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Brands are created in the mind

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BUSINESS LINE
D. Murali

IIM ALUMNI are working to create a global brand in the US, much like what the IIT-ians did a few weeks ago in Washington DC (www.iit2005.org).

A survey by Vivaldi Partners and Forbes magazine has found that Apple's brand value is at \$5.3 billion, after rising by 38 per cent in the last four years, largely on the popularity of its iPod digital media device, www.macnewsworld.com reports.



Sports-shoe brand Hi-Tec is putting digital at the heart of its marketing activity through the launch of a global Web site (www.hi-tec.com) to be used as a platform to reposition its brand, says www.brandrepublic.com. "Brands & Branding 2005 features a wealth of useful information reflecting the latest trends in branding theory," states a press release of Affinity Publishing posted on www.bizcommunity.com. "What better way to disarm your competition than by wearing their brand on your chest or by kissing them in public — as Madonna did to Britney Spears?" asks www.bizcommunity.com.

A communiqué on www.emediawire.com explains 'wikification' of brands; it incorporates measurement and today's branding imperatives, one learns. Bank of Baroda sports a new sunny brand with Rahul Dravid in company, even as Dabur ropes in Vivek Oberoi as its brand ambassador.

Isn't it time we come to terms with brands?

"Brands are the express checkout for people living their lives at ever increasing speed," according to Brandweek. Brand is a type of product manufactured by a company under a particular name, explains a familiar brand, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary. "A particular type of something," it adds, giving as example, "the Finnish brand of socialism". The entry on Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary begins, "Middle English, torch, sword, from Old English; akin to Old English bærnian to burn." The first meaning, therefore, is a charred piece of wood; sword and "a mark made by burning with a hot iron to attest manufacture or quality or to designate ownership," are other meanings that follow.

"The doctor whose beard they have singed off with brands of fire," is a gruesome line from The Comedy of Errors. "We'll burn his body in the holy place, and with

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the brands fire the traitors' houses," is another fiery firing line from Shakespeare, as found in Julius Caesar.

There is enough swordplay with brand wordplay in the Bard's works. Such as, "Never brandish more revengeful steel," in King Richard II; and "Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel, which smoked with bloody execution," in Macbeth. There's also the poetic brandishing of 'crystal tresses in the sky' in King Henry VI.

"What brand of shampoo do you use?" is a sample sentence in Encarta to explain the word to mean trademark. The historical meaning is given as "a mark made on the skin of a criminal or an enslaved person, especially to identify the owner," and the word's origin is traced thus: "Old English, 'burning stick.' Ultimately from an Indo-European word meaning 'to be hot,' which was also the ancestor of English burn, brimstone, brandish, and brandy."

It was once customary to brand the cheeks of felons with an 'F', recounts www.bartleby.com. "The custom was abolished by law in 1822."

Bran-new or brand-new is described as "Quite new; bright as a brand of fire," by Webster's 1828 Dictionary. "Brand-new is c.1570 and must have meant 'fresh from the fire,'" guesses Online Etymology Dictionary. Shakespeare used the phrase fire-new for the purpose. For instance, "A man of fire-new words" is a line from Love's Labour's Lost, "Fire-new from the mint" is from Twelfth Night, "Fire-new fortune" appears in King Lear, and Richard III speaks of "Your fire-new stamp of honour is scarce current." You can spot brand new too, as in "At my mistress' eye love's brand new-fired," from a Sonnet. "Don't waste time trying to break a man's heart; be satisfied if you can just manage to chip it in a brand new place," is a tip from Helen Rowland. A philosophical quote of John Bradshaw reads, "Children are natural Zen masters; their world is brand new in each and every moment."

With a brand new hard white ball, the bowlers have a good chance of getting it to move, so you'll usually see a couple of slips and a gully to snap up those edges, is an insight about 'How to set a one-day field' posted on <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

BRAND is Broadband For Rural And Northern Development, explains www.stands4.com. "In marketing, a brand is the symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a product or service," originating in the 19th century with the advent of packaged goods, says Wikipedia. Brand is a logo, corporate image, or distinct product or service identity that can become firmly rooted in the public's mind, says www.netlingo.com.

Co-branding is explained as "marketing effort or partnership between companies (such as retailers and manufacturers), either online or offline, to join forces and use the best technology or content of each (lending both of their brands to the final product)."

Branding is the process of creating and disseminating the brand name, according to <http://whatis.techtarget.com>. "Branding can be applied to the entire corporate identity as well as to individual product and service names. Brands are usually protected from use by others by securing a trademark or service mark from an authorized agency, usually a government agency," it adds.

"Products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind," is a quote of Walter Landor.

Oxford Dictionary of Business lists brand after 'branch accounting' and informs that the sale of most branded products began in the UK at the turn of the century, though a few such as Bovril and Horlicks were mid-Victorian. "Manufacturers believe that if they invest in the quality of their brands they will build up a brand image," it notes. "You can't use a comic approach today and a scientist in a white

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jacket tomorrow without diffusing and damaging your brand personality" cautions Morris Hite on consistency of brand image. Katharine Hepburn would agree: "My greatest strength is common sense. I'm really a standard brand - like Campbell's tomato soup or Baker's chocolate."

Brand images aren't built in a day. "Consumers build an image of a brand as birds build nests. From the scraps and straws they chance upon," points out Jeremy Bullmore. Brand accounting is how bean counters try to bring the intangible into financial statements. But Edwin Artzt looks at brand value as something very much like an onion. "It has layers and a core. The core is the user who will stick with you until the very end," he explains.

Brand equity is "the value of a brand beyond its functional purpose". Our future will depend on our brand equity, said Jong-Yong Yun, because if one keeps selling low-end products, it damages the corporate image. Brand extension refers to the using of "a successful brand name to launch a new or modified product in a separate category". If you aren't brand loyal, you may resort to brand switching, a not-too-uncommon exercise in politics where, after a time, you find that a neta has as many brands in his CV as a much-travelled suitcase might sport in the form of varied baggage tags.

It was only with the increase in consumer marketing in the past fifty years that terms such as own brand, brand leader, and brand manager started to appear, opines www.worldwidewords.org. "Brand X, as a derogatory term for an anonymous competing product that's considered inferior, dates from as long ago as 1934," informs the site. Nobody has ever built a brand by imitating somebody else's advertising, is a caveat from David Ogilvy.

"A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person. You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well," counsels Jeff Bezos. Well-managed brands live on, assures George Bull, though bad brand managers die. To wrap, however, let me pick up a line from www.lexicon-branding.com: "A brand name is more than a word. It is the beginning of a conversation."

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