

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'S MOST VALUABLE BRANDS IN THE PERIOD 2021-2023

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Abstract: *In nowadays economic context, when, in many situations, the perception is more important than the reality, it is relevant to understand which is the attitude of the customers regarding a brand. Thus, brand value is an important part of any company's intangible assets. In the period 2021-2023, the United States of America's brands dominated the hierarchy of the top ten world's most valuable brands. The aim of the paper is to analyze the evolution of the United States of America's most valuable brands by brand value in the period 2021-2023. Moreover, the study shows and analyzes the main industries represented in the top 10 of the United States of America's most valuable brands in the period 2021-2023. The research was based on a quantitative method. The paper demonstrates that the brand value of the Americas' most valuable brands grew in the period 2021-2023. Also, the paper highlights the battle for supremacy between Apple and Amazon.*

Keywords: *brand, most valuable brand, America, period 2021-2023*

INTRODUCTION

In nowadays economic context, when, in many situations, the perception is more important than the reality, it is relevant to understand which is the attitude of the customers regarding a brand. Moreover, in the last 3 years, the COVID-19 pandemic associated with its economic effects have impacted the worldwide companies' approach in the economic field, in general, and in marketing, especially [1-3]. In this frame of reference, the world's entrepreneurs understand the importance of brand value by spending millions of dollars on building brand awareness to make customers recognize their brands and purchase from them [4]. The United States of America owns the most lucrative advertising industry in the world, with a projected spend for advertising of almost \$300 billion in 2023 [5]. Also, the American brands dominated the top of the first ten world's most valuable brands with 7 brands in the period 2021-2023 [6].

The concept of brand value has increasingly received attention from marketing scholars. It is associated with brand equity, with an understanding that different marketing actions can result in different outcomes or "added value" for the brand [7,8]. Moreover, brand value establishes the capabilities of a brand to conduct its business activities in a way that allows managers to achieve a company's business objectives [9]. Thus, brand value is an important part of any company's intangible assets [10]. Other authors state that brand value provides emotional value to consumers, rational value to its business customers, and reflects its operational efficiency as an important element of the value it provides to both consumers and business customers [11]. This definition highlights one of the major differences between business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) commerce: emotional vs. rational thinking.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the evolution of the United States of America's most valuable brands by brand value in the period 2021-2023. The research contributes to the enrichment of the literature on brand management. The paper is organized into three major sections: In the first part, the authors explain briefly the conceptual framework of brand value and its management. In the second section, the authors present the research methodology. The analysis is based on desk research. The third section contains the results and discussion. Several concluding remarks are presented at the end of the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of "brand" is reflected in various forms in the scientific literature. According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers" [12]. Moreover, this interpretation is taken by Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong in their book "Principles of Marketing" [13]. Therefore, starting from this perspective, it's relevant to emphasize the main role of a brand, as being that of a differentiation from competition. Sammut-Bonnici presents the concept as "a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization" [14]. Moreover, David Ogilvy, considered "the Father of Advertising", defined a brand as "the intangible sum of a product's attributes" [15]. Thus, traditionally, scholars present the concept as focusing on the company's efforts to create a brand identity that will resonate with its target audience [16].

The scientific literature presents different approaches for calculating brand value. Generally, they can be organized into four types, as follows [17]:

- cost-based approaches;
- market-based approaches;
- income-based approaches;
- formulary approaches.

The cost-based approach assumes that brand value is calculated by considering the cost involved in developing the brand (acquiring, building, or maintaining the brand) [18] (Seetharaman, et al., 2001). The market-based way measures the value of a brand based on similar market transactions of comparable brand rights [19]. The income-based method depends on determining how much the brand owner would have to pay to use its brand if it licensed the brand from a third party (Brand Valuation, 2023). The formulary method involves using numerous criteria, such as brand profitability, brand identity, distribution system, etc. [18].

In 2021, the total value of the world's top ten brands reached a combined \$1.336 trillion [20]. An interesting fact is that the first company from this top, Apple, holds 20% of it. Moreover, the companies from the United States of America dominated the top and reached a combined \$1.093 trillion, which means around 81.7% of the total. Next year, in 2022, the total value of the world's top ten brands increased and reached a combined \$1.689 trillion [21]. Also, the world's most valuable brand, Apple, expands its domination and holds more than 21% of the total value. The American companies extended their superiority and attained a combined \$1.435 trillion, which means around 85% of the total. In 2023, the total value of the world's top 10 brands has declined, in comparison with the last year, and obtained \$1.552 trillion [22]. Amazon surpassed Apple and became the most valuable brand with a value of \$355.1 billion. The companies from the United States of America reached a combined \$1.317 trillion, which means around 84.9% of the total.

