts and the audio recordings of the interview, have been preserved so that researchers can evaluate it in the future.

In this chapter, a thorough discussion was provided of the methodology conducted in the study. In the next chapter, results from the empirical part of the study will be presented.

Chapter Four: Empirical Findings

In Chapter Three, a detailed presentation of the methodology applied in this research was given. In this chapter, the significant findings of the primary and secondary data collected will be presented. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings in a systematic way and relate these findings to the research questions.

The empirical data and findings of the research are presented for each case separately. The three cases represent a combined branding strategy, a translucent warning strategy, and a sudden eradication strategy.

Firstly, the background of the cases will be presented, followed by a description of the rebranding process adopted by each firm. Analysis of the rebranding process will be based on three main stages: analysis, planning, and evaluation of the corporate rebranding framework (Daly & Moloney, 2004).

Secondly, a cross-case analysis is presented based on each of the research questions, starting from describing how professional service firms are changing their brand images, to studying the effect of rebranding strategies on brand equity, its dimensions and lastly identifying factors influencing the effectiveness of rebranding strategies adopted.

4.1 Case One: Combined Branding Strategy – K3 Corporation

In this section, Case One (K3 Corporation) is analyzed. First, the interviewee's profile is described, followed by a brief description of the background of the case. Later, important insights into the overall rebranding process adopted by K3 Corporation will be described using the corporate rebranding framework described by Daly and Moloney (2004). This will help in answering the research questions.

4.1.1 Interviewee's Profile

Peter A* is the marketing manager for K3 Corporation and joined the firm the previous year when the firm was planning to rebrand. Peter is a marketing professional with an extensive background in strategic marketing and has worked with many well-known companies within New Zealand to

help them grow their brands. Peter specializes in growing brands through the use of strategic analysis, planning, and creating innovative campaigns for businesses.

Having a strong track record of improving overall customer service experiences by connecting businesses with their firms, Peter joined the K3 Corporation a year before with the sole intention of rebranding the K3 brand, including all three areas of the company.

4.1.2 Case Background

Incorporated on 1st February 2017, K3 Corporation was formed with the intention of harnessing business consulting, accounting, and legal expertise under one roof. The vision of K3 is to combine all three businesses (legal, accounting, and consulting firms) together under one roof to thereby create a powerful mix of professionals providing the best services so that their clients get the advantages of all the three approaches.

Initially working as a law firm for more than 10 years under the name Kirkland Morrison O’Callahan, the directors of the firm decided to expand the law firm and adding two more verticals, namely accounting and management consulting. The directors of the firm felt professionals, like accountants, have encroached on different work-areas such as incorporation of firms, structures, tax structures and disputes, stakeholder agreements and disputes, etc. which previously used to be the sole domain of lawyers. Through their own experiences, they saw how lawyers have to deal with an accounting firm and take their input for some of their cases (Kirkland, 2017).

They therefore came up with an idea of expanding into different verticals of business, namely accounting and management consulting. This meant the law firm Kirkland Morrison O’Callahan needed a new brand as they wanted to change the brand identity of the old firm to facilitate the expansion of their firm which now included all three service companies.

This idea of combining the professional services is not a new concept. The directors had observed this practice overseas and they found this idea to be very popular with clients for two main reasons. First, it is very convenient to the clients and second, it helps to reduce the communication gap between clients and the service provider, improving communication. Also, in the context of the New Zealand business environment, the directors were aware of changing trends. The directors got an idea from following the footsteps of bigger firms like Deloitte and Kensington Swan, who

were delivering one stop shop services to their clients. So, in line with current trends and to create a new point of difference for their clients, Kirkland Morrison O’Callahan decided to go for rebranding. This was one of the main drivers for the rebranding of Kirkland Morrison O’Callahan to K3. As Peter says:

“They basically kind of had a look around, the business landscape in New Zealand anyway and saw what people were doing and basically the need for, I guess efficiency and the people were looking for kind of one stop shop and a new model. And we had couple of examples around so, they looked companies like Kensington Swan and Deloitte and some of those bigger ones who had come from more of accounting background and formed basically a one stop shop for businesses. So, Business, Accounting and Consulting (MC) and Law all in one place.”

Additionally, the firm had initially gone through several incarnations of their brand name, which caused a sense of confusion amongst clients and leading to a bad reputation in the market. Therefore, they wanted to start a totally new venture with a new and simple brand name, free from the complications of the previous brand identity. The directors were now focusing on creating an iconic contemporary brand identity which was appropriate for both New Zealand as well as Chinese markets. The new K3 brand was formed under which three different sub-brands would operate:

K3 Legal

Previously known as Kirkland Morrison O’Callahan, the brand name was transformed to “K3 Legal Limited” led by five directors: Mark Kirkland, Edwin Morrison, Brent O’Callahan, Margaret Chen, and James Nolen.

K3 Accounting Limited

Another sub-brand was created under the banner of K3 to handle the accounting aspects: “K3 Accounting Limited,” led by Richard Matson.

K3 Consulting Limited

“K3 Consulting Limited” was another vertical of the business which was created to look after management consulting aspects, led by Greg Radford, Marcus Morrison, and Ken Brophy (“K3 – Consulting, Accounting & Legal – When three mighty parts make a whole, the results are explosive,” n.d.).

4.1.3 Rebranding Process

In this section, the rebranding process adopted by the K3 Corporation is presented in three stages following the corporate rebranding framework presented by Daly and Moloney (2004). Initially all the participants in the rebranding process are described, followed by a presentation of the overall rebranding process of the K3 Corporation. The purpose of this section is to understand how the rebranding was undertaken and what strategies were considered for rebranding.

4.1.3.1 Participants in the Rebranding Process

The main participants who were involved in the rebranding process for the K3 Corporation was the marketing manager (Peter), all the directors of the firm and Principals (Branding Agency). Peter explains that he was hired as the Marketing Manager of the firm to assist the rebranding and launch of the new K3 brand. As said by Peter:

“Yea sure! I'm a Marketing Manager for the business. I joined them a year ago, basically with the purpose of re branding this business. So, we started off; the whole business actually started off as a law firm, probably a mid-size law firm who is been operating for around 10 years.”

As a marketing manager, Peter faced challenges while rebranding the firm, especially in terms of the costs involved and justifying those costs to the directors. However, as the directors were commercial minded, they understood that though there is some amount of risk involved, they had no other option. This step was very important for them to grow and align with the current trends in the New Zealand business environment.

In addition to the directors and the marketing manager, another entity which was involved in the rebranding process was the branding agency, “Principals.” The whole rebranding process was monitored by the principals. Started in 1995, Principals is one of the leading branding agency with

a team of more than 35 branding professionals which has a great passion for delivering compelling brand experiences ("Principals Branding Ltd: Marketing Association," 2018)

“So, we engaged a few branding agencies around and came out with principals to do the job and yeah kind of went from there it terms of giving the brand kind of up and running.”

4.1.3.2 Steps in the Rebranding Process

(a) Analysis

At the start of rebranding process, as shared by Peter, the initial step was to analyze the whole situation. They initially figured out what direction they should take, and they followed current trends that their competitors were adopting. They observed what their competitors, including Deloitte and PWC, were doing and what strategies were they adopting to gain sustainable competitive advantage in the current business environment. Also, in this analysis stage, views of staff members were taken into consideration which provided significant inputs. After the initial analysis of the overall business landscape in New Zealand, they came up with a conclusion that customers were more interested in one stop shop solutions instead of going to different service providers, and based on this analysis, the idea of including all three services under one brand was conceived.

“They basically kind of had a look around, the business landscape in New Zealand anyway and saw what people were doing and basically the need for, I guess the efficiency and the people were looking for kind of one stop shop and a new model. And we had couple of examples around so, they looked companies like PWC and Deloitte and some of those bigger ones who had come from more of accounting background and formed basically a one stop shop for businesses.”

After the initial analysis and significant inputs, the next step was to start planning the rebranding process. Through the analysis of the business environment, the decision to include all three services under one brand was made. Peter emphasized the importance of taking into consideration the views and ideas of internal staff, especially at the planning and implementation stage. The vision of the new brand was a business of an immense scale and experience that could provide all kinds of services in a consistent manner while also being cost effective and efficient for the client.

“That was the vision, basically was to.... to become a business of scale and experience, that can offer all services, consistent, cost effective, efficient. To be able to basically serve clients or businesses. I suppose to just operate in one consultant and serve.”

(b) Planning and Implementation

In the planning and implementation stage, the first step they took was to sell the vision of the new brand to the internal staff. Peter stressed the importance of involving the internal staff from the beginning of the rebranding process. The internal staff was informed of the changes which were about to take place. It was very important to take into consideration the point of view of staff so, prior to planning the strategies for rebranding, they conducted internal staff surveys to get a better understanding how the staff felt about the brand and their services and allow staff to give their opinions on the rebranding of the firm.

“And, we conducted staff surveys. You know, we did a survey around how staff feels, how they assume the brand, the company, the partner, their services. How they think we have served in the market. What they would like to see in the new brand, new company. We gave them the opportunity to basically to say what do you think? We want your opinions and thoughts into the rebranding as it comes through. I think It was very well appreciated”

This is a very important aspect, as staff acts as the first point of contact for clients. It is therefore very important to educate the staff and make them feel positive about the changes that are going to be undertaken by the management. Staff may be resistant to change, and it can create confusion in their minds, so it is very important to communicate the changes appropriately and to do so very positively to motivate them and make them feel positive about the changes happening.

After educating the staff, the next step was to start planning the strategies. In the context of their own business model, they looked at different business models undertaken by the competitors and decided to unite the three businesses under one roof using “Combined branding strategy” (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003). Using combined branding strategy was seemed more appropriate in the case of K3- Corporation, as they wanted to provide one stop solution for their client needs. Using this

strategy three different brands were created which would operate under the “K3 Corporation”: K3 Legal, K3 Accounting, and K3 Consulting.

“So that's you know, strategy was to come up with a way of uniting these three businesses and we chose to basically the model of coming up with umbrella brand and creating thus with three sub brands K3 legal, K3 accounting, K3 consulting under the full K3 umbrella. So that was a strategy to start with how we can create a brand such that three-separate business can basically come under... under one united front.”

The brand name “K3” was decided, drawing inspiration from the K2 Mountain, with the three nods related to the three companies under the K3 brand and the “K” a nod to their director, Mark Kirkland. They planned two different versions of their logo with the tagline “Harness the Power of Three.” The New Zealand arm of the business has a logo with three vertical stripes, and the Chinese arm of the business has three horizontal stripes, representing the number three in Chinese. The color “red” was chosen due to its association with energy and warmth, as well as its relation to good luck in Chinese culture (see Figure 7). Thus, taking into consideration all the above factors, a new brand name with a completely new brand identity was created (“New Brand of Professional Services Firm Hits Town,” n.d.).



Figure 7: K3 Corporation Logo (“K3 – Consulting, Accounting & Legal – When three mighty parts make a whole, the results are explosive.,” n.d.)

Under the new brand name, K3 also planned for a complete makeover of their office, both internally and externally. The office layout, its website and all other marketing elements including business cards, letterhead, branded word documents, and all other official documents were updated under the new brand. Prior to officially launching the brand, a small celebration was arranged for the internal staff where they were given a brief idea about the process the firm had gone through and what the firm would look like in future. Videos and other visuals were used to

explain how the brand would be in the future to get their buy-in prior to the launch of the new brand. Also, a launch party was organized to educate the customers about the rebranding. Prior to the launch party, external stakeholders were not aware of the changes being made to the brand and using the translucent warning strategy all the customers were now made aware of the changes. All media persons were invited along with the existing client base of the Kirkland Morrison O'Callahan Law Firm. The keynote speaker invited for the launch was former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir John Key ("Sir John Key discusses life after politics and a cashless future at k3 launch [Blog post]," n.d.). These factors created a huge buzz in the business environment and allowed for a successful launch of the new K3 brand.

"I think, I think launching was one big thing, partly because it was an advantage for us, because we launched with this new model which is not known of, it created a lot of excitement and curiosity."

"Launching in one big thing, it was more news worthy, we had a lot more media kind of PR pickup because of it, we had a lot more excitement around it."



Figure 8: John Key at K3 launch party K3. (n.d.).

This concluded the planning and implementation stage of the rebranding process. The next stage was evaluating the whole rebranding process, which is described below.

(c) Evaluation

Evaluation is important, not only at the end of the rebranding process, but also continuously at all the stages of the rebranding process (Daly & Moloney, 2004). In K3's case, evaluation was evident from the beginning of the rebranding process. The empirical findings show that K3 was very much interested in evaluating the strategies through the process and decisions were made at all stages after a thorough evaluation and analysis.

Peter states that, in the case of K3's rebranding process, evaluation was done from the start of the process. As explained in the analysis section, prior to start of rebranding process, different points of view of the staff were taken into consideration and different strategies were formed accordingly. Prior to the start of the rebranding process, they also evaluated all the business models that their competitors were operating under and used this to inform their own business model.

"We conducted staff surveys. You know we did a survey around how staff feels, how they assume the brand the company the partner, their services. How they think we have served in the market. What they would like to see in the new brand, new company. We gave them the opportunity to basically to say them what do you think we want your opinions and thoughts into the rebranding as it comes through. I think It was very well appreciated."

Even throughout the planning stage, continuous evaluation of the strategies to be considered were done and staff feedback was taken prior to the launch of the brand. Post-rebranding, feedback was taken from customers through customer surveys and K3 is continuously monitoring their strategies and the effects of rebranding. According to Peter, their client base has seen some drastic improvements and they have received excellent feedback from both the existing client base, as well as internal staff.

"And I think from the customers perspective, I think sometime the association is being from colleague's neutral feedback whole way through is that we are a lot more professional, there are lot you know repeat business is increased and

because of that the loyalty is increased and the word of mouth increased because of that and it worked for us.”

This rebranding effort was a great success for the new K3 brand and has created a brand identity in-line with the initial goals identified during the start of rebranding process. Further, they plan to continuously evaluate the process by the means of continuous customer and staff feedback and plan to keep the brand in line with the current trends in the market.

“I think people have been really kind of positive about what we have done, the feedback we have received, they are loving the look and feel of it, they are loving the consistency. For us it’s been really good to. We have noticed we got good business through referrals, through word of mouth, through you know just a general brand.”

4.1.4 Answering the research questions

In this section, answers to the research questions will be presented based on the emergent themes. Firstly, how this professional service firm used rebranding strategies to change their brand image will be described followed by describing the effects on brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and brand equity. After describing the impact of rebranding strategies on brand equity and its dimensions, findings in context to what were the influential factors to make those rebranding strategies effective will be presented.

4.1.4.1 Effect on Brand Image

As discussed earlier, a firm’s brand image refers to the way a brand is perceived by the customers and also includes a set of beliefs which a customer has about the brand (Nandan, 2005).

The new brand name, “K3,” seems to be well thought of, after taking into consideration all the important factors and other elements such as logo, tagline and the color used to resemble the brand. These elements justify the brand image created through the rebranding process. One of the reasons why they successfully created a positive and effective brand image was the appropriate use of combined branding strategies (Kaikati, 2003).

Appropriate competitor analysis was done, and this helped them to be clear from the beginning about the strategies needed to be adopted to create the new business model. Combined branding

strategy was suitable in this case, taking into consideration the aim of the business, which was to provide a one stop shop solution for clients. After undertaking the necessary competitor analysis, they rightly decided to keep all three businesses under one roof using umbrella branding strategy. This also helped them to overcome the bad reputation which was associated with the old brand image. The new brand image presented them as a commercial minded entrepreneurial business with broad minded thinking which strives to serve every need of their clients.

“We talked about kind of entrepreneurial intelligence, like a big part of brand backbone and that’s we are a commercially minded entrepreneurial business, who thinks larger basically. So, it’s a professional commercially minded, new world business basically.”

Their tagline “Harness the Power of Three” also builds confidence in the brand, associating it with being three times stronger and better than what it was previously (see Figure 9). This creates a strong and effective brand image in the minds of the customers.

“When we talk about power of three, that’s the way we convey the messages and the fact that the power of three is obviously a lot better than power of one and it’s you know, three times stronger and that’s, that’s what we deliver. So, I think that’s probably the brand image that we are trying to build.”



Figure 9: K3 tagline: Harness the power of 3 (“K3 – Consulting, Accounting & Legal – When three mighty parts make a whole, the results are explosive.” n.d.)

From the empirical study, it can be concluded that K3 used the combined branding strategy to change the old brand image, which had earned a bad reputation in the market, to the new image created which was very well accepted by the customers. They were successful in getting positive word of mouth from customers and gained a good number of referrals from their existing client base. The new brand was very well received by the clients and by the internal staff post-rebranding.

Using combined branding strategy was quite challenging for them as they had to go for a complete make-over, but they still managed to implement it quite well. The new brand image of K3 successfully gained the trust of their clients in terms of reliability and quality of services provided by them.

4.1.4.2 Effect on Brand Loyalty

In the case of K3's rebranding, Peter described brand loyalty as the most affected aspect out of all the other aspects. Post rebranding, brand loyalty has increased tremendously. Increased marketing and advertising efforts have seen clients coming back again and again, showing their brand loyalty. Also, the business has seen tremendous growth in their client base through word of mouth, publicity, and referrals.

"I think just that, through building the brand with increased message communication, we have lot more ongoing communication, maybe we are saying a lot more and that's how we get people back. They might have used a single service in the past, may be with the law, but now seeing us with a lot more critical communication, they come to us for some work and then probably coming back more."

Using combined branding strategy helped to gain the trust of people and after delivering excellent services, K3 managed to convert them into brand loyal customers. Leveraging across the businesses and various PR activities are a few of the other factors which helped K3 to convert their clients into brand loyal clients.

4.1.4.3 Effect on Brand Awareness

One thing which worked in favor of the firm was they had planned for a complete rebrand. Being a new brand, they got full flexibility to decide the message that needed to be communicated to the

target audiences. Combined branding strategy was very beneficial for them to create brand awareness of the K3 brand. They didn't have to deal with creating separate brand awareness for each brand separately.

Also, using sudden eradication strategy has worked for them. The launch of the new brand was one of the most influential things for creating awareness of the new brand. Lots of excitement and curiosity was created during the launch phase. Also, sudden eradication strategy meant launching all together at one time, which helped them to gain attention from all over. Because of all the excitement, buzz, and media, there was a good amount of exposure for the new brand and which helped to create a significant amount of brand awareness for the new brand during the initial launch period. Post-launch they are continuing the marketing and PR campaigns to maintain awareness amongst the target group.

