

Atlantic Marketing Journal

Volume 5 | Number 2

Article 2

October 2016

The Scent of Change: A Case Study

William K. Foxx

Troy University, wfoxx1@troy.edu

Melissa C. Northam

Troy University, mnortham@troy.edu

Corlette S. Burns

Shift Marketing Consultants, cburns138681@troy.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/amj>



Part of the Advertising and Promotion Management Commons, Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons, Business and Corporate Communications Commons, Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons, Marketing Commons, and the Sales and Merchandising Commons

Recommended Citation

Foxx, William K.; Northam, Melissa C.; and Burns, Corlette S. (2016) "The Scent of Change: A Case Study," *Atlantic Marketing Journal*: Vol. 5 : No. 2 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/amj/vol5/iss2/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Atlantic Marketing Journal by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

The Scent of Change: A Case Study

William K. Foxx, Troy University

wfoxx1@troy.edu

Melissa C. Northam, Troy University

mnortham@troy.edu

Corlette S. Burns, Troy University

cburns138681@troy.edu

Abstract - Decisions about entering into a new business venture involve a variety of considerations, despite the level of experience an entrepreneur has. This case presents the story of a business owner Bennett Gage and his decisions concerning whether or not he should enter into a business where canines are used to detect bed bugs in hotels. This case study gives the reader an opportunity to wrestle with some of the many questions that are part of entering into the creation of a new service.

Keywords - services, franchising, branding, brand management

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners - The case is appropriate for in-class discussions in undergraduate strategic marketing management, strategic management, service marketing or brand management courses.

Introduction

Bennett Gage's desk chair was comfortable but he still couldn't relax. The organization had expended a lot of time and effort, and today was the moment of truth. This afternoon's activities had a sense of promise. At such times, he mentally crossed his fingers because his hands would clench too tightly to do so physically.

Bennett saw the team, Abe and Ryker, come into view on the computer screen. An inconspicuously placed camera transmitted their movements as they progressed down the hallway.

Abe, who was in front, moved down the corridor with clear purpose - almost a confidence. He prompted the greater part of Bennett's attention. Abe was silent and alert, critical qualities in these types of undertakings. Bennett duly noted them on

his pad of paper. Success or failure really hinged on Abe's inherent ability to find beings that sought not to be found. His recent training had been designed to focus and sharpen these skills.

Behind him followed Ryker, the team leader, a man who Bennett thoroughly trusted. He had extensive experience and was very discerning. In fact, he's the one who had suggested Abe was ready. While Ryker was the real leader on the team, at this moment he was wisely deferring to Abe's exceptional skill set.

As the team moved quietly into the last room on the hall, another camera picked up the team's progress. Bennett switched screens. He trusted Ryker but the final decision was his and he needed visual confirmation.

Except for the bedroom furniture, the room appeared empty. Abe, who had entered the room first, behaved as if he thought otherwise. He paused briefly, turned his head in deliberation and then moved with intent toward the far side of the room - to a space between the bed and a closet door.

As Abe moved along the wall near the bed, Bennett saw him abruptly stop, then fix his gaze on something out of view on the floor. Abe then sat down.

It was now time for Ryker to complete their assignment. He moved past Abe, stooped down close to the floor and picked up a small container. He then patted Abe on the head and said, "Good boy!" Neither the container's occupants - three live bed bugs - nor the team itself heard Bennett exhale an enthusiastic, "Yes!" This dog was ready. Bennett would make the certification training arrangements for him and three others in the upcoming days.

The Basics, or What Are These Critters?

Cimex lectularius, or bed bugs as they are commonly called, are insects a bit larger than but not unlike a flea. They are reddish-brown insects that feed on blood - primarily human blood. Adults have a flat-oval shape and are small in size, measuring only about 1/4 of an inch in length. Bed bugs emit an oil that has a smell similar to ripe raspberries.

Under normal conditions, bed bugs live roughly four to six months, but they are prolific. Over the course of her life, a female may lay up to 500 eggs, a few each day. Each egg is roughly the size of a grain of salt. Once they hatch, bed bugs normally mature in about 40 days (Bedbugs.org, 2015).