Starting from the abovementioned discussion, the authors proposed the following two research objectives:

Objective 1 (O1): To identify and present the United States of America's top 10 most valuable brands in the period 2021-2023.

Objective 2 (O2): To show and analyze the main industries represented in the top 10 of the United States of America's most valuable brands in the period 2021-2023.

In order to achieve the research objectives, the authors used a quantitative research method through desk research. This study is conducive to the development of the literature on brand management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to reach the aim of the paper, the authors used a quantitative method. Firstly, they identified the sources of information. Secondly, the authors searched for relevant data for the topic and performed a literature review. So, they found documents in electronic databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Scopus, Science Direct, etc. Thus, they discovered numerous journals, books, and reports from the areas of marketing, business, and brand management. Moreover, for the brand value information, they consulted the annual report on the world's most valuable and strongest brands, provided by Brand Finance. They chose the United States of America's brands, due to the following reasons:

- The United States of America owns the most lucrative advertising industry in the world [5];

- The American brands dominated the top of the first ten world's most valuable brands with 7 brands in the period 2021-2023 [6];
- The American company Apple led the top of the first ten world's most valuable brands in 2021 and 2022, while another American company Amazon led the same top in 2023.

Thirdly, the information was synthesized, highlighting the aspects related to the brand value and discussing the aspects related to the United States of America's most valuable brands. Finally, the authors concluded the paper and emphasized the conclusions following the performed analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, the global economy experienced one of the worst declines since the financial and economic crisis at the end of the first decade of the 2000s. Thus, 2021 was a year of economic recovery and the world slowly evolved toward a state of relative normalcy [23]. In this frame of reference, it is interesting to analyze the top ten United States of America's most valuable brands in 2021 (Table 1) and to illustrate that some companies are rebounding faster than others.

Table 1: Top 10 United States of America's most valuable brands in 2021

Rank	Rank in the top ten world's most valuable brands	Brand	Brand value (\$B)	Industry
1	1	Apple	\$263.4	Technology
2	2	Amazon	\$254.2	Retail
3	3	Google	\$191.2	Media
4	4	Microsoft	\$140.4	Technology
5	6	Walmart	\$93.2	Retail
6	7	Facebook	\$81.5	Media
7	9	Verizon	\$68.9	Telecoms
8	20	Home Depot	\$52.9	Retail
9	21	AT&T	\$51.4	Telecoms
10	22	Disney	\$51.2	Media

Source: (Brand Finance, 2021)

The year 2021 witnessed an interesting top of the world's 10 most valuable brands by brand value (Brand Finance, 2021). The companies from the United States dominated the top and reached a combined \$1.093 trillion, which means around 81.7% of the total. In a year with global lockdowns, with teleworking becoming the new normal [24], media, technology, and retail industries have significantly boosted their brand values [25]. Moreover, analyzing the above results, the following facts can be highlighted:

- Apple tops the most valuable brands in 2021, followed by Amazon, and Google.
- The top of the world's 10 most valuable brands contains 7 American brands, which demonstrates their dominance. On the other hand, only 8 American brands are in the top 20s of the world.
- The retail industry has 3 companies at the top (Amazon, Walmart, and Home Depot), followed by the media (Google, Facebook, and Disney), technology (Apple and Microsoft), and telecoms (Verizon and AT&T).
- The total value of 2021's Top 10 United States of America's most valuable brands reached a combined \$1.248 trillion, while only Apple holds around 21% of it.

Moving forward to the year 2022, the dominance of American companies continues at the top of the world's 10 most

valuable brands by brand value and their brands reached a combined \$1.435 trillion, which means 85% of the total (Brand Finance, 2022). Moreover, Apple secured its first place in the world, followed by the same American brands: Amazon and Google (Table 2).

