

Brand equity is defined as “the goodwill that an established brand has built up over the period of its existence,” (Chitty, Barker, Valos, & Shimp, 2012). A firm that has become internationally successful based on effective generation and maintenance of brand equity is Estée Lauder Companies (ELC). ELC would like to be the “global leader in prestige beauty,” (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011), and as such has a sole focus on prestige offerings. Currently, ELC owns a controlling interest in 26 brands, the most famous of which include: Estée Lauder, MAC (a controlling interest since 1996), Clinique (a startup in 1968), Bobbi Brown, Donna Karen New York or ‘DKNY’, Tommy Hilfiger and Coach (Chesters, 2012). This large brand portfolio helps them to target a range of female and male consumers, although this essay will focus purely on the female cosmetics offerings. It will discuss the two perspectives of brand equity; organizational and consumer, and the brand strategies ELC uses to generate brand equity and achieve international success. It will then analyse in greater detail the associations and communications of three of ELC’s brands: MAC, Estée Lauder and Clinique, to uncover how the company is implementing their brand management strategies; namely global market development and efficient target marketing.

Brand equity is a key feature in ELC’s success, and is valuable to businesses for a number of reasons. Brand equity is about making an emotional connection with the consumer (Tan, Tan, Michelle, William, & Liew, 2012), which leads to positive brand associations. Having strong brand equity can lead to a number of benefits for businesses, including; greater consumer loyalty, greater profit margins, improved marketing communication efficiency, and brand-extension possibilities, (Kim & Hong-Bumm, 2004). Aaker, one of the first academic writers on the topic (Tan, Tan, Michelle, William, & Liew, 2012), proposes the existence of five dimensions of brand equity; perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, and other proprietary assets (Aaker, 1991).

Generally it is accepted in marketing circles that there are two facets of brand equity: an organisational, and a consumer perspective (Grace & King, 2009). The organisational perspective is described as the collection of cash flows stemming from a firms’ ability to obtain and keep customers (Berthon , et al., 2001). In simple terms, it can be described as the extra money made by a firm if they use a brand as opposed to if they sold an unbranded product. The consumer perspective is defined as the added value received through the purchase of a branded product over the same product if it was unbranded

(Berthon , et al., 2001). Brand equity explains the willingness of a consumer to pay more for "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," (Aaker, 1991).

ELC owns multiple brands with a high level of brand equity. The two “power house,” (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011), brands Clinique and Estée Lauder have arguably the greatest brand equity of any two brands in the company profile, and they are also the most profitable (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). The built up equity ELC possesses, may also have been the factor that allowed them to partake in multiple product development schemes that would arguably not be viable otherwise. ELC’s are operating in a mature market, which is controlled by a few large conglomerates all of which have diversified brand portfolios (Born, 2004). Their strategy for remaining in a strong competitive position is to use their core competencies to maximize their market share in the prestige sector to capitalize on as many profit making opportunities as possible (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). Arguably, their key initiatives are holding on to their current consumers, competing effectively for untapped market segments, and developing into new markets geographically.

For ELC to hold on to their current customers, the firm is working towards greater customer satisfaction and loyalty (Thomas, 2000), through effective use of target marketing: consumer profiling and market segmentation (Mullins & Walker, 2010). This allows them to meet each consumer groups’ unique needs by establishing a unique brand image for each of its brands (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). This approach is often associated with sustainable competitive advantage and strong brand equity in marketing literature (Mullins & Walker, 2010). As ELC is solely focused on prestige brands, this essay argues that ELC targets its customers based on the following hierarchies: age (both physical and psychological), bold versus conservative, scientific scrutiny versus scientific indifference, and vibrancy versus elegance (see Appendix A for a perceptual map).

