

Exploring employee perspectives of branding: a case study of Purple Wave Auction

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B.S., Texas A&M University, 2022

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Communications and Agricultural Education
College of Agriculture

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2024

Approved by:

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Abstract

Purple Wave Auction, an auction house based in Manhattan, Kansas, has established itself as a trailblazer in the online equipment auction industry since its founding in 2000. Specializing in the direct selling of agricultural, construction, and fleet equipment through fully online, no-reserve auctions, Purple Wave Auction has earned a reputation for reliability and transparency. This paper proposes a case study analysis to probe Purple Wave Auction's employees, aiming to assess their impact on overall brand identity. By understanding how their branding is perceived by employees, Purple Wave Auction and other businesses can identify areas for improvement and strengthen their brand presence in the market amidst changing dynamics and stiff competition.

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Introduction

Purple Wave Auction is a renowned auction house in Manhattan, Kansas which operates fully online (Purple Wave Auction, 2022). It is a specialized local expert in direct selling of agricultural, construction, and fleet equipment that people can trust as the best in auctions of used equipment to the highest bidder with no reserve. The company's specialty lies in liquidating vehicles and equipment through the easiest and most reliable, no-reserve public internet auctions (Purple Wave Auction, 2022). The organization was founded in 2000 and has earned itself a good standing as a trailblazer in the online equipment auction industry. The firm assures sellers of a full-service experience ranging from marketing and listing their assets to selling and collecting payment. The company illustrates that technology is a great driver of firm growth and a productive marketplace for sellers and buyers of products. The transparency provided by the real-time system redefines the traditional buying and selling of equipment-related assets.

Purple Wave Auction's current marketing and branding strategies reflect a blend of traditional and digital approaches aimed at reaching a wide audience of buyers and sellers (M. Rieke, personal communication, April 2, 2024). Their branding is characterized by its distinctive purple color scheme, which is consistently applied across various channels, including their website, marketing materials, and signage at field events. This consistent branding helps to create a strong brand identity and fosters brand recognition among their target audience. In terms of marketing, Purple Wave Auction employs a multi-channel approach to reach potential buyers and sellers. Their website serves as a central hub for accessing information about upcoming auctions, browsing available inventory, and participating in online bidding. They also leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to engage with their audience, share auction highlights, and promote upcoming events.

Additionally, Purple Wave Auction utilizes email marketing to communicate with subscribers about upcoming auctions, featured items, and other relevant updates. They also invest in targeted online advertising campaigns to reach individuals interested in buying or selling specific types of equipment. Overall, Purple Wave Auction's marketing and branding efforts reflect a commitment to innovation, customer service, and providing a seamless auction experience for all involved parties. By leveraging a mix of traditional and digital strategies, they continue to strengthen their position as a leading player in the auction industry (M. Rieke, personal communication, April 2, 2024).

The case of the Purple Wave Auction is an ideal indicator that market dynamics are swiftly changing due to the advancements in technology. The changes are consequently disrupting the online auction business environment positively. With the surge in prominence of the online auction marketplace in the industry, a strong and recognizable brand identity becomes a critical factor (Jankovic, 2012). This means that businesses in this sector, like Purple Wave, should actively seek a strong brand identity that instills trust and faith in clients operating in a virtual setting. This entails the online auction businesses aggressively improving their brand consistency and differentiation efforts to stay afloat in the industry's changing dynamics and stiff competition. There is a need to probe the internal stakeholders of this company to make informed conclusions about its branding strategy and external communications for its impact on overall brand identity (Vandiver, 2023). The results of this case study can be used by Purple Wave Auction and other corporate companies to better understand how effectively their brand identity is perceived by customers, identify areas for improvement, and ultimately strengthen their brand presence in the market.

Review of the Literature

Branding

According to Johnson (2019), a brand refers to a term, name, or sign symbol, including a combination of these elements that creators or sellers of products use to identify themselves. The process of branding is a diverse concept that encompasses both tangible and intangible elements. Branding is beneficial as it creates awareness and improves the identity of products, services, places, persons, or organizations (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). People in business use the branding process to develop a unique market space and strategic location and manage their brand equity (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). This confirms its significance as a marketing strategy that creates product value and positively impacts consumer perception. Branding also goes beyond understanding and influencing consumer perception to include defining brand identity and the corporate culture of a firm internally and externally (Mearns, 2007).

