

Strategic Brand Consultancy : Adaptation & Accountability

MBA Dissertation Abstract. Fiona McNae, October 2002

This dissertation evaluated the hypothesis that : **decreased client marketing spend during economic recession will require strategic brand consultancies to adapt to changing market conditions and client needs and to become more accountable for the impact of their advice.**

A review of the academic literature covers marketing effectiveness and current perspectives on advertising agency accountability and hypotheses generated for testing in the fieldwork. Primary data was gathered from semi-structured qualitative interviews with senior industry personnel and analysed to show how (i) economic recession is impacting on client marketing and strategic brand consultancy and (ii) the issues associated with measurement of marketing effectiveness in client companies and consultancies. The feasibility of increased accountability for marketing consultancies is considered and the overall results are compared to hypotheses arising from the literature.

The business issues for strategic brand consultancies in the future arising from the analysis were explored from a number of angles : (i) the linking of marketing outcomes to shareholder value and cash flow (ii) the language to communicate marketing effectiveness to finance personnel, (iii) the considerations regarding creativity and financial discipline and (iv) the reframing of the metrics used to measure accountability to keep pace with innovation in marketing techniques.

It was concluded that the future of marketing consultancies should upweight their brand economics capability, pay attention to their payment structure and establish thought leadership in bridging the gap between marketing and finance. Several rich streams of further work are detailed.