The Estée Lauder Company’s brand MAC has a very carefully targeted image (Make-up Art Cosmetics, 2010). MAC was created in Canada in 1984 by a salon owner and a fashion photographer, and was initially a stage-make up brand (Michalak, 2008). In keeping with ELC’s portfolio, it is a luxury brand that is set at a ‘just affordable enough’ price point (Michalak, 2008). The target consumer profile is likely a ‘Look At Me’ or a

‘Young Optimist’ on the Roy Morgan values segments (Levine & Benjamin, 2010). MAC was introduced to the public as an edgy, bold, and colorful brand, which represents “all ages, all races, all sexes,” (Bonhomme, 2009), and is positioned as aspirational and hip (Beatty, 2003). MAC is ELC’s youth targeted brand; their current spokespeople Nicki Minaj and Rikki Martin embody this outspoken, bright and young image (Chesters, 2012). ELC uses MAC to lure in young customers who are then groomed to favor luxury brands; and will later become consumers of their more prestige brands as they grow up and preferences change (Beatty, 2003). It’s almost a ‘gateway’ luxury cosmetics brand that achieves its market share by maintaining a fashionable image (Michalak, 2008).

The Estée Lauder brand is also heavily involved in this area of the company’s strategy. Estée Lauder was the original brand of ELC and has been in business since 1946 (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011), and has a massive and devoted consumer following due to effective target marketing (Moore, 2001). Its service to ELC is described by business analyst Meg Carter: “In plain terms... convince women that paying about 50 dollars for a bottle of perfume is money well spent, while ensuring that its products have a wide enough distribution to be seen as attainably upmarket but not specialist purchases,” (2003). The target market is synonymous with the Roy Morgan segments of ‘Visible Achievement’ and ‘Something Better’; these women are likely to live in urban centers, be reasonably well to do, and take pride in their position in society (Levine & Benjamin, 2010). The namesake brand is arguably successful due to its’ ability to connect with the consumer despite the changes over the last 67 years. For example in the last ten years, they have altered their advertising to become more in touch with the modern woman and move away from the brands previous “buttoned-up look,” (Carter, 2003) of the nineties.

ELC also uses its ability to segment the market, to reach previously untapped segments for greater market penetration (Carter, 2003). Their Clinique brand in particular, occupies a fairly unique place in the market: youthful yet science conscious consumers (see Appendix A). Clinique was built through a partnership between ELC’s Evelyn Lauder and Manhattan dermatologist Dr. Norman Orentreich, on the premise that “great skin can be created,” (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). Its’ unique selling position is the Clinique computer (which has recently been re-introduced in Hong Kong), which divides people in to one of four skin types, (Dargan & Donnelly , 2011). The brand occupies a highly differentiated position in the cosmetics market, as it is backed up by scientific

reliability, “people who want guaranteed results, perhaps with problem skin. They want a reason to spend money on Clinique, a dermatologist’s backup. Clinique targets intelligent people,” (Winslow, 1995). The brand continuously modernizes itself, in keeping with their target market’s values: they are the computer literate innovators who want their cosmetic brand to be honest with them (Silvan, 2005). They are likely the Roy Morgan ‘Socially Aware’ segment (Levine & Benjamin, 2010).

Apart from customer retention and market penetration, there is also evidence of ELC partaking in market development through new geographical regions. As the process of globalization changes the way many firms trade, multiple prestige brands are becoming very interested in the prospects of targeting the rising middle and high class consumers in emerging markets (Cavusgil, Knight, Riesenberger, Ramal, & Freeman, 2012). ELC has now become one of the many brands vying for their attentions through its recent diversifications into the Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European markets. William Lauder said: “One area of consideration is what portion of our existing brand portfolio can we bring to these markets. And what other brand opportunities might we have for that emerging middle class,” (Born, 2004). They have launched nine of their brands into the Chinese market in the last five years, and recently, a research center has been set up in Shanghai to better ELC’s ability to serve the skin types of the Chinese and Asian market. (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). Furthermore, Clinique has the scientific positioning to effectively target the Asian market with product developments, and in 2011 they introduced ‘Derma White City Block Anti-Pollution SPF 40/PA+++’ (Popcorn Media Network Limited, 2011). Developed specifically for the Asian market, this product contains ‘anti-pollution technology’ which claims to act as an invisible pollution filter that shields against harmful pollutants that can lead to hyper-pigmentation (Popcorn Media Network Limited, 2011).