Body heat and carbon dioxide aid bed bugs in finding a blood source. Their nocturnal nature allows them to move about and feed largely unnoticed. A bed bug is capable of consuming its body weight in blood in about five minutes. Though their bites may cause irritation, they are not known to carry disease. Once a food source is successfully located, bed bugs will hide relatively close by in floor cracks, carpet or upholstery. From these locations, they will venture out to feed at night. While bed

bugs generally feed every few days, a single meal can provide sustenance for up to six months (Bedbugs.org, 2015).

Even though bed bugs are wingless, they are capable of ascending great (for them) heights as they can climb on many types of surfaces, including wood, paper, fabric and even glass. They will also crawl lengthy distances - up to 500 feet - to reach a host. Because of their size and shape, this travel can even involve movement through the spaces between rooms. Journeys over much greater spans, even between cities and countries, is not uncommon because they can hitchhike in suitcases, clothing, bedding and furniture.

Undesired Closeness

For centuries, bed bugs have been interacting quite closely with humans. In Egypt, archeologists discovered fossilized bed bugs in association with human dwellings that were over 3,500 years old. Their unique qualities have been mentioned in the writings of ancient Greek playwrights, Roman medical texts, and on Chinese tablets (Potter, 2011). This close interaction has persisted because there have been so few techniques available to address their presence.

In more recent times, their unique qualities even prompted a nursery rhyme:

Good night, sleep tight,
Don't let the bed bugs bite,
Wake up bright
In the morning light
To do what's right

~ Anonymous

The close interaction between humans and bed bugs for these millennia was not fostered by a desire to nurture literary work. After all, humans haven't cared much for the very personal attention bed bugs have provided them. This closeness has remained because there have been so few techniques available to address their continued presence.

Initially, physical methods of prevention were used (for example, putting oil on the legs of a bed). These techniques didn't kill the bed bug, but inhibited its ability to get from its hiding place to the person sleeping. Throughout the 20th century, the number of options available for physical prevention such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners increased.

The real advance in dealing with bed bugs came with the development of synthetic insecticides. This technological advance in the mid-20th century had a tremendous impact because it simultaneously reduced bed bug populations and provided long-term residual control. But the chemicals that poisoned and reduced the bed bug populations unfortunately had detrimental effects on the humans with

which they were associated. For this reason, some insecticides, such as DDT, were deemed unacceptable and their usage banned. The milder insecticides that are currently approved do not endure as long nor are they as potent. The bed bug population has also developed some resistance to chemical controls (Hotz, 2011). Because insecticide treatment is less effective than it once was, bed bug control and prevention efforts must be more integrated and focused.

Back in Force

It is unknown how many bed bug infestations occur in apartments, homes, hotels, nursing homes, and commercial buildings around the United States each year. While some city governments such as New York City encourage the reporting of bed bug infestations, there is no nationwide organization or registry that collects such data. Factors that make it even more challenging to estimate the extent of the problem include the stigma of reporting, potential landlord financial responsibility, and lack of accurate information (including correct identification of specimens).

Reports from Pest Management Professionals (PMPs), residents, and health services providers suggest an extraordinary rate of spread. Research by the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) and the University of Kentucky, using a nationwide sample of PMPs, suggests that infestations in the United States continue at high rates and that bed bugs are as much, if not more of, a problem than in prior years. Almost all (99.6%) PMPs surveyed had treated bed bug infestations in the past year, a much higher rate compared to 5, 10 and 15 years ago. Almost two out of three (64%) PMPs report that infestations continue to be on the rise. They additionally indicate that infestations had increased in the majority of locations in which they typically treated for bed bugs (National Pest Management Association, 2015).

The Lodging Industry

The lodging industry has been particularly challenged by the bed bug's resurgence in recent years, as well as by the diminished options for their prevention and treatment. Bed bugs are primarily associated with places where people sleep and when people are not staying in their own homes, most of these places are properties associated with the lodging industry such as hotels, motels and bed & breakfasts.

In the United States, this industry is massive. The lodging industry's leading trade association states that there were almost 53,000 properties with 4,926,543 guestrooms in 2014, and these figures consider only properties with 15 or more rooms (American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2015). In dollars spent, over 1 billion rooms were sold in 2011 alone, with over 100 billion dollars in room revenue for the U.S. Hotel Industry. In addition, ancillary revenue spent elsewhere in lodging establishments was roughly \$30 billion (Hood, 2011). Another pertinent fact about the lodging industry is length of stay. Roughly 63% of business travelers stayed only

one or two days and over 76% of leisure travelers stayed only one or two days (American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2015).

