

A literature review and future agenda for B2B branding: Challenges of branding in a B2B context.

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### A literature review and future agenda for B2B branding: Challenges of branding in a B2B context

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#### Abstract

The existing body of research knowledge on brand management has been predominantly derived from business-to-consumer markets, particularly fast moving consumer goods and has only recently started to expand in other contexts. Branding in business-to-business markets has received comparatively little attention in the academic literature due to a belief that industrial buyers are unaffected by the emotional values corresponding to brands. This paper provides a critical discussion of the fragmented literature on business-to-business branding which is organized in five themes: B2B branding benefits; the role of B2B brands in the decision making process; B2B brand architecture; B2B brands as communication enablers and relationship builders; and industrial brand equity. Drawing on the gaps and contradictions in the literature the paper concludes by proposing an agenda for future research.

## Research highlights

° Academic inquiry on the subject of B2B branding is limited, fragmented and inconclusive. ° Five broad areas have been highlighted as requiring further systematic and rigorous research. ° Benefits and role of B2B brands; brand architecture; B2B brands as relationship builders; and industrial brand equity. ° Future research directions are identified to further our understanding of how branding can be applied in a B2B context.



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## Keywords

Branding; B2B brands; Industrial brand equity; Literature review; Future research

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**Sheena Leek** gained an MSc in Applied Psychology from Cranfield University before obtaining her PhD from Birmingham University. After a period at Cardiff Business School she returned to the Birmingham Business School in 2004. Her research interests include networking and the initiation of business relationships and development of networks, the

communication process within business to business relationships and B2B branding. She has published in a range of publications such as Journal of Management Studies, Industrial Marketing Management, Journal of Marketing Management and the Journal of Product and Brand Management.

**George Christodoulides** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Birmingham. His research focuses on brand management and e-marketing particularly the way the internet and other interactive technologies affect brands. His research has appeared in journals such as the Journal of Advertising Research, Industrial Marketing Management and the European Journal of Marketing. George has guest-edited special issues of the Journal of Business Research and European Journal of Marketing on Brand Management while he currently edits a special issue of Industrial Marketing Management on B2B branding (with Sheena Leek).

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