"I think, I think launching was one big thing, partly because it was an advantage for us because we launched with this new model which is not known of, it created a lot of excitement and curiosity. Launching in one big thing, basically need that we had again it was more news worthy, we had a lot more media kind of PR pickup because of it, we had a lot more excitement around it"

Because of the strategies used to rebrand, namely combined branding strategy, K3's brand awareness grew immensely in a short period and was maintained throughout the process.

4.1.4.4 Effect on Brand Association

Post rebranding, a difference was seen in the way people associated with the new brand. Internally, staff members were feeling proud to work for a firm which had a promising future. Peter says the way in which the internal employees associated with the new brand was incredible. They were very proud to be associated with such a dynamic brand and their pride was visible.

"Internally, people are proud to work for the company, especially as a future looking global business. So, I think internally it's been a huge step up and again their professionalism and the way they talk and the way they sell the business themselves that's a big part of it."

The customers also associated with the new brand in a very positive way. The new brand is now considered one with a very professional approach. The clients connected well with the new brand.

“And I think from the customers perspective, I think sometime the association is being from colleague’s neutral feedback whole way through is that we are a lot more professional, there are lot you know repeat business is increased and because of that the loyalty is increased and the word of mouth increased because of that and it worked for us.”

The strategies used in the rebranding process had a very positive effect on the brand association aspect which has worked in favor of the brand. Clients have now started associating themselves very strongly and positively with the new brand. Prior to rebranding, the clients had a negative brand association which changed drastically post rebranding. Previously, Kirkland Morrison O’Callahan was associated as a confused and unreliable brand due to several incarnations done to their brand name previously. Now, K3 is associated as a very professional brand providing one stop solutions to its clients.

“We were considered unreliable. It’s almost like we are doing it so often, renaming and bringing on new partners and moving out new partners it almost started to become a bit of joke I suppose in a way.”

Using combined branding strategy, the new brand was presented in such a way that the clients associated positively with the new brand, considering the new brand to be better and stronger. positive brand association brought back client’s faith in the new brand, which was lacking previously.

4.1.4.5 Effect on brand equity

Prior to rebranding, the brand equity of the Kirkland, Morrison and O’Callahan Law Firm was very low, as the firm had earned a bad reputation in the market due to various changes done. Peter explains that post-rebranding, the brand equity of the firm increased immensely. The new brand has built a very strong brand image for the firm and has also gained back the confidence of clients. Being a completely new brand and working on a completely new model, the expectations of its clients are pretty-high, and the directors believe in delivering whatever they have promised.

“It's a little bit different because we have basically built a brand-new business, a new company from where we were. Like what I said, the Brand equity was very low before, as a law firm, as they had gone through various changes and brand equity was basically diminishing and it was all based on word of mouth. So, we kind of went from very low brand equity to a very strong brand platform, that was able.... that we were able to build equity on because of the new model, because of the brand, look and feel and all of everything. So, it has helped us and given us other opportunities as well.”

The approach of using combined branding strategy for the rebranding process can be considered one of the key factors which helped to gain positive brand associations and increased the brand awareness amongst their clients. Also, using combined branding strategy, K3 Corporation could rebuild the trust aspect amongst its clients which in-turn affected the brand loyalty of the firm and thereby created a very strong brand equity for the firm. By using combined branding strategy, the new verticals of the business (K3 Accounting and K3 Consulting) also benefitted from the previously earned brand equity of Kirkland, Morrison and O'Callahan, now K3 Legal. Though they had previously earned a bad reputation due to frequent changes undertaken by the management that created a sense of confusion in the minds of clients, the firm was doing well in terms of getting referrals from its existing client base. As they have been in the business for more than 10 years, they had a good number of existing clients which was beneficial for leveraging across the businesses. As discussed below, Peter explains that business is leveraged from accountant to lawyer to consultant and vice versa.

“That was the part of the idea, to leverage and that's been sent across really well. I mean there is a need there and that was identified, and we knew that, that an accountant needs a lawyer and a management consultant all of that. So, it's working. Constantly business is going from accountant to lawyer to management consultant and vice versa “

4.1.4.6 Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Rebranding Strategies

Throughout the rebranding process, there were many factors which influenced the use of rebranding strategies and made these strategies convenient to use as well as effective. These factors are described below.

One of the key influential factors for the effectiveness of rebranding strategies was the support of the directors. Peter explains that such a huge makeover would not have been possible without the positive outlook of the directors. Having multiple directors - 9 in total - made it quite challenging for Peter, especially in the planning and implementation stage of the rebranding process.

“so, we had 9 directors at the time of rebranding. A lot of people. loads of different personalities and different way of working. I guess the first challenge is to kind of is to get everyone’s agreement on that vision. So, getting everyone to agree and then then steering everyone towards actually getting to the point of the rebrand”

Lots of risks are involved when a brand rebrands itself. Rebranding is a costly and time-consuming affair. A huge amount of money is at stake when a firm rebrands itself. Therefore, convincing the directors was quite a challenge for Peter. But as the directors were commercially minded, they recognized the importance and significance of rebranding the old brand. They understood it was very important to align with the current trends in business to grow the brand and create a sustainable competitive advantage.

In the case of the K3 Corporation, more risks were involved as they had planned to combine the three businesses together using combined branding strategy and they were using sudden eradication strategy for communicating the changes to the customer, which also increased risks. A slight mistake anywhere in the rebranding process would derail the whole process which would have proved to be very costly for the brand.

“Our directors are very commercial minded. They are business people, just as much they are lawyers. They recognize the value of the brand basically. And, I guess they saw the risk and there is also a risk for us in terms of bringing the three new businesses into one brand and having the two new businesses and their business goals aligned all you know all together as well. They basically they said well we got no option, if we want to continue to move forward, we would have to take that effort.”

This was the major influencer for effectiveness of rebranding strategies adopted by K3 group for the success of the rebranding process. Without the support of the directors and their positive outlook, the whole process would have gone off-track and it could have been a failed effort.

Secondly, brand communication is another key factor that influenced the success of the rebranding process. Brand communication plays a key role in communicating the key messages to both internal and external customers. In the case of K3, sudden eradication strategy was used to communicate the changes to the external customers. It was therefore very important to plan all the communication mediums very carefully as the customers were unaware of the changes being made.

Brand communication was precisely planned in the case of the K3 Corporation. Internal customers (staff members) were made aware with the changes well in advance to avoid any resistance to change and they were educated and trained accordingly. The internal customers were familiarized with the changes in advance, which worked very well for the K3 Corporation. The directors understood the importance of getting the staff in line with the changes being made as staff represent the face of the organization and act as the first point of contact for customers.

“The way we kind of went about it, was basically I mean we sold the vision to staff. We gave them an idea what we were doing from the start. It was like you know we are looking to continue to grow the business, and to do that we need to modernize, we need to basically come to a new world business model that works and we kind of assumed that it was exciting and interesting for staff and positive change.”

Equally important was educating the external customers, which was done using sudden eradication strategy. Despite the risks involved in using this strategy, it has worked very well for the K3 Corporation as they had taken into consideration all the aspects and accordingly communicated the key changes undertaken by the brand. The kind of buzz created through the launch event, and all the media and PR activities, are a few of the factors which contributed immensely to creating efficient and successful rebranding strategies for the K3 Corporation.

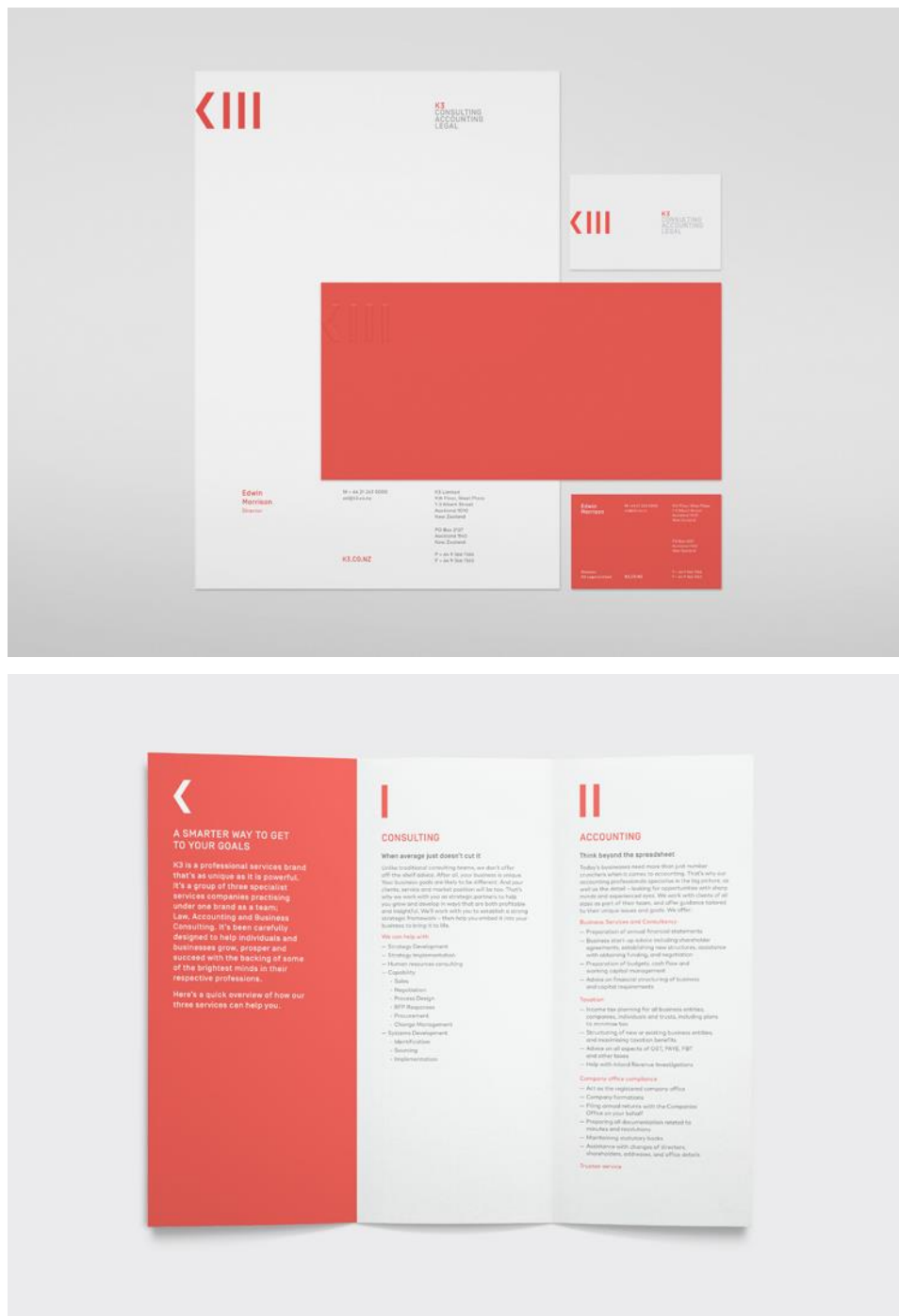


Figure 10: K3 Corporation: Means of Brand Communication ("K3," n.d.).

4.2 Case Two: Translucent Warning Strategy - Spark New Zealand

4.2.1 Interviewee's Profile

Janet B* has been working as the Communications Advisor for Spark New Zealand, handling the external public relations for Spark home, business, and mobile, for more than three years. Janet, being passionate about communications and having an extensive background in communications, joined Spark New Zealand in 2015 when the rebranding process was underway and helped the rebranding team in handling the external public relations and communications of Spark New Zealand.

4.2.2 Case Background

Telecom New Zealand started their journey in the year 1987. Initially things went smoothly for Telecom, but in 2008, Telecom New Zealand decided to divide itself into three separate divisions: Telecom Wholesale, Telecom Retail, and the network infrastructure division through Chorus. In 2011, Telecom New Zealand went through a demerger process where Telecom and Chorus became two separate entities ("Plenty of pomp as Chorus and Telecom part," 2011). On 8 August 2014, Telecom New Zealand rebranding itself as Spark New Zealand.

"Telecom changed its name to Spark New Zealand on the 8th of August 2014. This represented one of the biggest rebrands in New Zealand's history and marked the culmination of a massive integrated public relations and marketing communications Programme."

Post rebranding, Telecom Connect was renamed Spark Network, Telecom Retail was renamed Spark Home, Mobile, and Business, and Gen-I was renamed Spark Digital. Spark New Zealand, formerly known as Telecom New Zealand, started as a telecommunications company in New Zealand and today it's one of the largest telecommunication and digital services providing brand in New Zealand. Spark also provides Internet broadband services, acting as a major ICT provider to businesses all over New Zealand ("Telecom confirms August 8 for Spark launch date ", 2014).

As of 2017, Spark New Zealand is a multidimensional business brand with core businesses, including: Spark, Spark Digital, Spark Ventures, Spark Connect, and Spark Platforms. The core

brand, Spark, looks after delivering products and services to consumers and small business customers; Spark Digital delivers end to end ICT solutions to government and large business enterprises; Spark Ventures creates portfolios of different products and services, which in-turn create long-term value for Spark New Zealand; Spark Platforms supports business units by providing leading-edge digital platforms, products and capabilities which helps in ensuring quick response to different needs of the customers; and Spark Connect delivers robust infrastructural foundation and high-end data networks to Spark New Zealand (see Figure 11). Spark New Zealand also owns specialist and flanking brands like Skinny (mobile services), Big Pipe (fixed broadband services), Revera and Appserv (data hosting and Cloud-based IT services), Lightbox (Internet TV services), and Qrious (data analysis services).



Figure 11: Spark New Zealand business verticals

(“TEL1854_Spark_Annual_Report_Interactive-v2.pdf,” n.d.)

The reason why Telecom New Zealand wanted to rebrand itself was they wanted to change their brand image from just being known as a telephone line service provider to a new brand that is much more than just a telephone service provider as they deliver other products and services as well. Because the brand image associated with the “Telecom New Zealand” was that of a telecommunication company, so they wanted to change that brand image. Despite being a such a giant and dominant brand in broadband and mobile business, Telecom New Zealand also wanted to change its outdated brand personality and focus more on the booming, multicultural New Zealand market, particularly targeting the youth population of New Zealand which they had failed to be noticed by under the old brand. Rather than simply protecting its dwindling legacy, Telecom felt it was necessary to adapt its business to a futuristic point of view and therefore shifted from being “technology led” to being “customer led.” Telecom New Zealand was not focused as much on customers’ needs and was working on the strategy of “walking back slowly” without much focus on the growth aspect (Venuto, 2014). As said by Janet:

“Telecom was associated with the home phone, Spot the dog and the early development of New Zealand’s internet and mobile services. We needed to change to be more relevant to customers in a world massively different from 1987, when Telecom came into existence. Since then fiber, video calling, 4G, internet TV, Cloud, big data, mobility, social media and the ubiquity of the internet have all transformed our lives.”

Another reason for rebranding Telecom to Spark was that Telecom was consistently criticized for using its monopoly and incumbent status to charge higher prices to customers. Even when few competitors tried to enter the market and gain ground, Telecom was criticized for using unfair trade practices to prevent them from gaining any ground ("Spark New Zealand - Wikipedia," n.d.). Also, another reason why Telecom New Zealand rebranding itself was their customers felt neglected and unvalued ("Igniting the Spark – Why Telecom Wanted To Change", n.d.).

The management of Telecom therefore wanted to change its direction and adapt to the current trends in the market to protect the dwindling legacy of Telecom. Rebranding Telecom New Zealand to Spark New Zealand was considered their biggest milestone and since then they have been able to connect to their customers in a better way and helping to enhance and change the image in the minds of New Zealanders.

In the next section, the whole rebranding process is analyzed using a corporate rebranding framework.

4.2.3 Rebranding Process

4.2.3.1 Participants in the Rebranding Process

The main decision makers who were involved in planning the rebranding process for Telecom were their main management team consisting of: The Chairman of Telecom New Zealand, Mark Verbiest; Chief Executive of Telecom, Simon Moutter; and Telecom and Retail's Marketing Head, Craig Herbison. While the Telecom logo was designed by Design Works, led by Micheal Crampin and Sven Baker, the work on the new brand was handled jointly by Saatchi and Saatchi Design Worldwide, led by Derek Lockwood, and Interbrand New Zealand, led by James Bickford (Idealog, 2014).

“Apart from the top management team consisting of our Chairman, Managing Director and Marketing Head, there were external design agencies which were involved in the rebranding process. Logo designing was handled by Designworks.inc whereas the other aspects of brand development was handled by Saatchi and Saatchi Design Worldwide and Interbrand New Zealand.”

4.2.3.2 Steps in Rebranding Process

(a) Analysis

The first step in the rebranding process was to analyze the overall business scenario. First, they looked globally at the big retailers around the world, including the best telecommunications companies, to analyze the current trends in the business scenario. They also took feedback from the competitors' customers across all segments to understand why those customers were unhappy with Telecom. Competitor's analysis helped them to understand what strategies their competitors were adopting and what the effect of those strategies were (Kerr & Bennett, 2014a).

Second, they consulted internal staff members, key partners, and competitors' customers for insight and feedback on how customers were pursuing the brand, its products and services, and what they thought about the brand and about the changes needed to be addressed. Internal staff played a very important role throughout the rebranding process and views of internal staff were sought after regularly during the rebranding process. The analysis of the feedback received from the frontline staff, customers, and competitors' customers, helped Telecom to gain some important

insight. Understanding that though the existing customers were happy enough, and frontline staff were very impressed with the response they have been receiving from their own customers, from the competitors' customers' point of view one aspect which they felt was lacking was that the competitors' customers still considered Telecom to be for old, rich, white people, and that it was a brand about a fixed line and home phone brand. This led them to dismiss Telecom and to prefer competitor products (Kerr & Bennett, 2014b).

Telecom understood that along with adding new products to align with the current trends, they needed to focus more on the under 35 age brackets and the youth population which they considered to be future super consumers with high disposable incomes. This is a population they were not focused on much before, and thereby acted as a major factor which influenced Telecom to pursue its strategies for the rebranding process (Kerr, 2014).

Post analyzing the business environment and getting proper direction for their rebranding process, the next step was to plan and implement the rebranding strategies, described below.

(b) Planning and Implementation

The next step after analyzing the business environment was to plan and implement those changes which were needed in the brand according to the analysis done. The first step was to explain the goals for the rebranding process. As explained by Lydia, the business goal was:

“The business goal was to become a winning business, inspired by customers to unleash the potential in all New Zealanders. and accelerate the ongoing transformation of the company, express the enormous change that had already occurred and symbolize our intent to be the leading provider of digital services in New Zealand.”

After defining the business goals, Telecom started planning for different strategies they could use for the rebranding process and decided on “translucent warning strategy” (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003). Translucent warning strategy involves informing the customers ahead of time about the changes which have been planned both before and after the actual rebranding process through aggressive advertising and promotions, in-store displays, and improving product packaging (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003).