In sum, there are a large number of properties with a lot of guestrooms which experience substantial turnover. These facts suggest a problem that could become sizeable and expand exponentially in a relatively short period of time. The potential financial impact means the industry has cause to remain attentive to this issue.

Lodging Industry Response

In the past, initial responses to bed bug infestations by individual properties have typically been very aggressive. They included removal of all furniture and bedding, as well as extensive treatment involving chemicals. While this approach may have been somewhat effective, it was extremely costly in terms of lost capital goods, service expenses and downtime for rooms. When infestations continued to resurface, firms realized that the problem couldn't be managed as a one-time event - a more reasoned and unified approach was needed. The result was an integrated effort that has several critical components: prevention (actions to keep from getting an infestation), monitoring (actions to identify the presence of an infestation), and treatment (actions to eliminate an infestation). Bed bugs' secretive nature, high reproductive rate and ability to move from place to place, either under their own power or as hitch hikers, means that firms must maintain these integrated efforts as well.

For prevention, mattress covers and certain types of furniture reduce the number of potential places bed bugs can hide. Thorough and regular cleaning of bedding and linens, combined with powerful vacuums, can reduce numbers if an infestation is present. In terms of monitoring, staff must be trained to identify bed bugs and the signs of an infestation, such as bed bug fecal matter or molted insect skins.

Treatment is generally handled by PMPs and must balance various considerations. There are government restrictions on the chemicals that can be used for treatment, especially in an enclosed space in which people will sleep. Speed and effectiveness are both important as well. If an infestation is present, it is important to address it swiftly so it does not spread to other rooms on a property through adjoining wall spaces or traveler movement.

Although these efforts do not prevent re-infestation, they reduce its likelihood and allow a property to identify and address any problem swiftly. This is a critical consideration as the detrimental impact on company profitability is two-fold, including both treatment costs and lost rental revenue.

Sniffers, Inc.

Bennett Gage became aware of the resurgence of bed bugs in the lodging industry by accident. A friend mentioned that a local hotel had experienced a bed bug problem. Later he ran across an article about the use of canine scent detection to locate bed bugs. He was intrigued. His firm, Sniffers, Inc., was well respected for providing

canine training. At that time, the firm's training services were focused on drug and explosive canine sniffers for law agencies, but the training techniques were not all that different.

His research into the training and certification of canine bed bug sniffers was prompted by two thoughts. First, it seemed like a good fit for his firm, a fit that had substantial potential. Second, he believed the market for canine bed bug sniffers had to be much less complicated - both in terms of dealing with the ever expanding bureaucratic paperwork of selling to government as well as with the sourcing/storage of training materials. Effective training involved not only several hundred hours of focused time and effort but also the usage of the actual scents from the materials of focus. It had to be much less complicated for Bennett to retain and use live bed bugs (a few dollars and a feeding once monthly), rather than illegal drugs or potentially dangerous explosive materials. It seemed to Bennett a winning idea for multiple reasons.

His initial efforts had been a side venture. Once he'd learned how the certification process worked with the National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association (NESDCA), it was not too difficult to adjust his training methods (National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association, 2015). After a number of his dogs and their handlers had passed the scent detection certification process with flying colors, the quality of his training methods had become evident. There was tremendous latent demand for his trained dogs by PMPs that were incorporating canine sniffers into their service regime. It is for this reason that Bennett had a lengthy list of firms desiring to purchase his trained dogs. This was only one business model that he thought could be used though.

Future Expansion

The longer Bennett was engaged in his new enterprise and the better he began to understand how it worked, the more he speculated that there might be a more lucrative way to be involved. Rather than simply be a supplier of sniffing dogs to PMPs, perhaps there were other options. After all, Sniffers, Inc. provided the most critical resource involved in canine scent detection and he had the ability to substantially expand its production.