Branding and Employees

Employer branding and employee perspectives are interrelated. The perception of a brand by employees can influence how the public sees the brand (Wentzel, 2009). This perception is shaped by the organizational culture, with a consistent communication of values and culture being crucial (Buttery, 2023). Effective brand strategies lead to a strong positive brand that consequently improves employee retention, satisfaction, and productivity (Jain & Pal, 2012). Thus, employees with positive perceptions of their employer branding become significantly motivated to remain committed to advancing the brand because of their improved behavior and attitude. This ultimately contributes to the rise of brand ambassadors (Xiong et al., 2013). Besides, positive employer branding considerably improves the process of attracting and

retaining top talents in an organization. This further validates that a strong brand reputation is a key factor in the marketplace.

Internally, the differences in workers' perceptions towards the employer's branding make the workers depict varying levels of internal brand commitment and sustainability of the organization (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016). A study by Gilani & Cunningham (2017) confirms this assertion, revealing employer branding shapes how internal workers view the company. As a result, they are inspired to stay employed. Several factors contribute to the inspiration to remain employed at a company. First and foremost is a sense of purpose and alignment with the company's mission and values. When employees believe in what the company stands for and feel that their work contributes to a greater cause, they are more likely to stay motivated and engaged. Additionally, opportunities for growth and advancement play a crucial role. Employees are inspired to stay when they see a clear path for their professional development within the company, whether through promotions, training programs, or challenging assignments. A positive work environment characterized by supportive colleagues, effective leadership, and a culture of recognition and appreciation also fosters inspiration to stay. When employees feel valued and respected, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles. Finally, competitive compensation and benefits are essential in ensuring that employees feel adequately rewarded for their contributions and are motivated to continue their employment with the company (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). Overall, a combination of purpose, growth opportunities, a positive work environment, and fair compensation can inspire employees to remain dedicated to their organization.

These findings confirm that key determinants of employee retention are comprised of corporate culture, brand values and orientation, internal brand knowledge, and internal brand

involvement (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016; Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). These factors often lead to significant variations in employee perceptions of the company's sustainability performance and ability to operate for years to come. This is due to the differing policies, objectives, decisions made, and disclosure to employees by the brand (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016). Integrated employer branding strengthened by corporate values is invaluable for internal employees because it positively influences their decision to stay employed. These study findings are relevant to this case study as they underscore the clear influence of employer branding on employee retention and brand identity. This contributes theoretically to the understanding of the intersection between perceptions of internal branding by employees and the brand sustainability of a firm like Purple Wave Auction.

In the context of this case study, effective internal branding is vital to businesses like Purple Wave in the competitive and rapidly changing online auction industry. It positively influences the attitudes of internal stakeholders, such as workers, and their delivery of the brand promise (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). This process recognizes the role of internal workers in delivering the company services, as elucidated by the brand statement. This is in tandem with findings by Garas et al. (2018), which affirms that internal branding shapes the brand support behavior of employees. However, the research explains that internal branding by a company does not directly improve the in-role and extra-role conduct of the workers (Garas et al., 2018). In practice, this means that even if a company invests in internal branding efforts—such as promoting its mission, values, and culture to employees—it may not necessarily lead to improvements in their job performance or behavior both within and outside their formal job responsibilities. Instead, the extent of affective commitment and role clarity by the workers is

mediated by effective internal branding (Garas et al., 2018), which encourages internal workers to support the brand identity and external communications of their employers.

The practical implication is that Purple Wave Auction can fortify its corporate brand by stimulating brand-supporting behavior among its internal employees. Due to the relevance of internal branding within corporate marketing orientation, business managers should improve role clarity and affective commitment to guaranteed sustained brand-supporting behavior (Garas et al., 2018). To improve role clarity and affective commitment, business managers should focus on several key strategies. First, they need to ensure that job roles and expectations are clearly defined and communicated to employees. This involves providing detailed job descriptions, setting clear performance objectives, and offering regular feedback and guidance to employees regarding their roles and responsibilities within the organization. Second, managers should foster a strong sense of affective commitment among employees by aligning their personal values and goals with those of the company. This can be achieved through initiatives that emphasize the company's mission, values, and culture, as well as by recognizing and rewarding employees who demonstrate behaviors that support the brand (Garas et al., 2018). By analyzing Purple Wave Auction's branding strategies, managers can gain perspective into how effective branding initiatives can enhance role clarity and affective commitment among employees. They can learn from employee experiences and identify best practices that can be applied moving forward.

Brand Differentiation

In the marketplace, consumers are always inclined towards selecting a brand that is more unique than the others. This means that all brands in their respective industries must pursue aggressive differentiation to attract and retain a wide client base, become trailblazers in the industry, and ultimately make profits. Brand differentiation signifies the extent to which a brand

can distinguish itself from competing brands in the perception of the public. This differentiation may manifest physically or functionally, with a product or service being noticeably distinct in its appearance or the benefits it provides to consumers (Franzen & Moriarty, 2015). This includes meaningful services, features, programs, or ingredients that can sustain or improve an organization's competitiveness in the marketplace.