Clinique’s current goals appear to be building positive brand image and recognition in the new global markets it has entered. Clinique is well differentiated by its functional associations: its’ ability to cater to the needs of women with problem skin (Silvan, 2005). Clinique backs up their functionality with symbolic associations to cleanliness, medicinal allusions and lab-like imagery. It is likely due to these medical associations that consumers perceive the brand as trustworthy and honest (Silvan, 2005).

The following image is one of the key communications Clinique uses to convey its' brand associations to the consumer: the in store display or 'concept boutique' as they like to call it (Popcorn Media Network Limited, 2011). This particular display is from their new look store in Maritime Square Hong Kong, and is being used in part of their current market development strategy to build their brand's presence in Asia (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). The boutique's bright, translucent and white décor appears scientific and lab-like, leading consumers to have "no doubt befitting of Clinique's seriousness about skincare," (Popcorn Media Network Limited, 2011).



Clinique ties its symbolic scientific associations into its' other key appeal: dermatological and technological innovations. Estée Lauder Companies have this year outshone the likes of Google and Apple to be number 23 on the Forbes 'most innovative companies' list (Forbes, 2013), and Clinique contributes the most of innovations of any one brand in their portfolio (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). Innovation is what ties Clinique to their target market who are highly technologically focused, and therefore value innovation more than most sectors (Winslow, 1995). Clinique consistently updates its products; in a process they call sharing knowledge with their consumer following (Mulchand, 2008). These updates keep the brand relevant with the pace of modern development, which is likely to be what keeps it appealing to the younger market and stops the brand from going out of date. This is arguably how Clinique has managed to be so successful: by

placing themselves in a unique position of the market (see Appendix A) and managing to stay there (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011).

Clinique communicates its' associations with the forefront of ELC's research and development, through advertising which features their products as the 'stars' and typically does not use models (Mulchand, 2008). These advertisements are often presented online via shopping websites where the majority of their consumer following looks for product information (Popcorn Media Network Limited, 2011). Clinique is also technologically innovative in its' marketing strategies and was one of the first companies to use opt-in mobile advertising (Tsirulnik, 2010). The mobile communications are accompanied by a print campaign that includes out-of home appeals such as billboards as well as some targeted magazine appeals. The print adverts encourage IOS or android users to download the Blippar application for free from either Apple's App Store or Google's Android Market, which links consumers to Clinique's online store, as well as having a GPS feature that locates the nearest Clinique outlet (Johnson, 2012).



The print advertisement above is an example of Clinique's mobile campaign; the smartphone icon is highlighted in bright green in the bottom left hand corner. The products are the brands latest innovations, Clinique's 'Even Better' range. The advert uses transparent and white, which ties it in with the concept botiques, and scientific appeals previously discussed, and uses eggs perhaps as a symbolic association for an embryotic newness to the world.

The next brand analysed, MAC, generates fashion forward, youthful, hip and current brand associations to make their brand aspirational and desirable to their youthful and affluent target market. It was introduced to the public as an edgy, bold, and colorful brand, which represents "all ages, all races, all sexes," (Bonhomme, 2009), and is positioned as aspirational and hip (Beatty, 2003). To maintain their globally fashionable image, the brand participates in 23 fashion weeks and approximately 850 fashion shows around the world: New York, London, Milan, Paris, Sydney, Copenhagen, Athens, Moscow, Berlin, Delhi, Istanbul, Barcelona, Mexico City, Miami Swimwear, NY Bridal, Auckland, Toronto, Tokyo, Sao Paulo, Paris Couture, Milan Menswear, and Paris Menswear (Anonymous, 2011). MAC spends over \$1 Million US each year in backstage presence, providing make up and artists for big fashion brands (Beatty, 2003). They arguably do this to gain the profile of a global social 'insider'; unlike their typical corporate competitors who splash their names all over the show in blatant sponsorship deals. MAC will instead post backstage snippets for their followers via social networks such as Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook, which gives them a relatable, connected, and unique advertising advantage. MAC personifies its brand as a well-connected socialite (Anonymous, 2011), and in doing so takes on a personality that is aspirational to its' target market.