Bennett began pondering which form of service business offered the greatest potential financial returns over the long-run. His initial idea was to develop franchises that focused exclusively on bed bug monitoring services. This would involve his franchises providing scheduled canine detection services to lodging properties. If a sniffer team found an infestation, they would determine the extent of the problem and return later to assess the effectiveness of a PMP's treatment. Focusing exclusively on monitoring would supplement activities by the lodging staff and would allow properties to address infestations more effectively and with less cost and down time. Being solely a monitoring service would let him present his services to lodging properties as more objective than PMPs, which both locate an infestation

and then treat it as well. It would also allow his franchises to skip all the additional regulations with which PMPs had to deal. He could help franchisees get set up with a branded service, trained canines, and all the necessary handling certifications. Additionally, he could instruct them in how to properly care for the dogs according to the USDA National Detector Dog Guidelines (USDA, 2003). The franchisee would then use their local knowledge of a market to establish contracts with lodging properties in their area.

Considering a price of \$300 per hour, a canine/handler team could save a lodging property a large amount of money. Canine sniffers are much more effective than most alternatives. They boast a substantially higher accuracy rate in finding infestations compared to trained humans using visual detection (97% vs. 30%) (Bedbugs.org, 2015; Pfiester, Koehler and Pereira, 2008). They can also cover a greater area in a shorter amount of time, a quality that would be attractive to properties that needed swift turnaround times. He was confident that many lodging properties would be attracted by such a service, on the basis of a simple cost/benefit analysis.

Seeking an Identity

Bennett understood that a unique brand name and logo could set him apart from his competition. He had read some materials about branding. One key aspect of branding that stood out to him was that a brand name should be strong and memorable. A brand name for detection and monitoring services should readily communicate the service being offered as well as the benefits that a buyer could expect. He believed he had some good ideas in that regard. While he had been contemplating the issue of a brand name based on these criteria, his wife had suggested “Bedbugs-R-Us” or “Bedbugs-B-Gone”. He thought either of these brand names had a lot of potential.

To support one of these brand names, he had come up with two competing logo designs. The first was pretty straightforward. It used the silhouette of a bed bug with a big red “X” across it. The second logo design showed cartoon bed bugs fleeing from a dog walking upright wearing a deerstalker hat (like Sherlock Holmes’) and holding a magnifying glass. He thought that either design would both complement the brand name and be attractive on company uniforms and the side of company vehicles. The second design had an added advantage in that it could be fashioned into a 3-D model and put on the roof of a vehicle. That visibility would really make his franchisees stand out and communicate the services they provided. He had discussed his ideas with several close friends, who indicated that they thought he was very creative.

Bennett thinks there is the potential for substantial growth in the coming years for this industry and that a franchising model would allow him to take advantage of this growth in a manner that has very positive long term potential. He is asking for your advice. What should Bennett Gage do?

End of Case: Instructional Materials Follow

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Develop a SWOT Analysis for Bennett's business.
2. Do market trends suggest there is potential for growth for canine scent detection services?
3. Is franchising a good option for Bennett to use for canine bed bug scent detection services?
4. What are the pros and cons of franchising this business?
4. What do you think of Bennett's branding efforts thus far?
5. Are there additional criteria that he should use to assess the quality of a brand name or logo?

Instructor Teaching Notes

Case Synopsis

The use of canine scent detection for bed bugs is a relatively new service in the pest management industry. The case follows the deliberations of one entrepreneur, Bennett Gage, who is evaluating entry into this industry with service targeted toward the lodging industry. The critical strategic decisions before him include: whether to enter the market, how best to enter the market and how best to brand the firm. His experience in a similar industry gives him some insight into this service market. The benefits and cons for his firm are introduced. Various business models are available to him but he currently believes franchising to be the most financially promising approach long-term. Bennett recognizes the critical importance of branding in this effort and has developed some brand names and logos to potentially use for this purpose. Though these strategic decisions are considered in sequence, each must be contemplated with its impact on other decisions. Information in the case was derived from interviews with an individual involved in this business and Internet research.

Educational Objectives

The objective of this case is to challenge students to evaluate the multi-faceted questions involved in introducing a new service provision. The case is designed to be considered as a series of strategic decisions: whether to enter the market, how best to enter the market and how best to brand the firm. The setting of the case is likely new for students. The purpose of the case, however is to prompt students to wrestle with strategic decisions and better appreciate how they apply across other contexts. To strengthen this connection, students may benefit from a discussion of whether these strategic decisions are applicable, and in what way they are relevant to other new product ventures.