As explained by Janet below, the management of Telecom, along with the design agencies, decided to adopt a customer centric strategy for the rebranding process based on feedback received from the customers and front-line staff.

“The strategy we adopted was as below:

- Announce the new name in advance on Feb 21, 2014 and start laying groundwork for change (and also reduce the risk of a leak).*
- Allow customers to share their views/vent – given the nature of the old Telecom brand we expected a strong reaction, so we needed to be ‘upfront and front up’ from day one.*
- Give it time to soak in – and make a real effort to listen and respond appropriately.*
- Acknowledge our heritage*
- Start with an internal focus, then broaden externally to build awareness and support*
- Underpin our name change with real substance to reinforce and evidence the change by showing how we are changing rather than telling how we are changing.*
- Build up anticipation for Spark Day (8 August 2014)*
- Pay particular emphasis on the tone of communications - to show Spark New Zealand would be a very different organization to the old Telecom.”*

As evident above, an interesting point to note is that the management team decided to announce the changes well in advance (21 February 2014) and the actual name change was done on 8 August 2014. The 6-month gap period helped them to settle the dust, and at the same time motivate the staff by giving them something to aim for and also allowing them to adapt to the changes being made to the brand. It also gave the internal staff clarity on what roles they would be playing in the rebranding process and what strategies they would need to adopt.

Another aspect of adopting “translucent warning strategy” was that the management team wanted to gauge customers’ reactions and viewpoints by giving them time to let the changes soak in and then respond accordingly. The initial response made by customers and internal staff was very positive and the management therefore knew upfront that the strategy applied was very successful and they could move ahead in the process (Kerr & Bennett, 2014b).

The new logo used by Spark New Zealand was introduced in 2009 (see figure 12). After introducing the logo, the company left it on the customers to interpret what the logo meant to them. Some of the interesting feedback based on the customers' interpretations of the new logo was that it implied "energy and momentum" and was "dynamic fresh," while internal staff interpreted it as "spark." The management team, along with Design Works Inc., planned to use different colored logos for different business verticals (see Figure 12) ("Creating New Zealand's Telecom," 2015).

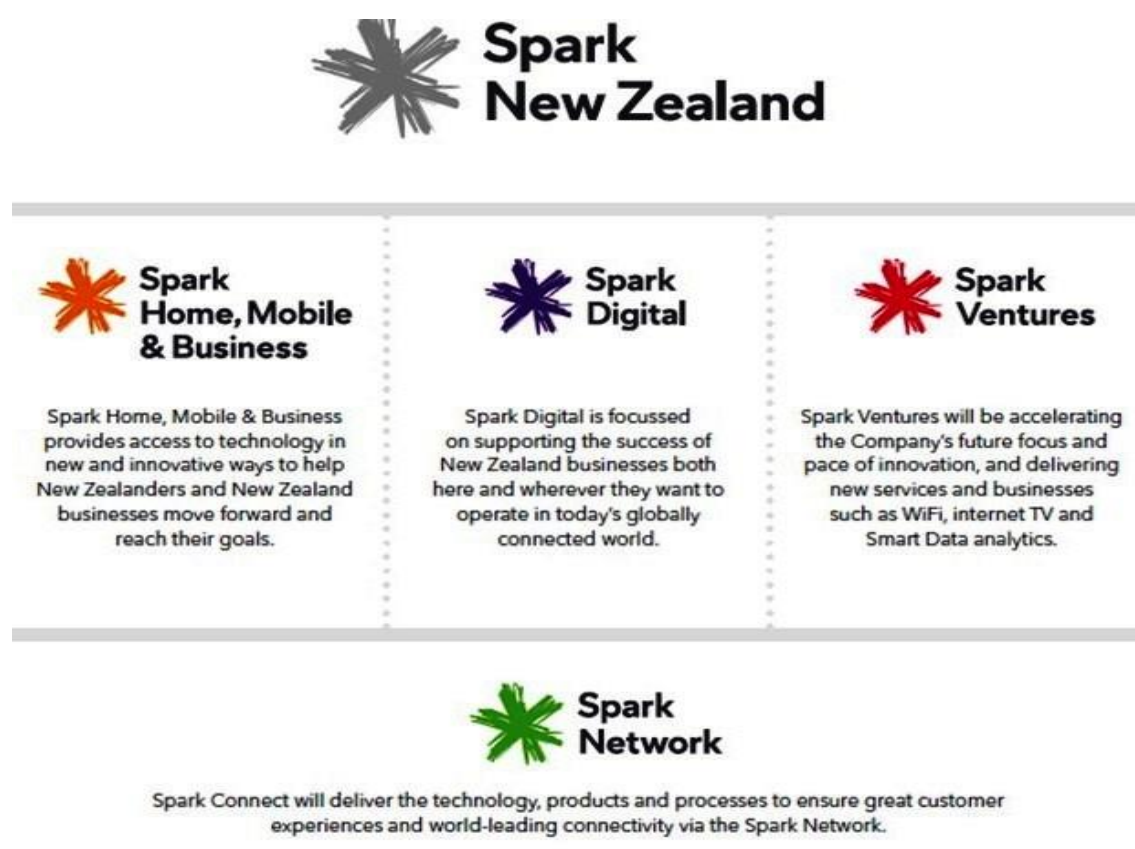


Figure 12: Spark New Zealand Logo (TEL1854_Spark_Annual_Report_Interactive-v2.pdf," n.d.).

Second, the word "Telecom" unintentionally created a brand image of them being a telephone company, which made the management rethink about their brand name as well. On 8 August 2014, the company revealed the brand name "Spark" – a word that means life, potential, energy, and creativity. Their main purpose was to help "unleash the potential of all New Zealanders." The brand name "Spark" was based on the new logo which was introduced in 2009 ("Spark NZ," n.d.).

The next step was to develop core values which would define the brand. Four core values - “We listen”; “We are straight up”; “We get stuck in”; and “We win together” - were finalized, and these core values underlined the culture of the new brand (see Figure 13).

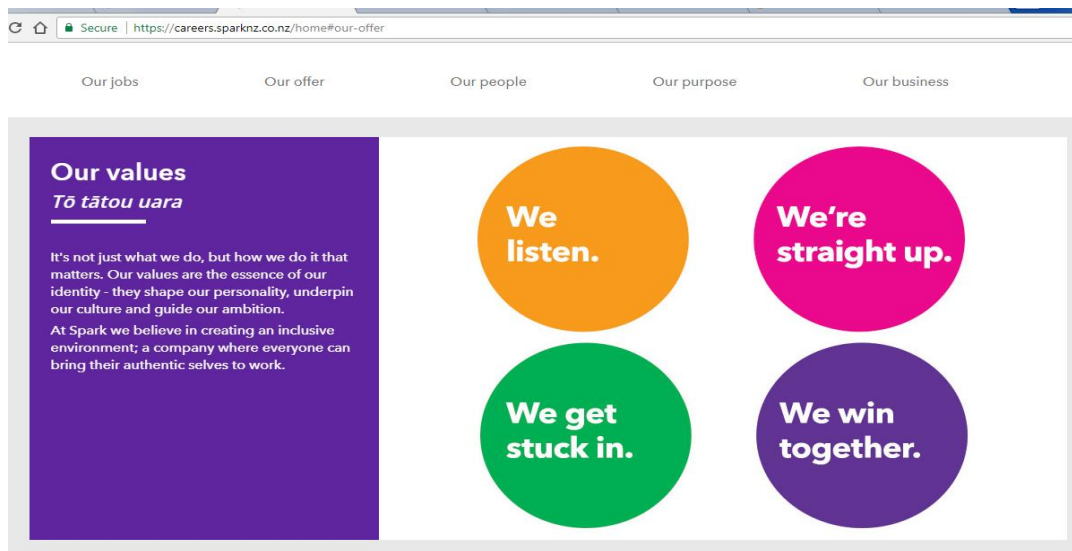


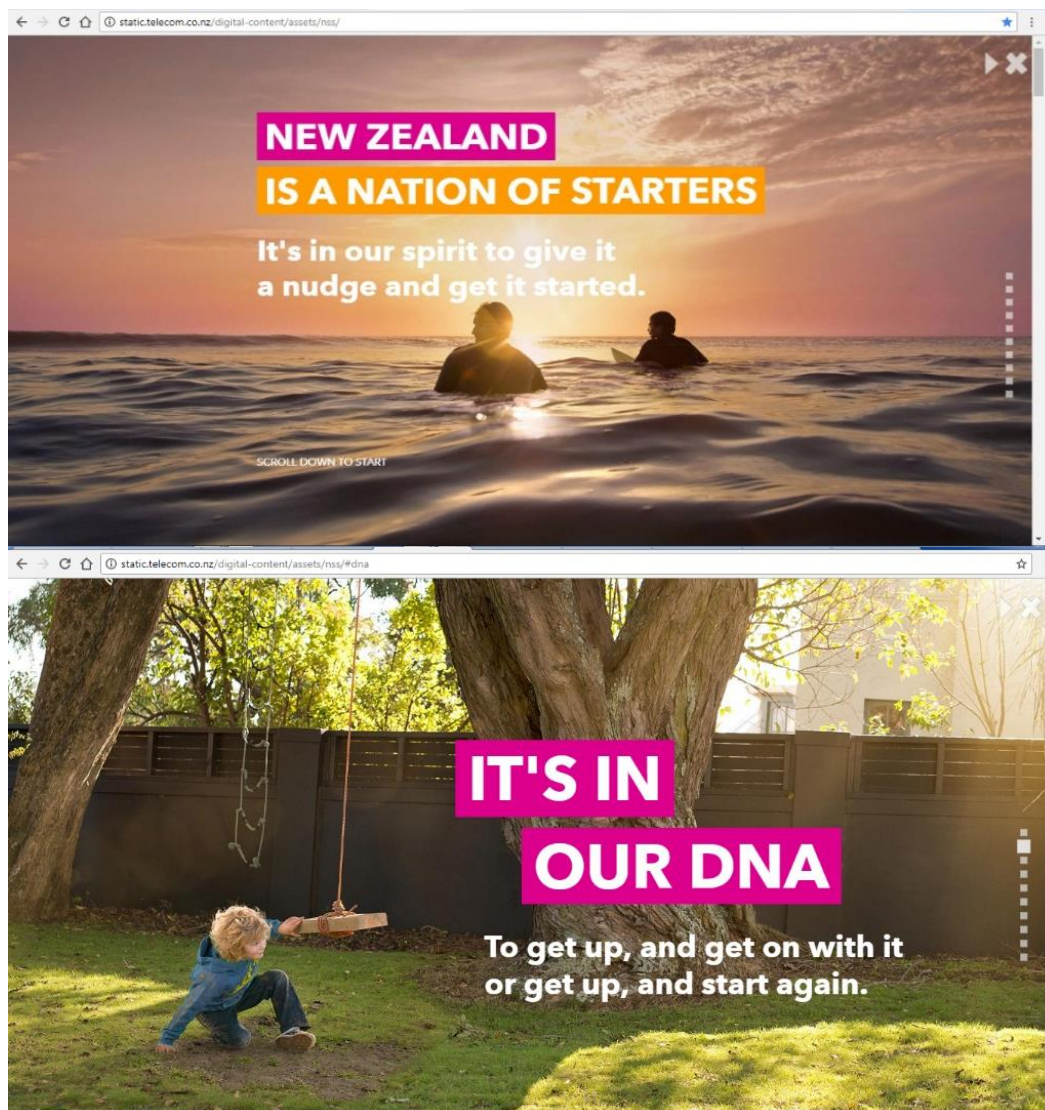
Figure 13: Spark’s Core Values: ("Career at Spark," n.d.)

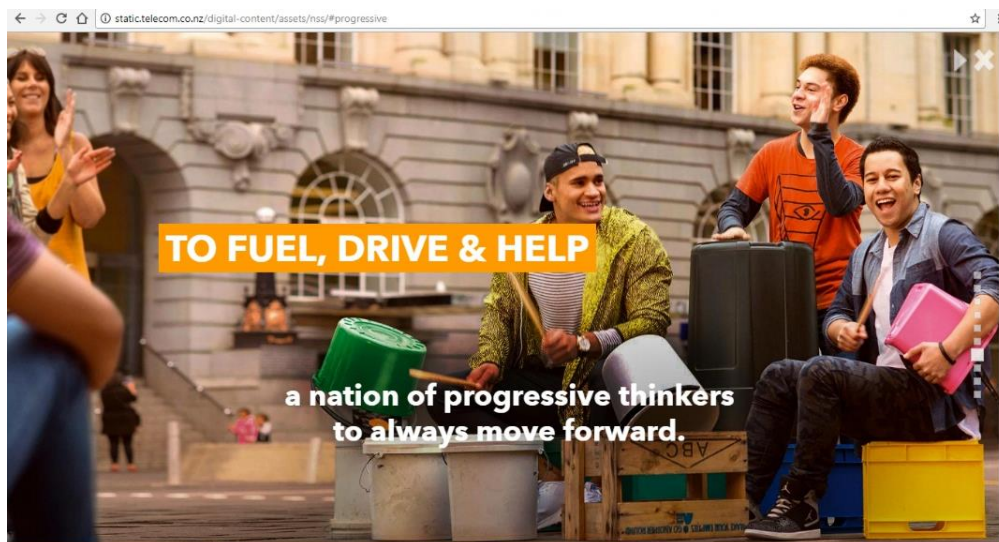
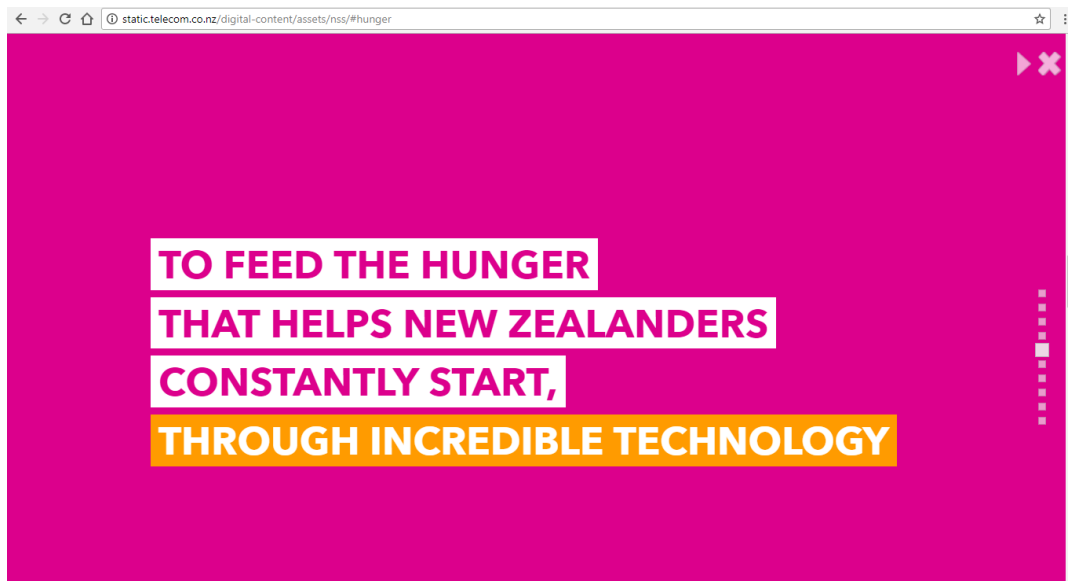
Spark New Zealand also planned to convey their strong brand story to their customers through their YouTube channel with a video named “Journey to Spark” (see Figure 14).



Figure 14: Journey to Spark (Spark, n.d.)

Telecom New Zealand also planned to create a brand manifesto - “Never Stop Starting” - which was meant to encourage New Zealanders to unleash their potential using Spark New Zealand’s services and motivate them to keep moving ahead in life by adapting to changes in new technologies. The manifesto included all the important communications which the new brand wanted to convey to customers (see Figure 15). As seen below, their manifesto spoke about what they believed in, what the brand stands for, what it is passionate about and what they fight for in context to services provided.





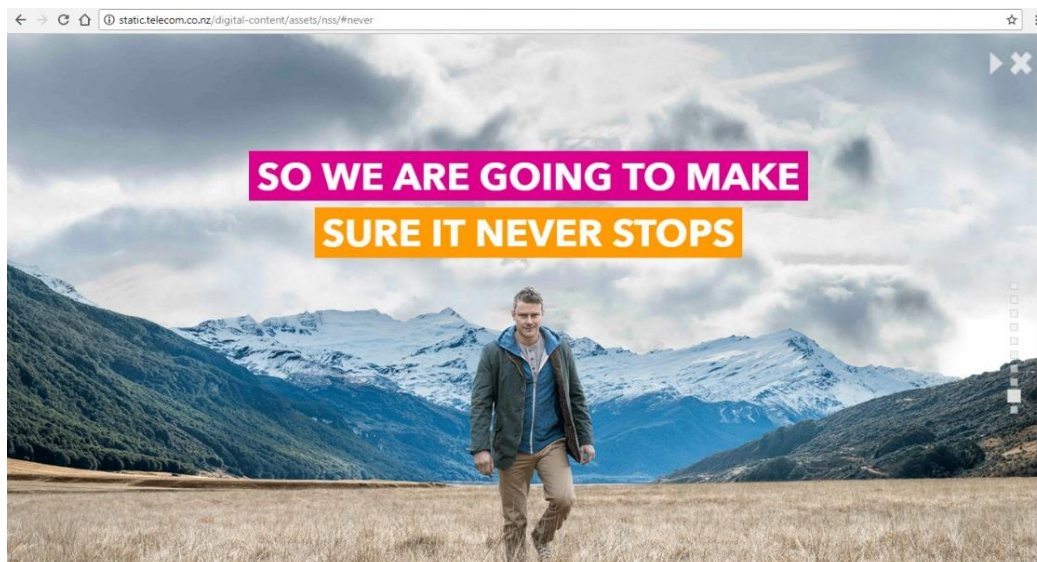
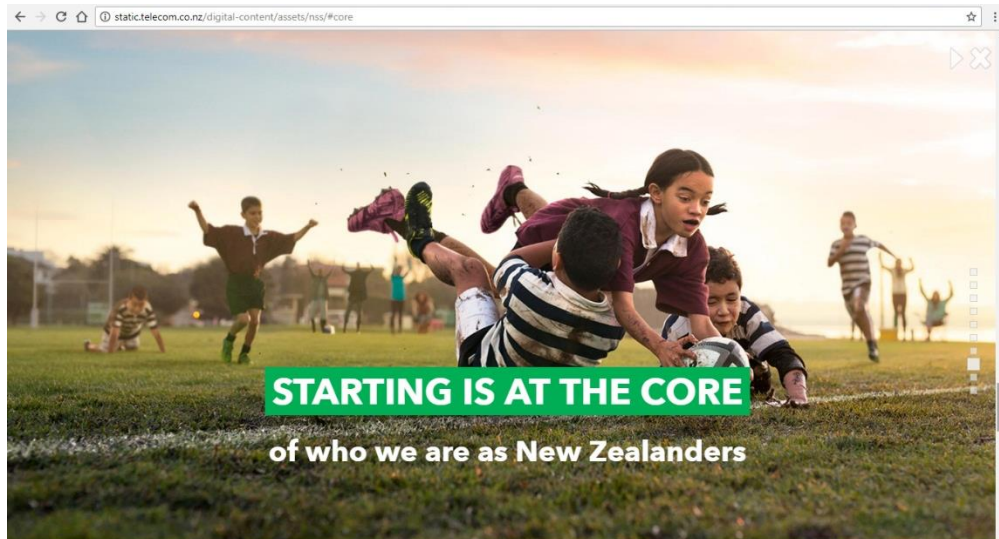


Figure 15: Spark New Zealand's Brand Manifesto ("Spark - Never Stop Starting," n.d.)