The following MAC Facebook post from India, is an example of their use of social networks to generate a blogger or socialite status; a symbolic association. The image has a professional tone and is bright and vibrant. The MAC brand name is included in the image but in a subtle and seemingly accidental way on the artists wristband. The post is accompanied by a link to the MAC Tumblr page where fans can follow the brands backstage presence and see more of the cosmetics in use. It is a manufactured advert, which manages to look natural; as if it was just a photo that make-up artist took on their

iPhone. This is arguably an ingenious way to draw in their socially connected target market.



Alongside their fashionable associations, MAC attempts to align their brand with the western music industry (Make-up Art Cosmetics, 2012). This is arguably to further their hipster profile and generate positive brand associations, but it also broadens their marketability across a range of their target market's interests, likely to improve their brand recognition. MAC keeps its' focus on current and hip artists, choosing

spokespeople who are current A-list celebrities that will be excite and generate interest for their consumers. Nicki Minaj is an example of this and was pronounced “the hip-hop queen of MAC Viva Glam,” (Make-up Art Cosmetics, 2012). Celebrity endorsements such as Nicki’s are then blogged about to bolster MAC’s symbolic associations with celebrity and the current music industry trends. The images posted often go viral on gossip and social media sites on the Internet and are re-posted by fans. This viral marketing again associates MAC’s brand personality with the status of an insider or celebrity, and likely bolsters their image as a hip and aspirational cosmetics brand.

The MAC Viva Glam campaign is also a promotion based on advertising MAC’s corporate social responsibility (CSR): it is an HIV/AIDS support campaign. MAC describes the purpose of the campaign as being all-encompassing of global diversity, and says the campaign partners them with the “bold the visionary and the brave,” (Make-up Art Cosmetics, 2010), and better connects the brand with its mantra “all ages all races all sexes,” (Make-up Art Cosmetics, 2012). This association is beneficial to the brand associations on a global stage of diversity, as it makes MAC appear inclusive and socially responsible. However, this essay will argue that MAC’s CSR is also used because it is in vogue to be seen as ‘socially responsible’, and has been for some time (The Economist Limited Newspaper, 2004), which further aligns the brand’s symbolic associations with their target market’s value of trendiness. CSR is in itself a trend.

The following advertising image for Viva Glam first appeared on the MAC website, and has subsequently been re-posted on thousands of blogs all over the web (makeupartistsmeet, 2011). The image generates interest by being provocative, bright, bold and interesting. Again, the MAC brand name is included but not in the traditional plastered-across-the-page way. The celebrity status of Nicki Minaj and Ricky Martin is also likely used to spike the consumer’s interest and create hedonic appeals.



Next this essay will discuss the associations and communications of ELC's namesake brand: Estée Lauder. Estée is currently trying to build positive brand image and increase their brand recognition in a generation of younger consumers (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). The brand is highly associated with beauty, glamour and luxury (Thomas, 2000), it is about materialism, the upper class, and social status and it uses hedonic aspirational appeals to attract its target market (Carter, 2003). Therefore, the brand must keep up with the modern markets perception of what luxury and social status looks like; something quite different today then it has been previously. The modern woman wants to associate herself with success in her career, with an equal power to that of a man, and with a voice and independence (Bakewell, 2013), and must be marketed to accordingly.

Estée Lauder has traditionally reached its consumers mostly through print advertising in glossy magazines such as Elle, Cosmopolitan, Vogue, and Glamour (The Advertising Archives, 2013). This is arguable because their target market has a high level of magazine readership (Levine & Benjamin, 2010), and magazines present a sleek and specifically targeted platform from which to advertise (Chitty, Barker, Valos, & Shimp, 2012). Magazines are also appropriate because they are a point of reference for the generation of women's aspirations based on what and who is in fashion (Chitty, Barker, Valos, & Shimp, 2012). However, in tune with the modern rise of technology, a select set of Estée Lauder's marketing communications are being taken online; and these appear to be appeals to the younger, more tech savvy market (Born, 2004). To link these two mediums, the magazine advertisements are increasingly encouraging consumers to continue their information search online, with statements such as "Visit esteelauder.com now," (The Advertising Archives, 2013), included in recent magazine adverts.