The case can be used as either an individual or a team-based assignment. The critical thinking questions may be assigned from the start or students may be left to work through the challenge of determining the best course of action themselves. In either case, the critical thinking questions can be used by the instructor to roughly sequence the in-class discussion.

The case is most applicable to undergraduate marketing courses in which strategic decision-making concepts are covered such as strategic marketing management, strategic management, service marketing or brand management courses.

Upon completion, students should have a better appreciation for how the firm's response to each strategic decision impacts later decisions in the process. In particular, students should have a more robust understanding of the following:

Environment analysis provides a foundation for strategic planning but in most cases, business decisions must be made without all desired information being available.

There are multiple business models available to a new business. The "best" option must consider the industry, the product to be introduced, and the goals of the firm.

Branding is a critical consideration for firms. It has the potential to tremendously impact the long-term success of the firm.

Comments on Critical Thinking Questions

- Develop a SWOT Analysis for Bennett's business. Do market trends suggest there is potential for growth for canine scent detection services?

Firms and potential entrepreneurs desire to estimate market potential to assess whether there will be demand for a good or service in the future. SWOT analysis gives him the opportunity to consider the impact of both internal and external factors on the business decision. It allows Bennett to make more informed strategic decisions about entry into the canine bed bug scent detection market and how best to do so.

A sample SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is outlined below.

Strengths

- Sniffers, Inc. has an excellent reputation.
- Owner has substantial experience in the canine training industry.
- Firm has already successfully trained a large number of canine bed bug sniffers.
- Firm has a waiting list of PMPs who want to purchase his trained dogs.

Weaknesses

- Owner has limited experience in the managerial operations of a consumer or B2B service business.

Opportunities

- Research confirms that canine bed bug scent detection is both substantially more accurate and faster than other methods.
- Industry research suggests that bed bug infestations continue to increase in the United States.
- The lodging industry is taking more proactive steps to prevent, monitor, and treat infestations.
- Expanded use of social media amplifies the impact of negative consumer experiences; thus firms may need to take more active steps to prevent such infestations.
- Federally approved chemicals for the treatment of infestations are shorter-lasting and less potent than in the past.
- The number of domestic and international travelers has continued to increase in recent decades.

Threats

- Greater awareness and education on the subject of bed bugs is reducing negative consumer reactions to infestations.
- Some well-branded competitors offering substitute services already exist in all markets.

Bennett must ask not only whether there is an opportunity in the market for canine bed bug scent detection services but also whether he is poised to take advantage of such an opportunity.

Beyond broad trends, estimating some level of numeric growth potential for this industry would be very difficult. There are deficiencies in terms of industry sales data available to Bennett to make his decision. There is no nationwide organization/registry collecting such data and numerous factors hold the potential to sway that data's accuracy. That the best nationwide effort to collect such data involves parties, the NPMA and PMPs, that have a strong vested interest in the outcome offers the potential for results to be somewhat skewed. On the other hand, these are experienced professionals on the "frontline" so to speak. There may be no better way in which to assess these environmental changes.

Looking at the big picture, some trends can be surmised. There has been a substantial expansion in the number of bed bug infestations in recent decades. Though they may taper off, such infestations are unlikely to markedly diminish.

Even with awareness and education, the methods available to individuals and commercial firms to combat bed bug infestations are limited. Approved insecticides have reduced potency and are not as long lasting. The number of lodging establishments and the travelers staying in them is likely to remain high. Individuals' responses to personal encounters in lodging establishments are likely to remain negative though the intensity of consumer responses may diminish. Meanwhile the ability of travelers to communicate any negative response via social media and internet websites will only expand in the future, meaning any adverse impact of bed bugs can spread quickly.

Based on the strengths, it appears that Bennett is well positioned to take advantage of opportunities in this market. Both Bennett and his firm are well established and have very good reputations in the industry. The canine bed bug scent detection training process used is well tested and effective based on certification success. Numerous PMPs are requesting sniffers from his firm.

Developing quantitative estimates would be a challenge but environmental trends suggest the problem will not diminish and that the lodging industry will need to address it well into the foreseeable future. An opportunity is present. Bennett and Sniffers, Inc. have the skills to service this industry and benefit from the growth it experiences. The firm's strengths suggest it is poised to take advantage of growth.

- Is franchising a good option for Bennett to use for canine bed bug scent detection services? What are its pros and cons?