Using “translucent warning strategy” helped Spark New Zealand build anticipation for the launch of the new brand on 8 August 2014. A good amount of hype and excitement was created amongst the target group prior to launching the new brand and a lot of emphasis was given to communications regarding changes being made to the new brand. The launch had received a good amount of media attention as well which helped to create brand awareness of Spark New Zealand. The media focused mainly on the cost involved in rebranding, which was estimated to be \$20 million. This created a lot of hype all over and people were tempted to get connected to the new brand.

“Media focusing on the \$20m cost of the rebrand and all of the physical signage changing at the expense of the broader story around a huge business transformation”

Using this strategy helped the management pre-plan everything, to be prepared for the worst scenarios a crisis plans in case of technical issues while switching from the old brand to the new brand. Existing customers were informed beforehand that they might experience some technical issues due to the transformation.

The next step, which was also the last step of the rebranding process, was to evaluate the outcomes of the rebranding process. In the next subchapter, I present how evaluation took place in Telecom New Zealand’s rebranding process.

(c) Evaluation

Telecom New Zealand paid detailed attention to evaluation consistently throughout the rebranding process. Evaluation took place at each step of the rebranding process to make sure that they were progressing in the right direction.

Telecom New Zealand, using translucent warning strategy, alerted the customers beforehand about the planned changes and using this strategy they intended to evaluate the customers’ reaction upfront right from the beginning of the process. From this it is evident how important evaluation was considered to be for the rebranding process of Telecom. As there were huge costs involved, Telecom wanted to make sure that they were always on the right track and therefore they carefully evaluated the outcomes at every stage of the rebranding process.

“Allow customers to share their views/vent – given the nature of the old Telecom brand we expected a strong reaction, so we needed to be ‘upfront and front up’ from day one.”

“Give it time to soak in – and make a real effort to listen and respond appropriately.”

Constant feedback was sought, especially from front-line staff, customers, and competitors’ customers. It was a combination of feedback from each of these sources through which vital learnings were generated and which enhanced the decision making for the strategies adopted for the rebranding process. At the start of the rebranding process, Telecom evaluated what their current customers and front-line staff felt about the brand, and these viewpoints were taken into consideration regarding what changes they felt should be done to the brand. Feedback from competitors’ customers was sought as well. It was vital information obtained from this feedback which informed important decisions regarding strategies for the rebranding process.

Telecom New Zealand focused a lot on evaluation of the rebranding process, even post rebranding as well. Post rebranding, continuous customer feedback was sought and their reactions were taken into consideration to plan future strategies. The top management made sure that all the bottom level managers interacted with the customers at least three hours in a month (Kerr, 2014). This helped them to get vital information about expectations of the staff and they were even able to gain live customer feedback directly. Telecom wanted the bottom level managers to be in line with the front-line staff and their intention behind this was that the management wanted them to get live feedback from the customers and apply it in creating customer centric strategies.

“All these managers are now expected to have at least three hours exposure to direct customer experiences each month. We want these non-frontline people to go out and live and find out what staff are experiencing, and what the customer feedback is. This could involve going on a sales call with the big enterprise people, going to a call center and listening as calls are received or spending a day in the retail shop.

“We then want them to bring back what they've learned and apply it to creating a better customer experience.”

Evaluation played a very important role for Spark New Zealand throughout the rebranding process and helped them to gain important insights, which in-turn gave direction for planning and altering the strategies during each step of the rebranding process.

In the next subchapter, the research questions are answered based on the emergent themes.

4.2.4 Answering the Research Questions

4.2.4.1 Effect on Brand Image

One of the significant drivers behind Telecom undertaking rebranding is they wanted to completely change their brand image from what it was. Telecom, despite being a giant brand, was facing issues of diminishing brand equity due to consistent criticism for misusing its status to overcharge customers. Due to their unfair trade policies, Telecom was facing huge criticism and it was going into losses year after year, creating a very bad brand image of Telecom in the minds of New Zealanders. The word “Telecom” was associated with being a telephone company which they wanted to change as they were serving other products and services as well. Therefore, Telecom New Zealand rebranded itself to Spark New Zealand to change its brand image and regain lost ground in the market (Kerr, 2014).

Spark New Zealand used “translucent warning strategy” for their rebranding process, whereby they informed customers ahead of time about the changes planned for the brand. This strategy helped them to alert customers in advance about the changes being planned, making it easier for customers to adapt to the changes. This strategy also reduced the chances of vital information leaks about the changes being made.

Telecom New Zealand, based on the customer feedback, decided to create a completely new brand image using a customer-centric approach. Based on their analysis and evaluations, Telecom New Zealand decided to focus more on youth, including the under 35 age brackets. Their brand manifesto, “Never stop starting,” played a very significant role in changing their brand image (see figure 14).

In addition to their brand manifesto, they changed their brand elements, including brand name and logo, and made sure all these elements were aligned with the goals of rebranding. It was evident that all their communications across different platforms directed towards customers supported what the brand was promising. Brand communication played a huge role in creating a positive

brand image for Spark New Zealand and it was through the means of very strong and aggressive brand communication that Spark was able to achieve the kind of brand image it has today.

“Spark’s brand image positioned the company more positively amongst younger demographics and helped demonstrate the huge shift within the business from the legacy landline to mobile, the cloud and other future-oriented services like Lightbox amongst all age groups.”

The current brand image of Spark New Zealand is that of a youthful brand which is full of life, energy and creativity with a customer-centric approach; the brand helps Kiwis to unleash their potential using Spark’s products and services. Spark stands for making life simple and better, which is very much evident at all the customer touchpoints through which customers interact with the firm. Spark portrays their brand image of a pure Kiwi person who is frank, active, youthful, helpful, and passionate. Although the brand name change was criticized widely on social media initially, later on it proved to be the right move for them as the brand is very popular with the younger population who are more interested in connecting with Spark New Zealand than they were with Telecom New Zealand (Pullar-Strecker, 2014).

For firms to create a positive brand image, brand elements like brand name, logo, values, vision and mission statements play a very crucial role and also, the most challenging part is to sustain the brand image created, which Spark has been able to do very well. Post rebranding, Spark New Zealand has become a completely different brand with a powerful and positive brand image in market.

4.2.4.2 Effect on Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is referred to as a commitment towards a main brand which is shown by its customers through intentionally choosing that brand repeatedly as a first choice (Oliver, 1997). Brand loyalty plays a very important role in the success of a brand.

“We are constantly seeing a good amount of increase in foot traffic into retail stores and also online traffic to our websites have been increased tremendously”

In Spark New Zealand’s case, brand loyalty was observed as one of the most affected aspects influenced by “translucent warning strategy.” Informing customers beforehand about the changes being made and involving them in the decision-making process helped the brand to create confidence in the minds of the customers and it also helped to build a degree of trust in the brand. The customer-centric approach made customers realize that the brand was more focused on providing high-quality customer service.

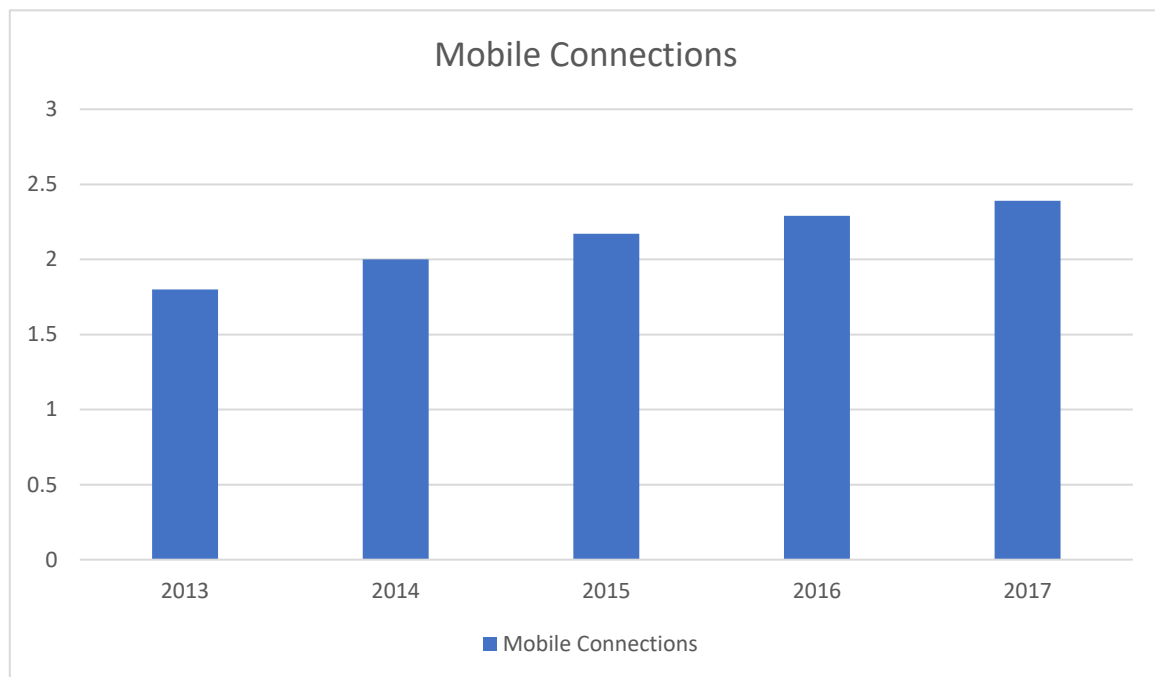


Figure 16: Spark New Zealand’s total Mobile connections (“2015_Annual_Report.pdf,” n.d.; “2016_Annual_Report.pdf,” n.d.; “Spark-New-Zealand-Annual-Report-2017.pdf,” n.d.; “TEL1854_Spark_Annual_Report_Interactive-v2.pdf,” n.d.; “Telecom-AR-2013.pdf,” n.d.)

As observed above, a drastic change was seen especially in the Spark Home, Mobile and Business unit, which acts as one of the core business units of Spark New Zealand. It is evident from the graph that their customer base has been increasing consistently (see Figure 16). Telecom’s mobile connections were 1.8 million connections in the year 2013 compared to post rebranding, where the connections of Spark Home, Mobile, and Business increased by 0.2 million in the first year alone. In 2014, the total mobile connections of Spark Home, Mobile, and Business was 2 million, which has increased consistently, and in the year 2017, it had reached 2.39 million connections.

Consistent increase in the customer base shows the amount of trust and confidence its customers have in Spark New Zealand. Spark New Zealand has positioned itself positively in the New Zealand market and its customer are proud users of the brand. Spark was very successful in unleashing the potential of New Zealanders by providing high standard products and services to meet the expectations of customers and the brand clicked well with the under 35 age group brackets - its main target audience. These were all key factors which made Spark New Zealand what it is today; a highly successful brand with a vast brand loyalty amongst its customers.

4.2.4.3 Effect on Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is often referred to as the most important part towards building brand equity and it is very much an integral part of marketing strategies adopted by the firms (Baldauf et al., 2003). Brand awareness plays a very important role in creating positive perceptions about the brand in the minds of its target group (Atilgan, Aksoy, & Akinci, 2005).

Using “translucent warning strategy” played a very important role for Spark New Zealand in creating positive brand awareness amongst its target audiences. Customers were informed almost 6 months prior to completion of the rebranding process. Spark made sure that the customers and internal staff were involved in the rebranding process and at every stage viewpoints of both internal and external customers were sought which informed strategies.

Using this strategy, customers had appropriate time to adapt to the changes being made and their reactions were tested prior to the completion of the rebranding process. By involving customers in the rebranding process, customers were kept informed about the changes being made which played a very important role to create brand awareness. By the end of the rebranding process, customers could connect themselves with the new brand and its elements, including brand name, logo, and tag line.

Even the launch date of Spark New Zealand was efficiently used as a platform to create brand awareness for the new brand. Using “translucent warning strategy,” a good amount of hype was created amongst its target group and media played a very important part in this as well. Using this strategy and relating the rebrand with the cost involved (\$20 million) increased media attention and this led to positive brand awareness.

“Announce the new name in advance on Feb 21, 2014 and start laying groundwork for change (and reduce the risk of a leak).”

“Allow customers to share their views/vent – given the nature of the old Telecom brand we expected a strong reaction, so we needed to be ‘upfront and front up’ from day one.”

“Give it time to soak in – and make a real effort to listen and respond appropriately.”

In Spark New Zealand’s case, communications played a very important role throughout the rebranding process to create brand awareness. Spark made sure that all communications directed towards its target group were aligned with the goals of rebranding. A very powerful and effective brand manifesto was implemented. It is evident they have been very clear and specific about their brand image and they have managed to put it into actions through appropriate brand communication. “Translucent warning strategy” was one of their strengths to create a power brand awareness campaign. Through all these efforts, a very powerful brand identity was created for Spark New Zealand.

4.2.4.4 Effect on Brand Association

Brand association helps marketers to create positive attitudes and feelings about the brand and it also helps consumers in their decision-making process by helping them to recall the message communicated by the brand (Aaker, 1991). In Spark New Zealand’s case, customers were able to positively associate with the new brand and the effects of rebranding was evident on both internal as well as external.

Using “translucent warning strategy,” customers were aligned from the beginning of the rebranding process and their view points were taken into consideration throughout the decision-making process allowing them to feel connected to the new brand. Employees were proud of the way Telecom New Zealand was transformed into Spark New Zealand and they also showed immense confidence in the new brand. The support of the internal customers was very crucial for the brand as they were one of the first touch-points who interacted directly with external customers. It was therefore very important that the internal customers associated positively and confidently with the brand to reflect in their interactions with external customers.

For external customers, it was evident that they were happy with the new brand based on their feedback. By involving customers at each stage of the rebranding process and taking their constant feedback, customers were connected with the brand from the initial stage of the rebranding process. The brand image presented by the new brand was very well received by customers and the customer-centric approach adopted by Spark New Zealand managed to build confidence amongst customers that the new brand was different and better than before.

It can be concluded that Spark was successful in creating a positive brand association through “translucent warning strategy” and their customer-centric approach was a key factor in creating immense confidence in the minds of customers. Spark New Zealand managed to create a connection with its customers through their structured communication process and they were also very successful in building a powerful brand image in the minds of customers by delivering what they promised through their various communications.

4.2.4.5 Effect on Brand Equity

Telecom’s brand equity was consistently diminishing due to its bad reputation in the market. To protect the dwindling legacy of Telecom and to be sustainable in a highly competitive market, it was very important for Telecom to bring about a drastic change in its approach through rebranding.

At the same time, it was very important for Spark New Zealand not to completely discard Telecom’s brand equity. Along with creating a new brand equity, it was very crucial for Spark New Zealand to maintain the existing brand equity of Telecom, which was a giant brand previously. Spark New Zealand, to some extent, is still like Telecom - Spark still operates fixed line and mobile services - yet, there is a huge difference as well as Spark is nimbler than Telecom (Kerr, 2014).

Spark New Zealand was successful in creating strong brand equity by consistently delivering what it promised across all touchpoints through which it interacts with its customers. One of the reasons why Spark New Zealand was successful in creating strong brand equity was due to the strategies it adopted and its customer-centric approach. Spark adapted to its customer-centric approach by separating its services from the networks, allowing it to deal less with government regulations and

focus completely on creating value-based services for its customers, something Telecom failed drastically to focus on.

“However, the re-brand to Spark, alongside the massive Programme of work to transform the company, has had a hugely positive effect on the company’s brand equity in a range of external and internal monitoring. It’s worth noting that on its own the brand change would not have shifted the dial, but alongside a genuine change in the business it was a clear indicator that Spark is a different business with a completely new brand equity to what it was in the 80s, 90s and early 2000s.”

Spark New Zealand with a strong and positive brand image also has a totally different approach towards looking at the business than Telecom had. Looking at the way Spark has become what it is today, it can be concluded that Spark New Zealand was successful in connecting with the young population of New Zealand and being a local brand of New Zealanders thereby creating tremendous brand loyalty amongst them. Spark could conquer almost the entire ground of the New Zealand market which it had lost. It can also be said that Spark was successful in unleashing the potential of New Zealanders by providing high quality products and consistently providing exceptional customer service to New Zealanders. It has become a brand with huge popularity and exceptionally huge brand equity throughout New Zealand.

The strong and powerful brand equity of Spark New Zealand is evident in the fact that its financials have been continuously increasing post rebranding. As seen below, the net earnings of Spark New Zealand have almost doubled in 5 years, compared to Telecom New Zealand. In the year 2013, the net earnings were NZ\$238 million compared to the next year when the net earnings rose drastically to NZ\$418 million. Additionally, Spark New Zealand’s share price has been on the rise with shareholders having a 53% return on investment in the first year alone, and constantly increasing on a year to year basis, post rebranding.