Table 2: Top 10 United States of America’s most valuable brands in 2022

Rank	Rank in the top ten world’s most valuable brands	Brand	Brand value (\$B)	Industry
1	1	Apple	\$355.1	Technology
2	2	Amazon	\$350.3	Retail
3	3	Google	\$263.4	Media
4	4	Microsoft	\$184.2	Technology
5	5	Walmart	\$111.9	Retail
6	7	Facebook	\$101.2	Media
7	10	Verizon	\$69.6	Telecoms
8	19	Disney	\$57.1	Media
9	20	Home Depot	\$56.3	Retail
10	26	AT&T	\$47	Telecoms

Source: (Brand Finance, 2022)

Considering the above-presented facts, the following aspects can be pointed out:

- The top of the world’s 10 most valuable brands contains the same 7 American brands as in 2021, which demonstrates, once more, their dominance. On the other hand, considering the ascent of Disney, 9 American brands are in the top 20s of the world.
- The top 10 United States of America’s most valuable brands in 2022 contains the same brands as in 2021. As a consequence, the split of brands by industry is similar to that of 2021.
- The total value of 2022’s Top 10 United States of America’s most valuable brands reached a combined \$1.596 trillion, while only Apple holds around 22% of it. This aspect highlights the positive evolution of this brand.
- The first 3 brands (Apple, Amazon, and Google) reached a combined \$969 billion, which means 61% of the total. This fact demonstrates the deeper concentration at the top.

The year 2023 is characterized by the change of the leader of the top 10 United States of America’s most valuable brands the dominance of American companies, Amazon overtaking Apple (Table 3). A possible explanation regarding this situation is its strong position in both business-to-consumer and business-to-business sectors of the economy, as a key global market leader (Brand Finance, 2023).

Table 3: Top 10 United States of America’s most valuable brands in 2023

Rank	Rank in the top ten world’s most valuable brands	Brand	Brand value (\$B)	Industry
1	1	Amazon	\$299.3	Retail
2	2	Apple	\$297.5	Technology
3	3	Google	\$281.4	Media

4	4	Microsoft	\$191.6	Technology
5	5	Walmart	\$113.8	Retail
6	8	Verizon	\$67.4	Telecoms
7	9	Tesla	\$66.2	Automobiles
8	13	Home Depot	\$61.1	Retail
9	14	Facebook	\$59	Media
10	18	Starbucks	\$53.4	Restaurants

Source: (Brand Finance, 2023)

Taking into account the above-illustrated data, the following facts can be highlighted:

- Two brands appeared in this top in comparison to the previous two years: Tesla and Starbucks. Thus, the automobile and restaurant industries have representatives at this top for the first time.
- It is worth noting the decrease of the Facebook brand to almost half of its brand value in the year 2022. A desirable justification could be the ascension of other social networks such as TikTok/Douyin (\$65.7), WeChat (\$50.3), and Instagram (\$47.4).
- It's interesting to mention that 8 American brands (Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft, Walmart, Verizon, Home Depot, and Facebook) were constantly at the top, in the period 2021-2023, which demonstrates, once again, their dominance.
- The total value of 2023's Top 10 United States of America's most valuable brands reached a combined \$1.490 trillion, while only Amazon holds around 20% of it.
- In comparison with the data from the previous two years, in 2023 there were 10 American brands in the top 20s of the world. This fact underlines the important growth of the brands from the United States of America.

CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the economic environment and impacted worldwide companies' approach in the economic field, in general, and in marketing, especially. In this line, the topic of brand value becomes relevant for scholars and practitioners.

From a theoretical point of view, this paper provides a theoretical framework to better understand brand value and its importance in marketing. Despite that there isn't a standard definition regarding this concept, the authors tried to present some of the main approaches found in the scientific literature. The outcomes of this study demonstrate that brand value explains to all stakeholders the core of a business, including what it is and what it stands for. Thus, this research shows that companies should create a good institutional image and understand that customers may choose to buy products or services from companies with good brand value.

From a practical point of view, this research identifies and presents the United States of America's top 10 most valuable brands in the period 2021-2023. Moreover, it shows and analyzes the main industries represented in the top 10 of the United States of America's most valuable brands in the same period. The authors conclude that American brands headed the world's 10 most valuable brands. Furthermore, Apple and Amazon were the two main competitors for global primacy.

Last but not least, there is a need for future research related to this field. Beyond brand value, it is important to analyze the top of the strongest global and American. Moreover, maybe an analysis of the most valuable European brands can bring good insights. Moreover, an interesting research direction might be an analysis of how there is a correlation between consumer preferences regarding certain products and services and the brand value of the producing companies.

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