The following Estée Lauder print advertisement from 2006 is an example of the historical, more buttoned up and demure image of success, represented by model Liz Hurley. Achievement and social status here looks like a comfortable life, a delicate picture of what it means to be a lady, and a quiet understated expression of wealth.

(Image Courtesy of The Advertising Archives, 2006)

ESTÉE LAUDER

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Enjoy "virtual immunity" from the visible signs of ageing.

Re-Nutriv
Ultimate Lifting Serum

"Virtual immunity" means you'll see a noticeably more lifted look, a brilliant clarity, a newly refined smoothness.

This extraordinary serum is formulated with rare, precious ingredients and the latest science, the groundbreaking OCA2 enzyme technology that helps reduce the look of critical post UVK damage. And it soothes your skin with the legendary luxury you expect from Re-Nutriv.

Ultimate Lift Powerful ingredients enable skin to increase its own natural collagen production.

Ultimate Clarity Proven skin brighteners visibly enhance skin transparency for a radiant, youthful glow.

Ultimate Smoothness Fine-grained silica and non-acid retinol create a velvety feel of perfection.

Use it faithfully for skin that looks firmer, more lifted, more defined. You'll simply be amazed.

www.esteeauder.com/re-nutriv

In contrast, the next image is a current web communication from esteelauder.com. This image is decidedly younger and shows a much less demure and more vibrantly dressed model. The image associates itself with a masked ball or theatre like setting with the use of the black cat mask and the pink feather boa, alongside glitzy earrings and eyeshadow. The size of the word naughty is slightly provocative when used next to model Constance Jablonski's open mouthed pout.



The Estée Lauder brand has traditionally been associated with a highly Americanized image (Thomas, 2000), which they are trying to move away from to generate a more global appeal (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). In keeping with this, Estée has recently taken on three global spokesmodels: Liu Wen from China (the first Chinese model to be signed by ELC), Constance Jablonski from France (the first French model to be signed by ELC), and Joan Smalls from Puerto Rico (Estée Lauder Companies, 2011). These models have been the 'faces' of Estée since 2011, and the brand hopes this will improve their image in new markets to assist with their market development strategy. This tactic will arguably build more connections for the brand; "the more range you show in your ads, the more people you connect with. Fashion is no longer just for pretty white people... with economies emerging in China, India, the Middle East," (It Can't All Be Dior, 2011).

The following print advertisement for Estée Lauder's Advanced Time Zone Age Reversing products appears to celebrate the diversity, in a very clean, crisp and beautiful way. This is the corporate face of globalized cosmetics. The white the models wear in the

advert could represent peace between nations as the world moves into a free trade era, and the use of the phrase 'time zone' in the name of the product is potentially a reference to global travel across time zones. This advert has very likely been designed to have a very upmarket, race inclusive appeal. The image itself is almost an example of mass marketing as it is so inclusive it likely does not require individual tailoring for each country it is to be used in.



In conclusion, ELC is a prestige cosmetics company which has generated a strong brand equity for each of its' brands, nominally MAC, Estée Lauder and Clinique. Their brand management strategies are focused on global market development and efficient target marketing. Each of the three brands discussed in this essay are highly targeted at a specific consumer market, which enables each to be competitive, relevant and connected with their consumers, and has led to much success for ELC. Furthermore, each brand has unique core competencies that are utilised to better target and develop each brand in new global markets. MAC, Estée Lauder and Clinique all have unique brand associations that make them appealing to their specific target market, and these associations are communicated through highly appropriate and integrated marketing communications. These things in combination are likely responsible for ELC's sustainable competitive advantage in the prestige cosmetics industry.

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