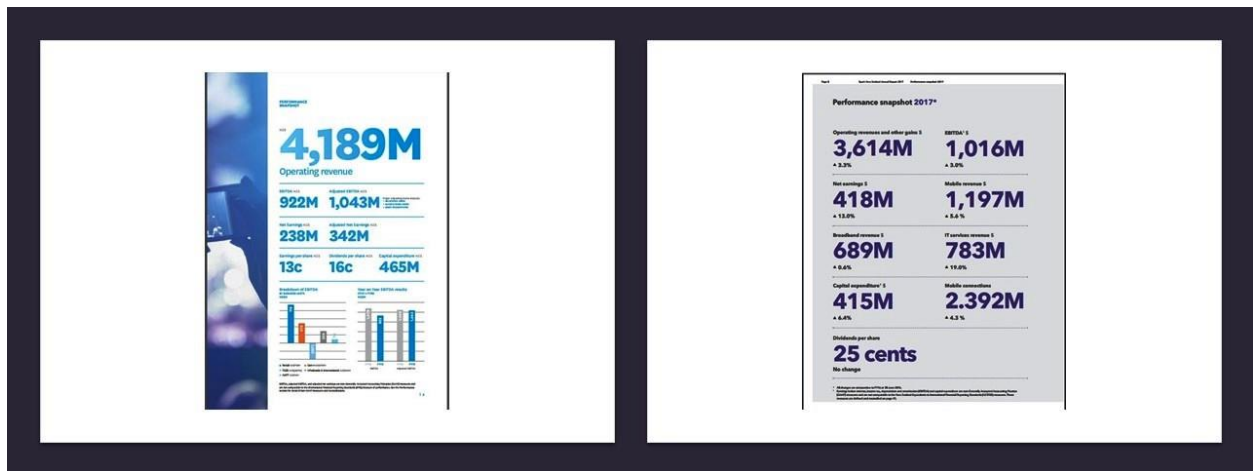


Figure 17: Spark New Zealand’s total earnings (“Spark-New-Zealand-Annual-Report-2017.pdf,” n.d.; “Telecom-AR-2013.pdf,” n.d.).

4.2.4.6 Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the Rebranding Strategies

In this subchapter, different factors which enhanced the effectiveness of the rebranding strategy for Spark New Zealand are presented. Empirical findings suggest that two main factors were significant to influence the effectiveness of the “translucent warning strategy” namely, integrated marketing communication.

Spark New Zealand’s management was very clear about its goals and vision from the beginning of the rebranding process. Through competitor analysis and feedback from customers, the management of Spark New Zealand decided to adopt a customer-centric approach for their rebranding process. They made sure both internal and external customers were kept informed throughout the whole process and constant feedback was sought to make sure that the whole process was on track. The bottom level managers were directed to spend at least three hours of direct customer interaction per month where they received direct customer feedback which helped the management to plan strategies.

It was this customer-centric approach which formed the base for using “translucent warning strategy” for the rebranding process through which customers were informed beforehand about the changes being made, and which ultimately played a very significant role in the success of Spark New Zealand. This approach also acted as a key strength to connect with the customers

through the structured communication process through which a powerful and positive brand was created.

To conclude, we can say that by using a customer-centric approach Spark New Zealand was very successful in creating a powerful brand image in the minds of its target group and it has been very successful in unleashing the potential of New Zealanders by providing high class products and services.

Another factor which enhanced the effectiveness of “translucent warning strategy” was the positive effects of some existing brand attributes of Telecom New Zealand. It was the combination of all the factors, such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand association, which made the rebranding of Spark New Zealand successful. The Spark New Zealand’s management emphasized using appropriate techniques for brand communication which played a significant role in connecting the brand with its customers.

Spark New Zealand’s management constantly communicated with its customers through different mediums of communication. Using “translucent warning strategy,” customers were informed beforehand about the changes being made and thereby brand communication played a very important role and was an integral part of “translucent warning strategy.” This positively affected the dimensions of brand equity, namely brand loyalty, brand association and brand awareness, which led to a successful rebranding of Telecom New Zealand to Spark New Zealand.

Since its rebrand, Spark New Zealand has been very clear about their brand communication which was a major strength for being successful in unleashing the potential of New Zealanders by providing exceptional products and services. Strongly connecting with its customers and maintaining a relationship with its customers by providing exceptional and high-class products and services is Spark New Zealand’s biggest asset which it has been able to build post rebranding.

It was mainly due to these two factors, its customer-centric approach and positive effects on brand loyalty, brand association, and brand awareness, that Spark New Zealand could achieve its goals and successfully rebrand itself. Spark New Zealand has been successful in positioning itself as a local New Zealand brand which focuses on providing exceptional customer service and has been able to maintain its powerful and positive brand equity.

4.3 Case Three: Sudden Eradication Strategy - Russell McVeagh

4.3.1 Interviewee's Profile

Felicity B* is the Director for Business Development and Marketing for Russel McVeagh. Felicity leads the dedicated business development, marketing and communications teams and is responsible for the planning and implementation of strategic business development activities that influence business growth.

Having joined Russel McVeagh in 2015, Felicity has become a highly respected individual in the company specializing in developing brands through strategic initiatives such as industry and sector-specific growth strategies, internal and external communications plans, and client-relationship management programs. Felicity also acts as a trusted advisor to Russell McVeagh's partnership, management, and internal staff at all levels.

4.3.2 Case Background

Founded in 1863 by John Benjamin Russell as a one-man practice, and later joined by Robert McVeagh in 1904, Russell McVeagh has held the names Russell and McVeagh ever since. From its humble beginning as a one-man practice, the firm has grown into a large national firm focusing on commercial law for New Zealand's largest and most influential firms. Over the years, Russell McVeagh has been able to earn a reputation as one of the most uncompromising firms in the New Zealand market and has been involved in quite a few high-profile cases all over New Zealand. Of With more than 350 staff and partners across New Zealand, Russell Mcveagh has been able to maintain a fantastic reputation for well over 150 years and is one of the top premier commercial law firms in New Zealand ("Home: Russell McVeagh," n.d.). As said by Felicity as well:

"So, Russell McVeagh is one of the three top law firms in New Zealand. With a fantastic reputation well over 150 years. Very old stable brand. A lot of our clients, our existing clients, started with us way back then. So, we have a strong client base. And, it's a full-service commercial law firm, so all I guess corporate clients, more so than the private client side of things. So, you wouldn't find us advising on say family law for example or criminal law. So, it's all corporate law based. And the Market is predominately New Zealand inbound, also from the US, from Asia, UK, Australia we have got a lot of referrals firms that we work with and advise them on any New Zealand aspects."

*nom de plume

At the time of this study, though a successful brand with a fantastic reputation in the market, Russell McVeagh needed a rebrand to modernize and adapt to the changes happening in the New Zealand marketplace, along with softening the edges and encouraging fresh thinking, while consistently providing high-quality commercial legal services to its clients.

“I think, since the GFC (Global financial crisis), the market has changed significantly, not just in NZ but right across the globe. It's a very small market here, but incredibly competitive. The law firms at the top end are constantly trying to depreciate each other from themselves on a daily basis.”

Through feedback from their internal and external audiences, a serious gap was observed in the way the clients perceived Russell Mcveagh to be, compared to the way Russell McVeagh wanted to be seen. Clients perceived them to be a very powerful brand with a strong brand presence, but at the same time they also had formed a negative perception about them. Clients were thinking about Russell McVeagh as a dominant, authoritative brand which commands presence, and is mysterious, and fierce. The management of Russell McVeagh wanted to change this perception and so they planned to rebrand to change the way they do business and the way they communicate. One of the major driver for rebranding was to soften the brand to create a positive brand perception about the brand in the minds of its customers.

“We needed to change the perception of Russell McVeagh in the marketplace.”

“So, we wanted to reflect the culture of Russell McVeagh in the external market. A lot of the feedback from my clients was once they worked with us... like wow... you are very different when we are inside Russell McVeagh to what your external perception is. So, there was a mismatch.”

To conclude, it can be said that Russell McVeagh needed a rebrand to change their perception in the minds of their customers and to reposition themselves as a brand which is confident, self-assured, sharp and as a brand which understands and supports their client's strategic goals.

“The major goal was, and it's still is to soften the brand, it's to round the edges, I guess with RM, to educate the market and the clients that we are here to

support them, we support their strategic goals, we are champions for their you know strategic direction where you know we are in that corner.”

One of the aspects that the Russell McVeagh brand was missing was the humanizing aspect which Russell McVeagh wanted to attain along with retaining its authority ("Russell McVeagh - REBRAND," n.d.).

4.3.3 Rebranding Process

4.3.3.1 Participants in the Process

The major participants who were involved in the rebranding process consisted of a team of about 20 members which included both internal and external experts. External experts involved in the rebranding process for Russell McVeagh were the “principal branding agency” who led the charge along with the internal experts for developing the new brand and designing the different brand elements that Russell McVeagh stands for. As said by Felicity:

“So, we engaged with the external experts... I guess... which were, the Principals agency and I have had experience with Principals in Australia in the previous job. So, they introduced me to the New Zealand team over here.”

Internal experts consist of Felicity (Director of Business Development and Marketing); a group of brand ambassadors including members representing the management team from Marketing, HR, IT, and the Finance department; heads of the practice group representing each service line; and lastly, four senior associates.

“So, we created a group of brand ambassadors. So that was a mix of saying new management. So, making sure that all the departments and the business and operations side were represented. Business development, Marketing, Human Resources, IT technology and then the Finance accounts team as well, they all needed to be represented. Then, each practice group so each service line within the firm also needed to be represented. So, I had the heads of each of those groups, they were senior partners. I then had senior associates who were in the pipeline for the next two years involved. So, there was about four of them. We ended up with a team that was close to 20 or so.”

4.3.3.2 Steps in Rebranding Process

In this subchapter, the process adopted for the rebranding of Russell McVeagh is described in detail using three stages of the corporate rebranding framework: analysis, planning, and evaluation (Daly & Moloney, 2004).

a) Analysis

Analysis is the first step of the corporate rebranding framework. The new identity a brand wants to create should be based on thorough analysis which includes situational or market analysis (Daly & Moloney, 2004).

The rebranding process started by analyzing the brand both internally and externally. External analysis took place through interviewing clients, peers, and business competitors, to assess the perception about Russell Mcveagh in the marketplace. Through external analysis, the current brand image in the minds of external customers, peers, and competitors, was analyzed and insights were gained from them to understand what all changes were needed to be made.

Second, internal analysis took place where the point of view of all the internal staff was taken into consideration, from kitchen staff to senior partners. Interviews were conducted with the internal staff by Felicity with the support of the marketing teams to assess the perception of the internal staff. Also, internal workshops were arranged where consultation and discussions took place to understand how the staff felt about Russell McVeagh, why they wanted to work for Russell McVeagh, and how the brand was being represented in the external market. As said by Felicity:

“So, I started the process by interviewing ex-clients and peers and competitors externally. I then also interviewed staff internally, right from Kitchen about up to our senior partners. So, we had a whole, we had a team, I had my marketing team supporting me and interviewing and then we pulled together the common things. We had internal workshops, we needed to understand what was important to every single person who works at Russell McVeagh as to why they are here and why they want to be here and how they represent the brand in the external marketplace”

“So, what we did was we had many workshops that went for half days, we had 2 hours, we would meet monthly, there was a lot of consultation, a lot of discussions about how they feel about Russell McVeagh.”

This highly consultative process helped Russell McVeagh gain some very important insight to re-affirm the brand’s commitment to the changes in line with current trends and in accordance with clients’ needs. This initial analysis of the brand helped Russell McVeagh to decide upon the direction for its further strategies ("Russell McVeagh unveils fresh new brand," n.d.).

b) Planning

The next stage in the corporate rebranding framework is the planning stage. Prior to rebranding, Russell McVeagh had not set firm values. The planning phase therefore started with setting the values. Three core values, namely collaboration, confidence, and originality, were defined.

“Believe it or not, there were no set firm values. So, no one had ever put pen to paper on what our firm values should be. So, that's where we started”

After defining the values, common themes were prepared based on feedback received during the analysis stage to understand what the actual needs of both of their internal and external customers were and further direction was decided accordingly.

In accordance with the feedback received, the team decided to use “sudden eradication strategy” where the whole rebranding process was kept secret from the external customers and they were unaware of the changes being made to the brand until the time the brand was officially launched.

“the staff didn't see the final visual until day1 when it was all being revealed. But I'm sure there would have been some leaks because I had some friends in competitor's law firms who had seen some (laughing). I always try to ban phones when we are in the you know... concept meetings, but partners, they are sneaky.”

The intention of management behind using this strategy was to create a hype amongst its clients and to make them eager to know what the actual changes were that the brand had made and how the new brand would look. The team also decided to use a client-focused approach in its rebranding process. From the beginning, a client-focused approach was taken and was used until the end of process. This was observed to be one of the most significant aspects for the success of the new brand which also created a very positive brand image in the minds of its customers.

“So, in terms of strategies, the most important one is the Client-focus approach. So, whatever we created, whatever behaviors we wanted to see come out from our values needed to be client focus. It's not about us, It's about the clients. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have the clients. So, that was the objective right from the start, right through, we didn't deviate from that and that has stayed stuck.”

The next step was to decide which brand elements they needed to change. The team decided not to change the brand name due to the legacy of the brand created over 150 years. Except for the brand name, all the brand elements were completely changed. From the way they present themselves to the way they communicate, everything was changed to represent their core values and client-focused approach (see figure 17).

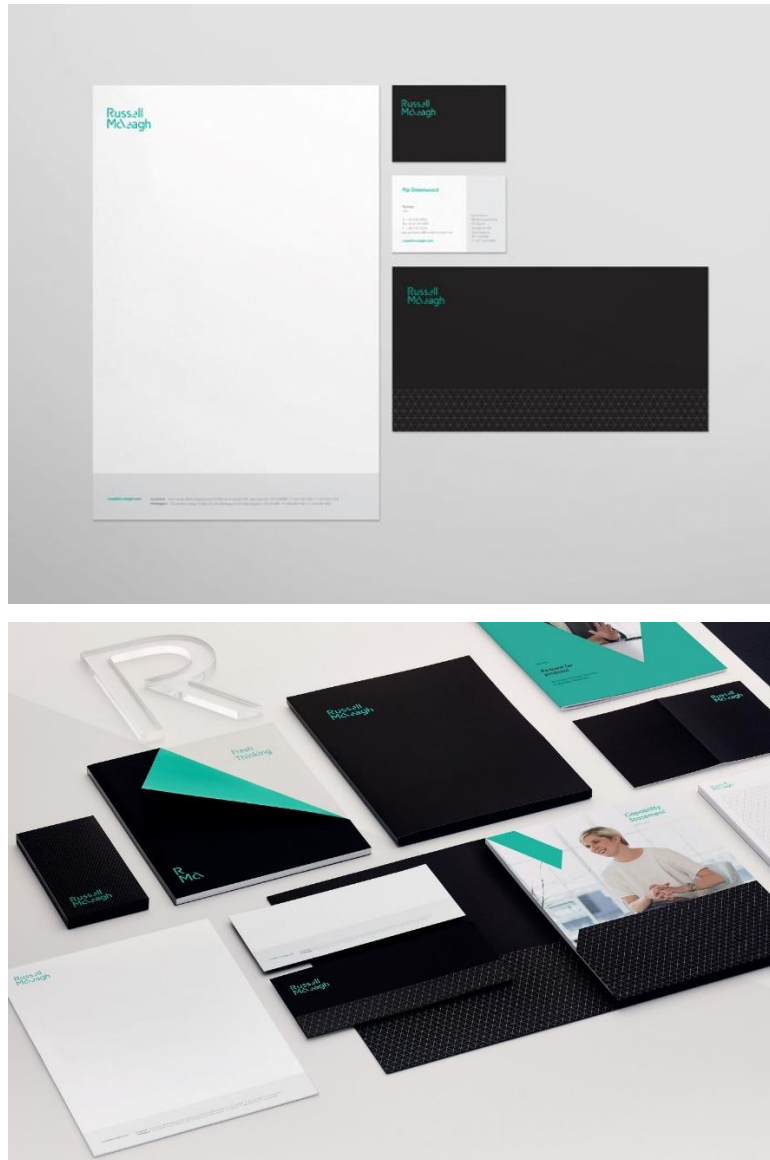


Figure 18: Means of Brand Communication (“Russell McVeagh - REBRAND,” n.d.).

The new logo featured a cut in the middle of the logo which signified the brand’s cut through in the local market (see Figure 19). This seemed appropriate for a brand that functions on the cutting edge of legal aspects (“Russell McVeagh | Principals New Zealand,” n.d.).

“A complete rebrand. Right down to the way in which we write i.e. our language, our documentation, letter format, our notepads, our envelopes, our business cards, everything had to be uniformed and everything had to represent our three core values: collaboration, confidence and originality.”



Figure 19: Russell McVeagh new logo ("Russell McVeagh | Principals New Zealand," n.d.).

The brand communication aspect also played a major role in successful implementation of “sudden eradication strategy.” It was planned to keep the whole process a secret so customers were not aware of the changes being made until the time the new brand was officially launched. An official brand launch event was organized to unveil the new brand where all existing clients were invited along with all internal staff and design people (Principals) involved the creating the new brand. The launch took place in their renewed office with a completely new structure to present a newer, fresher, younger, and more vibrant Russell McVeagh. The launch event had gained a good amount of media attention as Russell McVeagh was one of the premier law firms and a huge brand coming up with something new attracted media attention.

“But we planned for media, PR, we had a brand launch where we invited clients and all the people externally, Principals and design people that were involved in the process. We were very lucky to have had at the same time a complete re-foot in the office. So, we had new offices and new brand and a new year because it was in the early Feb that we launch. And it was like lifting the league, I guess on a new fresh, younger, vibrant Russell McVeagh, you know, Incredibly exciting... very exciting.”

The management team also had a formal interview with the legal press explaining what the new Russell McVeagh was all about and giving some key insights into the new brand. Russell McVeagh was successful in creating a young and vibrant brand with the support of its client-

focused approach, evident from the fact that they were nominated for the NZ design awards ("Russell McVeagh | Best Awards," n.d.). This shows how much the brand's new look and feel was appreciated by the people. Gaining attention from the design side of publications was something law firms were not used to, and it was a very special honor for the new Russell McVeagh.

"But the PR side we did some interviews with the legal press. But what surprised us, and we weren't; expecting was engagement from design publications because it was so different and outside in the norm of a law firm rebrand in terms of look and feel I guess not so much process but look and feel. We got quite a bit of an interest from that sector, and we were the first law firm to be the finalist in the NZ design awards though we didn't win because I think it was Lion who won that category or something like that. But, it was just an absolute honor to be a finalist... Yeah!"

c) Evaluation

Evaluation is the last stage of this framework. In Russell McVeagh's rebranding, evaluation was done from the beginning of the rebranding process. Brand evaluation took place in the analysis stage to decide which future strategies would be used and it gave an appropriate shape for the rebranding process. Towards the end of the rebranding process and prior to launching the new brand, customers were interviewed again to gain feedback about the changes being made, after sharing the brand elements of the new brand. Presentations were made to the board members and other partners of the firm to gain insight prior to officially launching the brand.