A study by O'Rourke et al. (2022) contributes to this discussion by empirically affirming the efficacy of brand differentiation for business success. The research suggests that when there is a weak alignment between how employees perceive a brand's position and the buying goals of consumers, the link between perceived differentiation and purchasing becomes more pronounced (O'Rourke et al., 2022). This encourages organizations like Purple Wave Auction to develop strong brand external communication strategies.

Brand differentiation is a tried and tested business strategy for brands wishing to outshine their rivals and capture a wider market share (Sharp & Dawes, 2001). For instance, product differentiation constructively impacts consumer utility and prices and is vital for brands pursuing market positioning and profitability (Giannias, 1999). Businesses should embrace meaningful and actively managed branded differentiators to attain a wider and more loyal customer base in the industry. Brands differentiate themselves from others by emphasizing unique qualities or attributes that set them apart in the eyes of consumers. Some differentiation tactics include product features, pricing strategies, brand messaging, and customer experience. For instance, Apple distinguishes itself through innovative product design and user-friendly technology, while luxury brands like Rolex differentiate through premium pricing and exclusivity. Overall, successful brands strategically employ various differentiation tactics to carve out a distinct identity and competitive advantage in their respective markets (O'Rourke et al., 2022).

This case study will investigate the significance of differentiation strategies at Purple Wave Auction in establishing a distinct brand identity. The focus will be on ensuring consistency across various aspects of the company. This examination will encompass differentiation efforts across multiple departments to ascertain how Purple Wave Auction effectively sets itself apart from competitors in the marketplace.

Brand Consistency

Brand consistency is the process of maintaining a firm's targeted brand personality and content classifications over time (Roy et al., 2019). Thus, perceived consistency in marketing communications, a vital component of brand consistency, directly impacts brand loyalty and trust internally and externally (Šerić et al., 2020). Brands achieve strong brand trust and loyalty among their client base in the industry by aligning their communication strategies with the principles of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) (Šerić et al., 2020). IMC is a strategic approach used by brands to ensure consistency and synergy in their marketing efforts across various channels and touchpoints. IMC involves the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools, such as advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, and digital marketing, to deliver a unified and cohesive message to the target audience. By aligning these communication strategies, IMC aims to create a seamless and impactful brand experience for consumers, thereby enhancing brand trust and loyalty. This approach ensures that all marketing efforts work together synergistically to reinforce the brand's positioning, values, and key messages, ultimately fostering stronger connections with customers and driving desired outcomes (Šerić et al., 2020).

As reiterated by Šerić et al. (2020), firms should embrace unmatched uniformity and coherence in expressing their brand's message and images to internal workers using various

online marketing communication channels. Therefore, Purple Wave Auction should leverage communication consistency to foster positive perspectives of its brand image by the internal stakeholders to ultimately improve its brand outcomes. This is vital because the firm heavily relies on online platforms to accomplish its auctions. The heads of the company should understand that, like fast-food brands emphasized by Šerić et al. (2020), its online presence needs to sustain a consistent image and message to build loyalty and trust. Therefore, this case study will focus on ascertaining the role of internal communication channels at Purple Wave Auction in ensuring a coherent brand message. The consistency to be examined within the firm will be on marketing efforts ranging from social media to marketing assets on behalf of their clients. This will help determine the impact of the brand strategy and external communication channels on identity building.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this case study was to identify and evaluate how key Purple Wave Auction employees perceive the company's brand. Thus, the following research questions were used to guide this study:

- i. How do employees perceive the company's branding?
- ii. What factors inform employees' perception of the company's brand consistency?
- iii. What forms employees' perception of the company's brand differentiation?

Methodology

Research Design

For this qualitative study, a case study design was used to organize and carry out the exploration through interviews as part of the research process. Case study methodology is a robust and versatile research approach that offers a detailed examination of specific instances, ranging from concrete entities like companies or individuals to more abstract concepts such as events or decisions (Crowe, 2011). This methodological framework was selected for its ability to provide an in-depth exploration of Purple Wave Auction's branding strategies, considering the complexity and multifaceted nature of branding within organizations (Franzen & Moriarty, 2015). By delving into the specific context and nuances of Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts, including its objectives, challenges, and outcomes, the case study design facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the branding process.

One of the primary strengths of the case study methodology lies in its capacity to gather rich, detailed data from various sources and departments within an organization (Flick, 2018). Through semi-structured interviews with recruited respondents, the researcher can access a diverse range of perspectives and insights from employees across different roles and levels within Purple Wave Auction. These interviews provide a platform for employees to share their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the company's branding strategy and external communications.