A franchise refers to the right granted by a company to an individual or group to market its product in a specific territory. The franchise seller is referred to as the franchisor and the buyer is referred to as the franchisee.

There are several kinds of franchises. Manufacturing franchises are agreements where the franchisor allows a manufacturer to produce and sell products using its name and/or trademark. Product franchises are agreements where manufacturers allow retailers to distribute products and use names and trademarks. Business format franchises are agreements where the franchisor provides the franchisee with an established business system, including name and trademark, which the franchisee independently owns/operates. This third type of franchising is a common business format which includes businesses such as Subway, Orange Theory Fitness, and H&R Block.

Whether franchising is "a good option" must be considered from two interrelated perspectives - that of the seller and that of the buyer. From the perspective of Bennett, franchising may be the best option. It is a commonly used business arrangement for services such as those he is interested in offering. Depending on the agreement, the franchisee pays an initial franchising fee and a royalty based on a percentage of profits over time; thus it offers Bennett financial benefits in both the short-term and long-term. Finally, his unique expertise and resources allow him to

take advantage of growth in the marketplace with relatively minimal personal investment and risk.

From the perspective of a potential franchisee, “a good option” must be considered differently. For a potential buyer, the advantages of purchasing a franchise include: reduced risk because franchisor/managerial know-how allows the business to become operational and potentially profitable more quickly, economies of scale exist in purchasing; and a recognizable brand name gains traction faster in the local market. Some blend of these benefits must be available to a potential franchisee.

At present Bennett has no service business system to replicate and franchise. However, he does have some critical operational know-how. He can provide the necessary training and resources for a franchisee to be able to deliver the actual service - trained dogs and assistance in completion of the certification process. The managerial side of the business system is currently lacking but it is not unreasonable to presume that that facet of the franchise’s operations can be replicated based on other franchise business models. In terms of branding, Bennett’s franchise brings no well-recognized name to the marketplace, but there are very few other firms with recognized brand names in the market and they are generally localized in specific urban areas. Buyers are likely willing to look beyond this deficiency when they appreciate the superior attributes of canine bed bug detection services in general. Also, potential buyers such as lodging properties will be approached via personal selling as opposed to customers needing to recall some brand name when the need for the service arises.

So the question of whether franchising it is a good option depends on what perspective students take and how they weigh the various issues. One student may consider the lack of a business system and a well-recognized brand name as a fatal flaw which negates further consideration. Another student may consider the operational know-how sufficient to warrant further evaluation.

Whether something is “worth it” obviously depends on the price involved. The “prices” in the context of a franchise is the initial franchise fee and royalty percentage. These are purposely not delineated in the case study to leave that subject to the instructor’s discretion. The instructor could propose various prices to students to have them consider at what point a potential franchisee’s decision would be “worth it” or students could be instructed to devise some criteria by which Bennett could establish these amounts. There are a number of websites such as FranchisingUSA (2015) where franchise information including initial fees is provided.

There are some additional considerations that Bennett might make relative to the idea of franchising. If he begins franchising and supplies sniffers to his franchisees, he can still be involved in the industry as a supplier of canine scent detectors to other PMPs. It is not unreasonable to think that the contract would include some restrictions on sales to potential competitors within a franchisee’s territory or that some substantial price or support difference would be necessary but he could still be involved in the industry. Franchising would not be his only avenue

for revenue. Additionally, should some magic bullet be developed that monitors bed bugs perfectly or deals with them in a more permanent manner, Bennett could shift back to the training and sale of canine scent detectors for other purposes. His commitment to canine bed bug scent detection is not irreversible should the business environment change.

- What are the strengths of Bennett's branding efforts thus far? Are there additional criteria that he should use to assess the quality of a brand name or logo?

A brand is not just the product, or its packaging or its promotion, or its logo, or its slogan, or its customer service. It's a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer driven by all of those things in combination. Thus it is important for a firm to determine what collection of perceptions the firm wants to foster about itself in the minds of consumers. Branding must start with clearly defining who your firm is and what it stands for. Managing the brand then focuses on what the brand communicates (intentionally and unintentionally) at every point of contact.

Once a brand is defined, the next step is to give that brand some meaning and build some awareness for it - emphasizing it via brand messaging, a well-designed logo, a tagline, and every other aspect of the business as possible.