"Yeah... the first step in the process when I interviewed clients at the very beginning to understand the RM brand, we went back to them and shared with them, exclusive before we launched and got some initial feedback from them and we had absolutely hit the market, they were all very excited and very happy and so we were very excited at this stage. We then, internally we did a series of presentations, so to the board first, we then present to the partnership, we then presented to the staff, but the staff didn't see the final visual until day1 when it was all being revealed."

Post rebranding, evaluation played a very important role to measure the success of the rebranding process. The client-focused approach helped tremendously to make Russell McVeagh what it is today, and the management is continually taking feedback from its customers and its internal staff about perceptions of the brand in the market.

In the next subchapter, the research questions are answered based on the emergent themes.

4.3.4 Answering the Research Questions

4.3.4.1 Effect on Brand Image

Russell McVeagh was successful in enhancing its brand image from what it was prior to rebranding. Though being a very successful and dominant brand in the New Zealand market, Russell McVeagh felt the need to adapt to current trends in the market in order to modernize itself.

Second, through feedback received from its clients, a serious gap was observed in the way Russell McVeagh was being perceived by its clients compared to what they were. Something was affecting the brand image of Russell McVeagh in the external market and they were losing clients due to the consistent negative brand image of the firm. Clients were thinking about Russell McVeagh as an aggressive, dominant, authoritative brand which commands presence, and is mysterious, and fierce. Using “sudden eradication strategy” Russell McVeagh decided to rebrand itself with a client-focused approach which was felt to be missing from the old brand. Though very successful, Russell McVeagh was portrayed as a brand which did not focus on clients’ needs and the firm was experiencing a decline in its client base. These factors led Russell McVeagh to rebrand itself with a fresher and younger look as expected by its clients.

Post rebranding, a very positive brand image was reinforced for the Russell McVeagh brand in the market. Using sudden eradication strategy, Russell McVeagh successfully communicated to its clients that now they were more focused in understanding their client’s expectations and to deliver in accordance to these expectations. Feedbacks from the clients also showed that the clients were very happy with the newer, fresher, younger, and more vibrant outlook of the Russell McVeagh brand. To date, Russell McVeagh strives to keep changing in line with the current trends using its client-focused approach (Principals, 2018, February 13). As said by Felicity as well:

“It's positively reinforced to the market and our client base that Russell McVeagh has changed and is changing and there's more to come, so be aware”

Regarding internal staff, Russell McVeagh was viewed as a factory, which meant they were not focused much on lifting the morale and development of internal staff. This aspect was changed, and now the management focuses more on internal staff development by investing time and money to be with them and constantly engage with them to understand their requirements.

“Absolutely! I think especially one of the market reputations that we were known was as the factory. So, that's our approach to recruitment has changed slightly. So, now instead of lavishing our recruits with gifts and beautiful graphics and what not. We are investing the money in being present and engaging with them and traveling and that type of things.”

To conclude, Russell McVeagh was very successful in understanding their customers' expectations, thereby they could use this to create a very positive brand image in the minds of their customers and they were very much successful in transforming the negative brand image owned by the old Russell McVeagh brand into a positive one. Russell McVeagh was successful in portraying itself as a brand open to adverse culture and a flexible working environment, using modern technology to be accessible everywhere and anywhere. Using “sudden eradication strategy” with a client-focused approach, they were able to create a hype in the minds of their customers' and gain a good amount of media attention which led to them creating a very powerful and very positive brand image in the minds of their customers.

“The key message is to be aligned and positive, we are open to adverse culture. We are flexible in our working that has changed a lot, the previous presentism, no longer flexible working place, we have the technology now to be anywhere and accessible that can be good or bad.”

4.3.4.2 Effect on Brand Loyalty

Russell McVeagh, being a premier law firm in the New Zealand market, enjoyed a very good amount of brand loyalty from its existing clients. Post rebranding, brand loyalty has tremendously increased for Russell McVeagh. “Sudden eradication strategy,” along with a client-focused approach played a very significant role in the successful implementation of the rebranding process.

Word of mouth and referrals were two very important tools for Russell McVeagh to create brand loyalty amongst its clients. To maintain brand loyalty, client-relationship meetings are conducted regularly by Felicity or any of the CEOs without any involvement from the partners with the intention of providing a safe environment for its client to give unbiased feedback on how they feel about Russell McVeagh and how can Russell McVeagh can improve their experiences. This helps them to understand where they are currently standing in regard to fulfilling clients' expectations and thereby helping them to plan future strategies by identifying the gaps in services.

“Absolutely! Referral basis is very strong for us. It plays a very strong point in our reputation. So, one thing we do to keep a check on that is we do regular client-relationship meetings, we someone like myself or the CEO would meet with the client, independent of the partner, which gives the client an opportunity to talk about the services and allows them to speak in a safe environment.”

As a part of creating brand loyalty, another thing which Russell McVeagh does is keep an eye on the fee revenues of their clients and if there is any big difference observed then they engage in professional commercial conversations with those clients to understand why such differences have been observed, and whether it was a one-off transaction or if they are actually dropping off.

“What I also do as a part of brand loyalty and client-relationship management is to look at the fee revenue for a particular client and if it's being top and then in the last 6 months started to drop off, ask the questions why and if it's because it was one off transaction then its fine but if it been business as usual and they are dropping off, we would like to go to talk to them to see why the difference is.”

It can be said that Russell McVeagh has been very successful in maintaining brand loyalty of its clients through the different efforts taken by its management to create brand loyalty. Russell McVeagh succeeded in building trust among its clients by involving the clients in the rebranding process and taking their input from the start, which in the end helped Russell McVeagh to create an impression that they did care about their clients' opinions. The successful implementation of their client-focused approach was evident from the increase in their client base observed, which was declining prior to the rebranding.

4.3.4.3 Effect on Brand Awareness

Post rebranding, brand awareness was observed as the most affected aspect. One of the major aims of rebranding Russell McVeagh was to create an awareness of who Russell McVeagh was. Initially, brand awareness was created just by the means of referrals and word of mouth publicity but as a part of the rebranding activity, a proper brand communication channel was created which played a significant role in creating brand awareness for the new Russell McVeagh brand.

“Absolutely! Referral basis is very strong for us. It plays a very strong point in our reputation.”

During the analysis brand awareness was created indirectly by involving both the internal and external customers right from the start of the rebranding process. Throughout the rebranding process, they made sure that all participants in the rebranding process were aligned and that the communications sent out all said the same thing. Brand communication played a very important role in creating brand awareness of the new Russell McVeagh. Using “sudden eradication strategy” for brand communication was a very successful approach for Russell McVeagh which helped them to create a hype amongst its clients, who were now more eager and excited to know how the new Russell McVeagh would look. As a part of this strategy, the launch event was a big platform to showcase what the new brand was and what changes were being made. Also, a good amount of media attention was gained during the launch event of the Russell McVeagh, which further aided creating the brand awareness for the new Russell McVeagh brand.

“It's the awareness of who we really are. It's the awareness that we are young, we are flexible, and they have been for many many years, but the brand did not portray that in the external market unless the clients knew us and that was the referral”

To conclude, success of the rebranding was evident from the fact that post rebranding, the most affected aspect was the brand awareness of the firm. Using “sudden eradication strategy” as described by Kaikati and Kaikati (2003), Russell McVeagh was very much successful in creating appropriate brand awareness in the analysis stage by involving its clients and internal staff, and later during the brand launch period by adopting the appropriate brand communication channels to communicate changes about the new brand and gain a good amount of media attention which helped to create brand awareness about the new brand. Using “sudden eradication strategy” helped

Russell McVeagh to maintain a secrecy aspect to create a hype in the minds of its clients followed by a successful launch event which all added up to a powerful awareness about the new Russell McVeagh.

4.3.4.4 Effect on Brand Association

Prior to rebranding, through the feedback of their clients, it was evident that clients perceived Russell McVeagh as a very aggressive, dominant brand with a strong presence which in a way made the clients afraid of the brand. Due to its very strong brand personality, clients thought about Russell McVeagh as an aggressive and arrogant brand which did not adapt to clients' expectations and they were losing their client base because of this strong but negative brand personality which did not portray them as client-focused.

"In terms, I think, very very positively it's shown at the market and our client base that we are adaptable and flexible. Whereas before, it was like our way or the high way"

Also, Russell McVeagh had negatively portrayed themselves as heavy hitters in the litigation space, making clients resistant to approach them, which led Russell McVeagh to lose out on its client base as well.

"So, for example, one client would recommend to someone to another potential client you really want to go to Russell McVeagh... no no ... we don't want to fight. We were perceived as the heavy hitters in the litigation space."

Felicity, in the interview conducted with the clients, asked them what kind of animal they would associate Russell McVeagh with. The answers received were somewhat surprising. Russell McVeagh was associated with rottweilers, dolphins, and owls. But the most surprising and predominant answer (95%) was that they were associated mainly with black panthers, a jungle animal who is mysterious, aggressive, and commands presence

"Yea, Absolutely! One of the questions that I asked clients right in the beginning was "if Russell McVeagh was an animal, what type of animal would that be?". And it was incredible, probably 95% of the response was like "Panther". So, like a jungle animal, that hides in the jungle, jumps out, eat their

prey, runs back... it's mysterious, you quite don't know much about them, quite elegant and sleek, commands presence. We had rottweiler, dolphins, owls but pre-dominantly black panthers.”

Post rebranding, Russell McVeagh has been able to use a client-focused approach along with its “sudden eradication strategy” to deliver what the new brand promises i.e. to be the champions of their client’s strategic goals. The new Russell McVeagh brand, along with maintaining its association with the black panther, has the elements of the lioness, which portrays the brand as very powerful one, having a strong presence, and a very proud brand with a soft side who cares a lot for its clients and always focuses on providing high-quality (“Top New Zealand law firm Russell McVeagh launches new brand identity via Principals,” n.d.).

“I think they still would say Black Panther in terms of strong presence, but then there is also the element of either a lioness who is very proud and very strong but also has a very soft side.”

4.3.4.5 Effects on Brand Equity

Russell McVeagh was very successful in maintaining their existing brand equity. The brand equity of the new Russell McVeagh brand was better and more powerful than what it was prior to rebranding. Prior to rebranding, Russell McVeagh was not focused on its clients’ expectations, one of the aspect which was negatively related to its brand equity. Post rebranding, it planned to focus a lot more on its clients’ requirements and it can therefore be said that somewhere this approach enhanced the overall brand equity of Russell McVeagh.

Post rebranding, the new Russell McVeagh had a better awareness in the market with a fresher and younger look than what it had prior to rebranding. Russell McVeagh was successful in creating a strong brand equity by delivering what they promised (Principals, 2018, February 13). They were very successful in strengthening their relationship with their target group and media sector through their various efforts, including community engagement activities and pro-bono work, which made them more interactive than they were prior to rebranding.

“I guess the visibility in the marketplace was heightened. We have been able to leverage that in media, PR around the work we do. Not just the legal work but internally our community engagement, pro- bono work, our CSR strategy all

those sorts of things we are able to strengthen our relationship with that with the media sector and great relationships there. So, they are responsive to us and we are responsive to them. Whereas before this process, we would never respond. Not actually never respond but we were very reluctant to respond to the media, the media inquiries.”

Due to increased interaction with the media, Russell McVeagh was able to build a powerful brand equity by communicating in a better way about their success factors and how they were benefitting the community and their clients. These interactions with the media sector helped Russell McVeagh to be more confident in their communications which was also one of their core values. These factors acted as a significant tool for Russell McVeagh to create a powerful brand equity in the market.

“So, we now have our expert corporate communications people who engaged and coach the partners on how to engage in media. It's being about confidence which is one of our three core values, giving them the confidence to talk confidently about the work they do. So, all about shouting about their success but also how we benefit the market, the community and now the clients.”

The strategies used by Russell McVeagh also played a very significant role in building the firm's brand equity. It was due to the use of “sudden eradication strategy” that the hype and excitement was created within the media sector and with its client as well. The client-focused approach, combined with this strategy, played a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of the strategy used for the rebranding process, making Russell McVeagh what it is today.

4.3.4.6 Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Rebranding Strategies

From the initial feedback from their clients, it was quite clear that they would need to adopt a strategy with a client-focused approach.

“So, in terms of strategies, whatever we created, whatever behaviors we wanted to see come out from our values needed to be client focus. It's not about us, It's about the clients. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have the clients. So, that was the objective right from the start, right through, we didn't deviate from that and that has stayed stuck.”

This client-focused approach along with strategic brand communication was one of the most significant aspects influencing the effectiveness of the “sudden eradication strategy” and led to the successful implementation of the rebranding process. Using this approach helped Russell McVeagh create a powerful and positive brand image in the minds of their clients and the clients were unknowingly involved throughout the rebranding process.

It was this approach which formed the basis for using “sudden eradication strategy” for the rebranding process. Because customers were not informed about the changes being made ahead of time, eagerness and excitement was created in the minds of the clients which played a very significant role in the rebranding process of Russell McVeagh.

This approach also acted as a key strength to connect with the customers through the structured communication process because of which powerful and positive brand equity of Russell McVeagh was created. Though quite risky, Russell McVeagh was very much successful in implementing this strategy as they kept the focus on their clients until the end of the process which played a significant role in the success of the new brand. This client-focused approach was also visible throughout their brand communications through which key messages were communicated to their clients. To conclude, by using this client-focus approach, Russell McVeagh was very successful in creating a powerful brand image in the minds of its target group.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This last chapter covers the discussion of the findings. In the first section, the cases are being compared based on the findings in the previous chapter. Firstly, the rebranding process adopted by each case would be discussed followed by a discussion of the impact of the rebranding strategies on brand equity and its dimensions and the factors influencing the effectiveness of the rebranding strategies. Subsequently, managerial implications will be presented and the chapter will close with outlining the limitations of the dissertation and future research areas will be suggested.

5.1 Comparing the cases

In this section, the cases will be compared based on the findings of the previous chapter. Initially, discussion will be made on the processes used by the cases based on corporate rebranding framework (see Figure 5), followed by a discussion of the impact of the rebranding strategies on the brand equity and its dimensions. Lastly, factors which influenced the rebranding strategies will be discussed.

5.1.1 Rebranding process

In the corporate rebranding framework (see Figure 5), three stages namely analysis, planning and evaluation of the corporate rebranding process were described in the chapter two of this dissertation (Daly & Moloney, 2004). As observed in the previous chapter of this report, the empirical findings revealed the existence of these stages in all the three cases and will be described in detail in the following sections.

a) Analysis

As per the corporate rebranding framework (see Figure 3), the first stage (i.e. the analysis stage) comprises of analyzing and scanning the external market conditions, and considering aspects such as the market size, the overall potential of the market, the competitors analysis and considering consumers' attitudes and preferences (Daly & Moloney, 2004). The empirical findings showed that all the three cases carried out some sort of analysis in the initial stage of rebranding process.

In Case one, the competitor analysis was done through which the management of K3 Corporation had a look around current happening in the market. In Case two and Case three, the analysis was

performed during the initial stage of the rebranding process by the means of competitor analysis and understanding preferences of both internal and external customers.

It is interesting to observe that though in Case one, the management of K3 Corporation did engage the analysis of competitors, but they did not conduct internal brand analysis. The aspect of analysis was not done in a detailed and formal way as suggested by Daly and Moloney (2004) in their corporate rebranding framework whilst in Case two and three, the aspect of analysis was evident in the more detailed way and extensive market research has been carried out as compared to Case one. Along with the competitor analysis it is also very important to do internal brand audit to gain appropriate understanding of brand's performance in the market (Daly & Moloney, 2004). It is based on this analysis that the further steps for the rebranding process will be decided.

Also, from the empirical findings, it can be concluded that in all the cases rebranding strategies have been planned based on analysis. It is very much evident that in the initial stage of rebranding process, analysis played a very significant role to give appropriate directions and strategies for the rebranding process and therefore, led to the successful implementation of the rebranding process.

b) Planning

The corporate rebranding framework describes planning as the second stage of the framework which involves internal and external brand communication. In all the cases it has been observed that the brand communication aspect was very carefully planned and implemented in accordance to the analysis done.

The theoretical framework states that organizations create brand communication programs directed towards both internal and external customers to receive their support during the rebranding process as well as the post rebranding process (Daly & Moloney, 2004). In all the three cases, a careful plan of the rebranding process was emphasized. It is very evident especially in all the three cases that very well-planned brand communication programs were implemented involving both internal and external stakeholders and accordingly, rebranding strategies were being planned, taking into consideration all customers.

Apart from the communications aspect, the planning stage also involves changes done in the brand elements such as renaming, redesigning, restructuring and repositioning (Ahonen, 2008). The

empirical findings revealed that in all the three cases these changes were evident in the brand elements.

In context to renaming the brand, only Case three didn't change the brand name and continued with the old brand name to maintain the existing legacy of the brand whilst case one and case two did prefer to change their brand name and therefore, it can be concluded that the most preferred approach for renaming the brand is substituting the brand name itself with a new name.

The redesigning aspect was also very much evident in all the three cases. The empirical findings revealed that in all the three cases the decisions in the context to redesigning aspects were mainly taken by the external branding agencies in consultation with the management. As observed, in Case one and Case three, it was handled by the Principals branding agency and in Case two it was handled by the Design works Inc. branding agency. It can be concluded that out of all the aspects, redesigning is most sought-after aspect and is given lots of importance throughout the rebranding process.

The third aspect related to changes in the brand elements (i.e. restructuring) is also very much evident in all the three cases. It has been observed that restructuring was also preferred in all the three cases to create a new brand image in the minds of their external and internal customers. The restructuring aspect was observed to be more relevant to creating a brand image of the new brand. Also, restructuring was observed to be one of the means to communicate the new brand to the internal and external customers. It can be concluded that during the rebranding process, restructuring needs to be carefully taken into consideration as it is directly related to communicating with the internal and external customers. It is very interesting to observe the relationship between restructuring the brand elements and the brand image of the firms which can be scrutinized in future research.

Repositioning was another aspect which was considered significant during the rebranding process by all the three cases. Though repositioning was evident in all the three cases, it is interesting to observe repositioning to be more significant in Case one and Case two wherein changes were being made in the context to the brand names as compared to Case three wherein brand name wasn't changed. It would be interesting to further scrutinize this relationship of brand name with the repositioning of the brand.

c) Evaluation

The last stage of the corporate rebranding framework is the evaluation stage. In all the three cases, continuous evaluation was very much evident throughout the rebranding process. The empirical findings revealed that an evaluation process was followed right from the start of the rebranding and continued post rebranding as well. Though mentioned as the last stage of the rebranding process, it is evident from the empirical findings, that all the three cases were continuously evaluating the rebranding process, even post rebranding. It is found that rebranding being a costly and time-consuming process, it needs constant evaluation, even years after implementation of the rebranding process.

In Case One, using combined branding strategy helped K3 Corporation to create a distinct brand image as compared to their competitors as the management planned to deliver all the three services together under one brand name. Combining all the services together made it more convenient for the management by improving and creating a powerful brand image of K3 Corporation in the minds of its customers.

Whereas in Case Two, using translucent warning strategy, the customers of Spark New Zealand were constantly kept in loop during the rebranding process while the changes were being made. This helped Spark New Zealand to create a strong and positive brand image by connecting the customers right from the beginning of the rebranding process which in-turn helped the brand to portray that they significantly cared about their customers and were committed towards delivering high quality services by taking customers' views under consideration throughout the rebranding process.

In Case Three, Russell McVeagh used sudden eradication strategy for the rebranding process. The empirical findings suggested that Russell McVeagh was successful in improving its brand image by combining sudden eradication strategy with a client-focused approach. It is interesting to observe that the sudden eradication strategy is highly risky as the consumers are not aware of the change and the sudden change in the brand might affect the brand image negatively as well. In the case of Russell McVeagh, it was combination of various factors such as sudden eradication strategy, client-focused approach and its previous dwindling brand legacy which helped to create a powerful brand image of the new Russell McVeagh.

To conclude, it is observed that the empirical findings tend to agree with all the three stages of the corporate rebranding framework as stated by Daly and Moloney (2004). In addition, an interesting observation is that the rebranding process starts with gaining the management's support and building the confidence of the decision makers and making them believe in the rebranding process. Also, it is interesting to observe that evaluation is a continuous process which doesn't end with the rebranding process and the evaluation should take place continuously, even post rebranding.

In the next section, the impact of rebranding strategies on the brand equity and its dimensions would be discussed.

5.1.2 Impact of Rebranding strategies

It is very interesting to observe the impact of different rebranding strategies on the dimensions of the brand equity and which ultimately affects the overall brand equity in all the three cases.

In Case one, combined branding strategy was used for the rebranding process through which three different services namely accounting, management consulting and law firm services were being delivered under a single brand name of K3 Corporation. Though the impact of combined brand strategy was evident on all the dimensions of the brand equity, the empirical findings suggested that the impact was mainly on the brand loyalty of the brand. Also, using this strategy, K3 Corporation could transform the bad reputation earned by the brand into a positive and strong brand image which helped to create a powerful brand equity for K3 corporation. The brand loyalty of customers increased drastically towards the firm as K3 corporation was able to gain the trust of its customers back and by combining the services, the brand was successful in communicating customers that they were extremely committed to meet their expectations and to deliver quality services as required by customers in order to develop confidence into the brand.

In Case Two, Spark New Zealand used translucent warning strategy for the rebranding process. Using translucent warning strategy, customers were made aware beforehand about the changes being planned and thereby this helped Spark New Zealand to win the trust and confidence of their customers as the customers were involved throughout the rebranding process, from the beginning of the process. Thus, using translucent warning strategy had a very positive impact mainly on the brand loyalty aspect as the customers trusted the brand more and it was evident from the fact that the customers data base increased constantly (see Figure 15). Eventually, this also created a very strong and powerful brand equity amongst its target group which is very much evident from the

fact that the earnings have almost doubled within short span of time (see figure 16). Using translucent warning strategy mainly impacted the brand loyalty aspect of Spark New Zealand which directly influenced the overall brand equity, thereby creating a strong and powerful brand equity of Spark New Zealand.

In Case Three, sudden eradication strategy has been used for the rebranding process through which the customers were not informed beforehand about the changes being made in the brand. The empirical findings reveal the impact of using sudden eradication strategy more on brand awareness and brand association dimension of brand equity. Keeping the customers uninformed helped Russell McVeagh to maintain the secrecy about the rebranding process and it also helped the brand to create a good amount of hype within customers and media which created curiosity about the brand and therefore, brand awareness was highly increased. Also, using sudden eradication strategy, Russell McVeagh was successful in creating a positive brand association in the minds of its customers which was also considered as one of the major reason for Russell McVeagh for rebranding the brand.

In next sub-section, factors influencing the effectiveness of these rebranding strategies will be discussed

5.1.3 Factors influencing effectiveness rebranding strategies

The rebranding process signifies the importance of collaboration between marketing, human resource and strategic decision makers (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). The empirical findings highlighted that for the successful implementation of the rebranding process, different factors affect the effectiveness of rebranding strategies. It is very interesting to observe that these factors played a significant role in making the rebranding strategies effective and therefore, also played a significant role in the success of the overall rebranding process. In case of professional services, significant factors influencing the effectiveness of rebranding strategies are ownership support, brand communication and integrated marketing communication. Also, the empirical findings revealed that factors such as characteristics of professional services namely nature of service, customer-centric approach and level of confidentiality also play a significant role in the successful implementation of the rebranding process.

5.2 Implications

In this section, the managerial implications of the dissertation will be outlined. These implications create new insights for the corporate managers especially in context to the professional service providers. These insights are formed to guide corporate managers and decision makers by highlighting crucial things which an organization should consider while planning for the rebranding process. While these implications are mainly targeted towards professional service providing firms, it is also important to note that by no means they are exclusive only for them. These implications are applicable to any of the organizations planning to undergo rebranding.

The first implication for the corporate managers is that while planning for their rebranding process, the managers shall be clear about the reasons in context to why and what kind of rebranding they want to consider and accordingly, the strategies shall be decided. Based on the observations from all the three cases, rebranding in the professional service firms requires a strong justified reason to build confidence amongst the owners of the business and to convince them to undertake the rebranding process.

Also, another important point which needs to be considered is, while planning the rebranding process, it is very important to gain support from owner of the business and their partners as well. Ignoring any one of the partners can be fatal and may even derail the whole rebranding process. Managers should always focus on strengthening bonds amongst the decision makers which is a very crucial factor for the successful implementation of rebranding process.

The managers, while undertaking rebranding of an organization, should conduct in-depth analysis of the current market situation. Also, the managers should try to build on existing legacy of the old brand instead of completely starting from a scratch. It takes ages to build a brand, so it is very important that the managers consider existing strengths of the organization as well. As evident in all the three cases, using existing legacy of the old brand made it much easier to communicate the new brand internally and externally and it also plays a crucial role in the implementation of the rebranding process.

Another implication is that the managers of professional service firms should engage aggressively in using marketing and promotional activities. From the empirical findings, it is very much evident the crucial role that brand communication plays for the effective implementation of the rebranding strategies. With the traditional methods (i.e. depending on word of mouth and referrals), the

managers of the professional service firms should also need to promote their new brand aggressively and focus much more on brand communication aspect. For the brand communications, the managers should prefer to seek expert advice from the branding agencies.

Managers should be aware that rebranding campaigns are a very risky affair and thus should be planned carefully. Communicating the changes to the customers is considered risky because it may affect the recognition levels by the customers, which may lead to decrease in brand loyalty and therefore, affecting the profits of the organization. Without a bold and aggressive brand communication program, it will be very difficult to create brand awareness of the new brand which in consequences can derail the rebranding process.

5.3 Future research

Despite much effort conducting this research, it remains that there are several limitations to this study that inhibit the generalizability of its result; and few suggestions are made for future research. As mentioned previously as well, literature in context to rebranding strategies and rebranding processes in context to the professional service providing firms is very less and therefore, more scope for future research in this domain is possible.

One of the major limitation of this study is that data taken for the study is limited to professional service sector and therefore it cannot be generalized. Also, the study was based on views of the internal stakeholders of the professional service firms. In all the three cases, only the views of their marketing professionals were taken into consideration. One of the directions towards future studies would be to investigate customers' responses towards rebranding. It will be very interesting to observe the impact of rebranding strategies on the brand equity of these professional service firms by cross-validating the findings of this study, taking into consideration the views of their customers as well. This will further help to improve the validity and generalizability of the findings of the study.

Another limitation of this study was that the study was conducted specifically just in Auckland. Conducting similar study based on cross-country domain could give some important insights. A longitudinal research design approach is advisable as a direction towards future study to investigate the impact of rebranding strategies on the brand equity of the professional service firms based on cross-country domain.

As evident from the findings of the study, different types of rebranding strategies can be used for rebranding. Therefore, further research can be done to investigate what can be the best strategy to undertake the rebranding process.

By conducting three interviews and selecting three cases consisting of professional service firms the researcher tried to control the size and the industry. As a recommendation for the future research, a similar kind of a study can be conducted on service sector using surveys (based on quantitative methodology) with a bigger sample size which can help in increasing the validity and generalizability aspects in context to the results the study.

Professional services shouldn't be avoided in the branding research and the author strongly encourage more research in context to the professional service firms which can lead to interesting insights in the rebranding and branding domain.

5.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the rebranding process undertaken by professional service providing firms and the impact of different strategies they adopt for the rebranding process. A case study approach was being used which involved three professional service providing firms. Data was collected through both primary and secondary sources. Initially, the secondary data was analyzed followed by the collection of the primary data through semi-structured interviews.

Based on the empirical findings, it can be concluded that the rebranding of the cases used in the dissertation can be seen as a typical example of corporate rebranding of organizations (Muzellec et al., 2003). It is also evident that the professional service firms tend to prefer revolutionary rebranding as compared to evolutionary rebranding (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006) and also preference of a complete change over a minor or an intermediate change has been observed (Daly & Moloney, 2004).

All the three stages of the corporate rebranding framework namely analysis, planning and evaluation were evident in all the three cases (Daly & Moloney, 2004). The empirical findings reveal that the professional services providing firms considered analysis as a very important and crucial factor to provide directions for the rebranding process. Communication, both internally and externally, played a crucial role in the planning stage and was also considered as a crucial factor which widely influenced the effectiveness of rebranding strategies. Professional service

providing firms depend a lot on word of mouth and referrals to interact with their clients and thereby these should be taken into consideration during the planning stage while developing the communication plans.

Though all the three stages as mentioned in the corporate rebranding framework were evident in the three cases, the researcher found that the rebranding process doesn't necessarily start from the analysis stage. Even before the analysis stage, the management and the ownership support played a crucial role and was considered as a significant factor in the success of the rebranding process. So, the first stage starts with building the confidence of the owners and the decision makers and making them believe that the positive change is about to happen.

It is also very interesting to observe that the evaluation is a never-ending activity as rebranding process is a timely affair and the process is planned in different phases which may be conducted over several years. Professional service firms consider to continuously evaluate the outcome of the rebranding process even years after rebranding process is completed, which helps the firms to plan for their future strategies.

A strong positive impact of rebranding strategies was observed mainly on brand loyalty and brand awareness dimensions of brand equity and therefore, these strategies were very much impactful to build powerful brand equity of the professional service firms. Ownership support and brand communication emerge as significant factors which affect the effectiveness of rebranding strategies and therefore these factors need to be taken into consideration while planning for the rebranding process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval



AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
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T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

25 September 2017
Marilyn Giroux
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Marilyn

Re Ethics Application: **17/313 Rebranding of professional services: A case study approach**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Subcommittee.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 25 September 2020.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEK prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEK Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEK Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Names or identifying features of firms must be removed from any report of the research.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEK before commencing your study.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Manager

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: bpb2729@autuni.ac.nz; Ken Hyde

Appendix B: Interview guide

Name of organization:

Name of concerned authority:

Title:

- 1) Please mention nature of your business.
- 2) Story of rebranding in your organization. (Why rebranding was needed?)
- 3) What were the Goals and Objectives of rebranding?
- 4) What all strategies were considered for rebranding and which strategy was finally adopted for the rebranding of your organization? Why this particular strategy was considered to be appropriate?
- 5) What problems or difficulties were observed during the rebranding process? What all risks were involved and how did you plan to overcome these risks.
- 6) What was the observed effect of rebranding strategy on the following factors
 - a) Brand Image
 - b) Brand Association
 - c) Brand Awareness
 - d) Brand Loyalty
 - e) Brand Equity
- 7) From the above factors, which factor do you think was majorly affected and why?
- 8) According to you, which factor do you consider influential in increasing the effectiveness of rebranding strategies?

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

The logo for AUT University, featuring the letters 'AUT' in a stylized, outlined font.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

31st August 2017

Project Title

Rebranding of professional services: A case study approach

An Invitation

My name is Harish Jayantilal Parmar and I am a Master of Business Student at the Department of Marketing, Advertising, Retailing and Sales at AUT University, New Zealand. I am conducting a research on the rebranding strategies used by professional service firms and the effects of rebranding on their brand equity. I would like to invite you to participate in this research. All information collected will be kept confidential. You may withdraw your participation any time before the completion of the research project without any effect to your rights.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to explore the current practices adopted by professional services firms in terms of rebranding. It also examines what are the factors influencing these rebranding strategies and its impact on brand equity, thereby providing useful insights for managerial implications to corporations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were initially identified based on personal contacts and as you have recently successfully undertaken rebranding approach to change your brand image. You are, thus, qualified as a participant to provide suitable and valuable information for this research. You have total rights to decide whether you want to participate, and in case you need more time to decide, I would like to obtain your contact details, under your permission, so that I can follow up and confirm your participation later. After your confirmation of participation, I will propose dates and times for the interview, and you can select the timeslot that is most convenient for you.

What will happen in this research?

This research will involve two interviews that will collect information based on current practices adopted by professional services firms in terms of rebranding. These interviews will take place in October 2016.

The first interview would be carried out in first week of October. The main purpose of this interview is to gather data based on following research question:

- 1) How are professional services firms using rebranding strategies to change their brand image?
- 2) What is the impact of the chosen rebranding strategy on:
 - a) Brand Loyalty;
 - b) Brand awareness;
 - c) Brand association;
 - d) Brand equity?
- 3) What are the factors influencing the effectiveness of rebranding strategies?

After analyzing the responses from the first stage of interviews accordingly, second stage of interviews would be conducted in which detailed follow up would take place and proper feedback would be given with regards to what more information on the particular topic would be required which was lacking in the first stage of interview or which was not answered sufficiently in the first stage.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There will be very limited level of risks, as this research does not require you to do any experiment, or come to contact with any substance or specific situation.

Regarding discomfort, it is believed to be very minor, and may occur when you answer interview questions.

To minimise this, I assure you questions are non-invasive, and explain clearly to you in advance that the interviews will be purely for collecting the data for the stated purpose of understanding the research subject. Data collected will be labelled with pseudo-names, so that the analysis and reporting will not reveal any personal or identifiable information about you.

What are the benefits?

A gift will be prepared for you, as a token for appreciation for participation in this study. For the wider community, this study will help to understand the strategic options organizations are considering for rebranding campaign and what are their actual effects on brand equity of the firm and thereby it serves as a guide to managers to understand how a rebranding campaign should be implemented and which strategy should be considered while going for rebranding. I will be the primary beneficiary as this research will allow to fulfil the requirement for the completion of Masters of Business degree from the Auckland University of Technology.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone except to the primary researcher. To ensure that privacy and confidentiality are respected, you and your

information will be labelled with a pseudo name for the purpose of data analysis and reporting. All data will be stored on a password protected memory stick and consent forms will be stored in a password protected cabinet of the supervisors after the project is completed.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no costs to you other than your time to participate in the study.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You can take your time to decide if you wish to participate in the study. If you cannot make the decision on the spot, I will ask for your contact details so that I can follow up with you later. You have the choice of selecting the most appropriate timeslot for you from the proposed schedule.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and will not advantage or disadvantage you by any means. Your formal agreement to participate in this research will be made when you sign the Consent Form given to you at the beginning of the first interview. You can withdraw from the research anytime until the final report is produced, without any penalty and the information you have provided would not be included in the final statement.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A summary of the results will be available and emailed to you upon request once the study is complete.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Giroux at marilyn.giroux@aut.ac.nz, 09-921-9999 ext 5078.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25th September 2017 AUTECH Reference number 17/313.

Appendix D: Consent form

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Consent Form

Project title: Rebranding of Professional Services: A Case Study Approach

Project Supervisor: Dr. Marilyn Giroux

Researcher: Harish Jayantilal Parmar

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 12 October 2015.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27th September 2017,
AUTECH Reference number 17/313

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix E: Interview transcript (Case three: Russell McVeagh)

To start with can you just brief me about the background of Russel Mcveagh

So, Russel McVeagh is one of the three top law firms in New Zealand. With a fantastic reputation well over 150 years. Very old stable brand. A lot of our clients, our existing clients, started with us way back then. So, we have a strong client base. And, it's a full-service commercial law firm, so all I guess corporate clients, more so than the private client side of things. So, you wouldn't find us advising on say family law for example or criminal law... so it's all corporate law based. And the Market is predominately New Zealand, Inbound also from the US, from Asia, UK, Australia we have got a lot of referrals firms that we work with and advise them on any New Zealand aspects.

How idea of Rebranding came up

From my CEO... He said to me let's tweak the logo. I was like ok... thinking What does he really need to do here, so yeah, it was... it was a direct instruction but quite a vague instruction, so that I then said about investigating when I first joined two years ago.

What was the need for rebranding?

I think, since the GFC, the market has changed significantly, not just in NZ but right across the globe. It's a very small market here, but incredibly competitive. The law firms at the top end are constantly trying to depreciate each other from themselves on a daily basis. I think the previous Russell McVeagh look and feel had served the purpose for many years and was incredibly successful. We needed to change the perception of Rm in the marketplace. A lot of the older partners had retired and it's a very young partnership now with an average age of 42 years. So, we wanted to reflect the culture of Russell McVeagh in the external market. A lot of the feedback from my clients was once they worked with us; like wow, you are very different when we are inside Russell McVeagh to what your external perception is. So, there was a mismatch. So, my role was to bring the two together.

What were the objective and goals of rebranding

The major goal was and it's still is to soften the brand, it's to round the edges, I guess with Russell McVeagh, to educate the market and the clients that we are here to support them, we support their strategic goals, we are champions for their you know strategic direction where you know we are in that corner.

What about the planning process? How did it all started?