Bennett has already developed some potential brand names and logos. In his zeal to get rolling, however, Bennett has skipped key considerations in the brand development process. Without knowing what he wants the company to stand for, how can he know if a particular brand or logo fits the strategy? At the very least, branding necessitates understanding business mission, the benefits/features of its offerings, what customers think about the firm already, as well as what qualities the firm desires customers to associate with the firm.

In terms of developing a logo, one must expend greater discipline than pulling a design out of the air. Research on existing logos, particularly those of firms in the same industry, ensures ideas are not used that belong to another firm. If logos under consideration are too similar in shape, color or text, potential customers may become confused about product and service offerings among competitors.

Once branding efforts are determined, a firm should be consistent across all the firm's marketing materials including color schemes, logo placement, look and feel throughout all marketing communications. The key here is consistency so customers will quickly recognize the brand.

Bennett did seem to grasp the idea of using branding to differentiate his franchise. He has thus far focused on making the franchise brand name and logo unique and memorable. While that is a worthy goal in most service contexts, there may need to be some boundaries in the context of this specific provision. For example, lodging properties, the group Bennett has expressed is a primary target market, may not want to be seen using canine bed bug sniffers. Differentiated, unique and

memorable are important attributes for a brand but he will need to define for whom this differentiation is desired. Students should be prompted to consider what additional attributes a brand for canine bed bug monitoring services should have.

Note: A previous version of this case was presented and an abstract published in the Proceedings of the 2015 AtMA Conference.

References

- American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2015. 2014 Lodging Industry Profile. [online] Available at: <<http://www.ahla.com/content.aspx?id=36332>> [Accessed 12 May 2015].
- Bedbugs.org, 2015. Learn All About The Cimex Lectularius. [online] Available at: <<http://www.bedbugs.org>> [Accessed 9 May 2015].
- FranchisingUSA, 2015. Directory of Best Franchise Opportunities. [online] Available at: <<http://www.franchisingusamagazine.com/franchise-directory/>> [Accessed 10 December 2015].
- Hood, S., 2011. Hotel Industry Analytical Foundations. [online] Available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCoQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.lib.jmu.edu%2Fgeneral%2Fdocuments%2Fstr%2FTraining%2FHotel%2520Industry%2520Foundations.pptx&ei=0XFVvc_BH_K1sQTxnoEw&usg=AFQjCNFK4obxfi8FrbUv9gYurfLvsoSrZg&sig2=kkMF5SElnHvIhUgKy1e0Zw&bvm=bv.93564037,d.cWc> [Accessed 25 April 2015].
- Hotz, R.E., 2011. Why Bedbugs Won't Die - Irritating Pests Are Evolving Rapidly to Withstand Pesticides, Gene Study Finds. Wall Street Journal, 20 Jan.
- National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association, 2015. NESDCA Certification Rules. [online] Available at: <http://www.nesdca.com/?page_id=112> [Accessed 14 May 2015].
- National Pest Management Association, 2015. 2015 Bugs Without Borders Executive Summary. [online] Available at: <<http://www.pestworld.org/news-and-views/pest-articles/articles/2015-bugs-without-borders-executive-summary/>> [Accessed 12 December 2015].
- Pfiester, M., Koehler, P.G. and Pereira, R.M., 2008. Ability of Bed Bug-Detecting Canines to Locate Live Bed Bugs and Viable Bed Bug Eggs. Journal of Economic Entomology. 101(4). pp.1389-1396.
- Potter, M.F., 2011. The History of Bed Bug Management - With Lessons from the Past. American Entomologist. 57(1). pp.14-25.
- United States Department of Agriculture, 2012. National Detector Dog Manual. [pdf] United States Department of Agriculture. Available at: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/plants/manuals/ports/downloads/detector_dog.pdf> [Accessed 12 December 2015].

Author Information

William K. Foxx is an Associate Professor of Marketing and serves as Chair of the Marketing Department for the Sorrell College of Business, Troy University.

Melissa C. Northam is an Associate Professor of Marketing for the Sorrell College of Business, Troy University.

Corlette S. Burns is an Adjunct Instructor of Marketing for the Sorrell College of Business, Troy University. She is also the Strategist & Senior Consultant for Shift Marketing Consultants.