Well, it was, believe it or not there were no set firm values. So, no one had ever put pen to paper on what our firm values should be. So, that's where we started. So, I started the process by interviewing ex-clients and peers and competitors externally. I then also interviewed staff internally, right from Kitchen about up to our senior partners. So, we had a whole, we had a team, I had my marketing team supporting me and interviewing and then we pulled together the common things. We had internal workshops, we needed to understand what was important to every single person who works at Russel McVeagh as to why they are here and why they want to be here and how they represent the brand in the external marketplace. So, we didn't want to create something new, we just wanted to get out what was already there and

present it to the market. So, we engaged with the external experts, which were Principals agency and I have had experience with Principals in Australia in the previous job. So, they introduced me to the New Zealand team over here. So, with Steve and Tess and we all worked very closely in creating the approach to creating the new brand and values that we say today. But before I engaged with principals, I identified internally who should be part of the process. So, we created a group of brand ambassadors. So that was a mix of saying new management. So, making sure that all the departments and the business and operations side were represented. Business development, Marketing, Human Resources, IT technology and then the Finance accounts team as well, they all needed to be represented. Then, each practice group so each service line within the firm also needed to be represented. So, I had the heads of each of those groups. So, there were senior partners. I then had senior associates who were in the pipeline for the next two years involved. So, there was about four of them. We ended up with a team that was close to 20 or so, which sounds like a lot but they also included few partners that I knew, had the potential to derail the project if they weren't involved. So, these are the types of partners who were like why did we need to do a rebrand? We are fine the way we are, we don't need to change, you know, not interested in at all. So, I need just to bring them with me. It's all part of bringing somebody in the journey, otherwise, I could have got to the end and nasty surprise with a few speed bumps and people who are quite influential within the partnership could have said no, this is not happening. So, by bringing them into the circle. So, what we did was we had many workshops that went for half days, we had 2 hours, we would meet monthly, there was a lot of consultation, a lot of discussions about how they feel about Russell McVeagh, some partners who have been for a long time, some who have been here for less than a year... what was fantastic was that the themes were very similar. What we struggled with were the words. Lawyers being lawyers, love words. So, we would get stuck on the be in your corner. Champions for strategic goals, those sorts of a language that's coming out in the values about being confident, about being original and collaborative and that sort of language they really struggled with. And, we got to a stage where we had to say, Myself and principals, enough okay, we are not talking about whether or not this is a right word or not, we have got the right themes, we understand how everybody feels about the direction of the brand and where we need to get to. We are going to away now for 3 months, leave them deliberating over whether or not we should have partners on the letterhead anymore or not, and we would come back and present to you three concepts and so we did that. Then we got stuck on the words again. So, it takes, I guess... with the lot of lawyers involved, a lot of influencing behind the scenes, I had a lot of one on one discussions to make sure that nobody was coming off the rails or they weren't sending the wrong messages to the rest of the partnership because there were other out from the wider firm, what is this group doing? What's going on over there, they just going to present this thing to us and we are in the end love it or hate it. So, a lot of careful management conversation and you know... dark corners, making sure that everybody was aligned. So, that was pretty much my role, I was very blessed to have fantastic marketing managers and people to run the project plans, so making sure that everything was ticking along to timeline so that we would meet our deadline. This took over 12 months, which I am comfortable with, especially in professional services because I don't think me being new and coming in and learning about the business and getting to know the partnership, it needed to take time and to build that trust. For me, I was comfortable with that time frame.

It must be very tough for you specially to convince them?

Yeah.... Yeah it is. I think I was very very lucky to come from a law firm in Australia and it's now global, they merged with London law firm. They had an excellent brand, they still have

an excellent brand, so I had some credibility behind me I guess to get them to listen to me...hahaha

Interesting

Incredibly rewarding, everybody's experience has been absolutely fantastic

The management would be very happy

Yes, they do. We get some fantastic feedback. Our competitors are very jealous because we are very different and they are like wow you are brave and that all just goes back to the original discussion we had around the black and scary Russell McVeagh but now we have turned into being brave and strong and yeah, it's great

What all strategies you considered while planning for rebranding?

So, in terms of strategies, whatever we created, whatever behaviors we wanted to see come out from our values needed to be client focus. It's not about us, It's about the clients. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have the clients. So, that was the objective right from the start, right through, we didn't deviate from that and that has stayed stuck. Where we need to get to know is that the client is a firm client and not my client. So, there is still a lot of that solo behavior that is occurring within the partnership and for us to be completely successful in this Client-focus strategy, we need to have that collaborative approach. We are not there yet. If you understand how most law firms are structured, It's around budget and it's around an individual's budget. So, they feed themselves first before they feed anybody else. So, the collaborative approach doesn't necessarily come naturally to a law partner.

So was that your main focus point

Yeah

That's good. So, till date you are continuing with the same strategy.

Absolutely. Yeah, yeah because we want to increase the market growth and we are only being able to do that with our client's support,

How did you plan to announce the rebranding to your customers?

Yeah... the first step in the process when I interviewed clients at the very beginning to understand the Russell McVeagh brand, we went back to them and shared with them, exclusive before we launched and got some initial feedback from them and we had absolutely hit the market, they were all very excited and very happy and so we were very excited at this stage. We then, internally we did a series of presentations, so to the board first, we then present to the partnership, we then presented to the staff, but the staff didn't see the final visual until day1 when it was all being revealed. But I'm sure there would have been some leaks because I had some friends in competitor's law firms who had seen some.... hahaha.... I always try to ban phones when we are in the you know... concept meetings, but partners, they are sneaky. It did get out there and I expected it too... I did expect it too. But we planned for media, PR, we had a brand launch where we invited clients and all the people externally, Principals and design people that were involved in the process. We were very lucky to have

had at the same time a complete re-foot in the office. So, we had new offices and new brand and a new year because it was in the early Feb that we launch. And it was like lifting the league, I guess on a new fresh, younger, vibrant Russell McVeagh...you know... Incredibly exciting... very exciting.

What all was planned for rebranding; a complete rebrand or just a few elements

A complete rebrand. Right down to the way in which we write i.e. our language, our documentation, letter format, our notepads, our envelopes, our business cards.... everything... everything had to be uniformed and everything had to represent our core values

What about PR activities? Russell McVeagh being a big law firm, have a huge responsibility towards society as well. So, what all did you do for PR and CSR activities.

CSR activities actually came later. So, almost 12 months later when we produced our 1st CSR report, first time ever, which was all under the new rebrand, which was great and there were elements of that that waived into the strategy and process that we went through but, it didn't coincide with the launch, it was quite separate.

But the PR side we did some interviews with the legal press. But what surprised us and we weren't expecting was engagement from design publications because it was so different and outside in the norm of a law firm rebrand in terms of look and feel I guess not so much process but look and fell. We got quite bit of an interest from that sector and we were the first law firm to be the finalist in the NZ design awards though we didn't win because I think it was Lion who won that category or something like that. But, it was just an absolute honor to be a finalist.

You have won quite a few awards recently

Yes, we record hold the legal awards and look that was a combination of the rebrand, our client focus, people focus strategy, CSR, the way in which we present ourselves in the market. So that also involves how we prepare our submission for these types of awards. So, you can imagine a lot of work goes into the hyper scenes. What we demonstrated to judges was an internal collaborative approach with HR, IT, marketing and the entire legal teams creating a differentiated firm and that stood out and we ended up with 8 awards round employer choice and law firm of the year and all the things like a great of recruitment and also great for internal morale. So, we celebrated a lot and we still continue to celebrate. But, it set the benchmark high for this year. So, yes it maintained and let's see how it goes

It works as a big motivation for the internal staff as well

Absolutely! Yeah, yeah. We are very very proud of it, Very proud. And as lawyers, we don't celebrate enough, so I Encourage it,

Yeah time has changed so we should change with time. I think Russell McVeagh was pioneers of rebranding after which other law firms followed

Yeah. I think Kingston swan also going through process too.

Everyone followed it afterward

It's laws like that for who is a sheep. Somebody does something and they would follow.

Steve also being a great Intellect would be very helpful

Yes, they were fantastic. Because the great thing about principals, they were able to take a lot of information from so many different people, different personalities, different approaches to create what we have today. It's incredible, my hats go off to them, they are excellent strategist.

I agree. They have huge amount of experience

Yes, and very professional as well. They worked very very well. as you could imagine sometimes it's a risk bringing in people who don't work within the role, but they did gain the respect of the partners very very quickly, Tess especially. Tess is no longer there but she was a super-star.

What were the difficulties observed during the process?

Yes! I guess the biggest challenge for me as a marketing professional is working with other professionals who don't understand my discipline. So, I need to be able to speak their language, I need to spend a lot of time talking. SO, the doing happens outside of the office hours I guess you could say. You need to have strong influencing skills, you need to leverage relationships and by that, I mean leveraging one partner to help to get another one on board. You know to have that Domino effect. I had to... You have to be very thick skinned in this process. Being a new kid on the block and coming in had a lot of advantages but also a lot of disadvantages. So, a lot of side-conversations and things that I was not necessarily aware about that could de-railed the project. But I was able to leverage out the relationships to get that information to be able to help smooth the waters I guess. So, it's no downtime, constantly challenges, constantly making sure that everyone is on track. Timetable incredibly difficult. Time here is a commodity. So, this was a non-bailable exercise. Very difficult to engaged lawyers in non- bailable exercises when they don't see the value. So, I had to demonstrate the value to them to get them in a room. And if I didn't get them in the room all the same time, then I had to engage with them separately. So, time was incredibly challenging, time was my enemy.

What was the most difficult to manage?

Yeah time and also the budget. Budget, once we have a set budget, which is not a lot of money in the legal scheme of things, legal environment. But the perception of lawyers put on the budget to non-bailable exercises this is something to do with their practice development or client engagement is so far moved from each other. So, they won't bend an eyelid on spending 10000\$ on a dinner for example but 10000\$ on getting something printed on color or you know an external consultant coming on... oh that too much money... you know... so always challenges being able to demonstrate the value.

It must be very tough for you to convince the owners?

Yea very hard. Return on investment. Every single day value of my team is questioned we are in an overhead. But, I am confident after 2 years and how much the team had changed and

how much change we have influenced and we have driven to positively influence the Russell McVeagh brand is incredibly valuable.

What about phases of rebranding.

Yeah, it's the values and the behaviors around the values, So, now post-launch, it doesn't stop. It's reminding existing staff and new staff coming in, how important our core values are and what the types of behaviors that we would like to see around our core values. So, we constantly doing promotions around the brand, I guess subtle messaging as we are putting out there in our internal communication that reminds people of what process we went through 12 months ago and the importance of maintaining that. Because it all contributes towards staff morale at the end of the day and the understanding of belonging and understanding the purpose of the firm and why we are here and what they are contributing towards the success of Russell McVeagh

yeah that's very important.

Incredibly important. So, my role now going forward is making sure that all of the business is engaged in continuing to perform our core values. So, very closely aligned with our HR team which is incredibly important otherwise without that close alliances, Marketing and HR just doesn't work and the technology piece of course as well to help us all be together.

Even in future AI could be a big thing for marketing.

Yeah and we have a working group who is looking at what we perhaps might invest in. We are working very closely with our clients and looking at what our client's needs are. We have taken a conscious effort to not jump in first, unlike some law firm has. We want to make sure whatever we are investing in is to the beneficial to our staff and our client end of the day.

So, after the rebranding process, what do you think about the effects on Brand equity

I guess the visibility in the marketplace was heightened. We have been able to leverage that in media, PR around the work we do. Not just the legal work but internally our community engagement, pro- bono work, our CSR strategy all those sorts of things we are being able to strengthen our relationship with that with the media sector and great relationships there. So, they are responsive to us and we are responsive to them. Whereas before this process, we would never respond. Not actually never respond but we were very reluctant to respond to the media, the media inquiries. So, we now have our expert corporate communications people who engaged and coach the partners on how to engage in media. It's being about confidence which is one of our three core values, giving them the confidence to talk confidently about the work they do. So, all about shouting about their success but also how we benefit the market, the community and now the clients.

It's been incredibly positive, fantastic in terms of recruitment. Client functions it's the first thing the people ask me about when they learn which area I work in "Oh the rebrand, Oh you are responsible for this" and you know. Incredibly exciting.

I have gone through the website and especially insights section. That's a very good thing

And that is evolving. That is what we went to the next level where we not just talking about the work we do, the implication about the law but also the value that we brought back to the clients. So, focusing more on telling the story, so you see case-studies. We don't do that very well yet. The law firms that do that well have dedicated professional support from lawyers who are ex-lawyers who want to work part-time or they are coming back into the sector they have children for example and want to work part-time. They are great for generating content. All of our lawyers here are the tools and are incredibly busy so my team getting access to them to write content is incredibly challenging. So, it's a challenge for us to keep that insights section evolving but its hugely valuable.

It's a very nice way to communicate. Interesting aspects is you can add blogs n all.

Yeah and I guess the challenge we have there is time and keeping them up to date. because if it's not regular then people tend to lose interest. Because even our insights are not regular. So, we might say me publish public-law update every month, you would find it might be every three months or there might be two in one week if there is something that's of importance we want to share with our client base, very reactive. And all the law firms want to be first to market and all want to be quick going, quite funny.

Maintaining the pace is important

Yeah, and quality as well. It's very important that we maintain consistent quality because if we get turning things out quickly and there are errors, credibility and brand equity is gone.

Epecially Russell McVeagh being a such a big law firm, huge responsibility involved

Absolutely! yes... So, we rather have a perfect one, so if it goes out late then be it... Yup

What about the effect on the brand image?

It's positively reinforced to the market and our client base that Russell McVeagh has changed and is changing and there's more to come, so be aware.... hahaha

Even the internal staff feels the same?

Absolutely! I think especially one of the market reputations that we were known was as the factory. So, that's our approach to recruitment has changed slightly. So, now instead of lavishing our recruits with gifts and beautiful graphics and what not. We are investing the money in being present and engaging with them and traveling and that type of things. So, it's more of a personal brand that they dispose some of those myths and it opens the door to I guess some graduates or some professionals who may not have thought Russell McVeagh was what for them in the past thinking actually you know... I should have been with them

What about effect on the brand association attributed?

In terms... I think very very positively it's shown at the market and our client base that we are adaptable and flexible. Whereas before, it was like our way or the high way

As you mentioned they were frightened of Russell McVeagh

Yea, Absolutely! One of the questions that I asked clients right in the beginning was "if Russell McVeagh was an animal, what type of animal would that be?". And it was incredible, probably 95% of the response was like "Panther". So, like a jungle animal, that hides in the jungle, jumps out, eat their prey, runs back... it's mysterious, you quite don't know much about them, quite elegant and sleek, commands presence. We had rottweiler, dolphins, owls but pre-dominantly black panthers

So now what they consider Russell McVeagh as?

I think they still would say Black Panther in terms of strong presence, but then there is also the element of either a lioness who is very proud and very strong but also has a very soft side

What about the effect on Brand Awareness?

Yeah. So, in terms of key messaging, so making sure that we are now in the marketplace where any of the partners are in the marketplace, HR directors is in the marketplace engaging with the new recruits, clients etc., we are all saying the same thing,

The key message is to be aligned and positive, we are open to adverse culture. We are flexible in our working that has changed a lot, the previous presentism, no longer flexible working place, we have the technology now to be anywhere and accessible that can be good or bad. So, it's having an army of brand ambassadors all signing from the same hymn sheet and it has opened us upto many possibilities. So, we have moved from looking at somebody's scores I guess in terms of very successful student, high performer, therefore they might be great for Russell McVeagh team to looking at the attributed that they might be able to bring to the business to help us to evolve, open minded.

What about Brand Loyalty aspects?

With my other head, my business development head on which is all around client-relationship side of things, it's a huge part of brand refresh going forward and how the partners engage with the clients, and it's that brand loyalty that perception that you are in safe hands and they would come back every time. The client that might be number one for us this year, might not necessarily number one next year or two-three years until they come back again with a larger transaction, but they do come back. So, it's what we do in between this time around generating that loyalty, around brand engagement with that people on a consistent basis regardless of whether or not we know if there is another new transaction or new work coming through the door, you treat them all the same.

It must be difficult still to create Brand loyalty, especially word of mouth and referrals plays a huge role

Absolutely! Referral basis is very strong for us. It plays a very strong point in our reputation. So, one thing we do to keep a check on that is we do regular client-relationship meetings, we someone like myself or the CEO would meet with the client, independent of the partner, which gives the client an opportunity to talk about the services and allows them to speak in a safe environment. There might be tiny little things that annoy the clients that we can speak, but if we do not ask then we don't know and the client can slowly disappear.

What I also do as a part of brand loyalty and client-relationship management is to look at the fee revenue for a particular client and if it's being top and then in the last 6 months started to drop off, ask the questions why and if it's because it was one off transaction then it's fine but if it been business as usual and they are dropping off we would like to go to talk to them to see why the difference is. So, it's just opening the door to professional commercial conversations that the lawyers not necessarily were engaging in.

Out of the above factors which factor has been affected the most

It's the awareness of who we really are. It's the awareness that we are young, we are flexible and they have been for many many years but the brand did not portray that in the external market unless the clients knew us and that was the referral. So, for example, one client would recommend to someone to another potential client you really want to go to Russell McVeagh... no no... we don't want to fight. We were perceived as the heavy hitters in the litigation space. We need somebody to support our strategic goals as a business, absolutely they can do that. But if we didn't have that relationship they might have gone away.

As you know, rebranding process never ends without evaluation, how did you do that

Yes, we did, in terms of understanding how they felt about the process and how they felt they were engaged and consulted throughout the process and as expected, there were mixed very hierarchical environment. So, some of the juniors, their responses were just is what it is... no so be it... but what I tried to change in terms of this process was to be consultative across all levels and that nobody was any different. So, that was received quite positive feedbacks.

Feedbacks from customers as well?

Every day, every day When I see you know... if I meet somebody new or someone who has been involved in the process and the ones who weren't involved in the process to talk about it.

You have got a beautiful office, looks more like a marketing agency

It is very nice and on our working floors, there are no offices, it's all open plan, which can be challenging but it was incredibly important that we did the brand refresh alongside the new fit-out and it's worked very positively... It's great

It's very important to match what we promise and what we deliver. Accordingly, to you what was your influence for rebranding?

Probably the lifting for the league, I professionally and personally underestimated the impact that this would have on the business, on the market especially with our competitors. So, that's quite rewarding. I guess it reinforced that Russell McVeagh is being here for a very very long time and is here to be for long. We needed a brand that could the test of the time, we needed a concept and values that would test the time

What do you do think what can a rebrand do?

I guess it depends on your overall agreement, the firm's overall strategy of what you want to achieve in your time working with that particular firm but, what it can achieve for you is I think the first thing when I said when I joined, this would either be a career suicide or it

would be a huge success and it's been a huge success. It can raise your professional profile but also most important thing was for Russell McVeagh to be seen as more than just the heavy hitters, more than just top-tier commercial law firm. And having a successful rebrand can help you as a marketing professional drive the key messaging and the strategy in terms of the influencing change within your firm. We are no longer marketing professionals, we are change agents I guess with the scheme of things and if you aren't able to influence change then... yeah... and if you aren't process driven... then...

I totally agree. I have seen few rebranding, top firm they have rebranded, and they have failed. Risk involved is way too huge and it hampers the brand equity badly if not done properly

Yeah that's right, Absolutely! You can't just tick the box and move on. It needs to be weaved in everything you do, needed to be successful, absolutely.

Thank you, it was great meeting you

Pleasure, you too.