Qualitative research, as underpinned by case study methodology, enables researchers to interpret situations effectively by studying phenomena in their natural setting (Flick, 2018). This approach allows the researcher to capture the subjective meaning that individuals attribute to their experiences and interactions within the organizational context. By immersing themselves in

the day-to-day operations of Purple Wave Auction and engaging directly with employees through interviews, the researcher can gain a nuanced understanding of how branding is conceptualized, implemented, and perceived within the organization.

As a social media content marketer for Purple Wave Auction, the researcher brings a unique perspective to the study, having firsthand experience in contributing to the company's branding efforts through digital communication channels. This dual role allows the researcher to not only analyze Purple Wave Auction's overall brand strategy but also offer practical recommendations for enhancement based on empirical evidence and industry expertise.

This close proximity to the case of Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts underscore the crucial acknowledgement of potential biases that may influence the analysis. The lead researcher is an employee intimately familiar with the company's operations, services, and culture, so her perspective inherently carries a degree of bias. This bias could manifest in several ways, such as a tendency to emphasize the company's strengths, downplay weaknesses, or overlook alternative viewpoints. Additionally, her personal experiences and interactions within the organization may shape her interpretation of data and findings, potentially leading to a skewed portrayal of Purple Wave Auction's performance. To mitigate bias, efforts were made to maintain objectivity, critically evaluate information, seek diverse perspectives, and transparently disclose any potential conflicts of interest. For example, the lead researcher's advisor served as a reviewer of the research design and instrument, as well as a coder during data analysis. She is an agricultural communications faculty member with experience in corporate branding and marketing with no connection to Purple Wave Auction. By acknowledging and addressing these biases, the case study aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced assessment of Purple Wave Auction's operations and impact.

In summary, the case study methodology serves as a robust framework for conducting an in-depth exploration of Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts. By leveraging qualitative research principles, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the complexities of branding within organizations and inform strategic decision-making aimed at enhancing Purple Wave Auction's brand positioning and market competitiveness.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The eligible participants included in the case study were recruited through purposive sampling, commonly used in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, the email addresses of various employees from different departments obtained from the organization's database were used to send them emails to recruit them into the study. This sampling technique is the most suitable for selecting knowledgeable employees within the Purple Wave Auction corporate culture who contribute to its efficiency. A total of 12 individuals were interviewed to gather diverse perspectives and insights relevant to the research objectives. These interviewees included employees with varying tenures at Purple Wave Auction, ranging from recent hires to seasoned veterans with several years of experience. Representatives from different departments were engaged in the study, including marketing, professional development, and product ownership. Each interviewee played a crucial role in the branding ecosystem of Purple Wave Auction, either directly or indirectly contributing to the development, implementation, or evaluation of branding strategies and initiatives.

Table 1

Description of Purple Wave Auction Employee Participants

Participant #	Department Represented	Employment Duration
1	Marketing	2 years

2	Marketing	12 years
3	Marketing	16 years
4	Marketing	3 years
5	Marketing	3 years
6	Marketing	2 years
7	Product Ownership	3 years
8	Marketing	3 years
9	Marketing	5 years
10	Marketing	22 years
11	Marketing	3 months
12	Professional Development	6 months

For instance, marketing personnel provided insights into the strategic planning and execution of marketing campaigns, while professional development offered perspectives on customer interactions and feedback related to branding efforts. Product ownership personnel provided insights into logistical considerations and operational aspects that impact branding, such as auction processes and customer satisfaction metrics.

Department directors offered high-level perspectives on overarching branding objectives, organizational culture, and strategic priorities. Their involvement in the study provided insight into the alignment of branding efforts with corporate goals and objectives, as well as the allocation of resources and support for branding initiatives.

Overall, the interviewees represented a diverse cross-section of Purple Wave Auction's workforce, each with a unique perspective and stake in the topic of branding. By engaging with

individuals from different departments and levels within the organization, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of Purple Wave Auction's branding landscape and identify opportunities for improvement and innovation.

The decision to stop at 12 interviews in the comprehensive case study of Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts was based on the principle of data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new information or themes emerge from additional data collection, indicating that the research has reached a point of theoretical saturation or redundancy (Guest et al., 2006).

By conducting 12 interviews, the researcher was able to gather a diverse range of perspectives and insights from employees across various departments within Purple Wave Auction. As the interviews progressed, it became apparent that the data collected were rich and comprehensive, with recurring themes and patterns emerging consistently across interviews.

According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation is typically achieved after approximately 12 interviews in qualitative research, although the exact number may vary depending on the complexity of the research topic and the heterogeneity of the sample population. In the case of Purple Wave Auction's branding study, 12 interviews were deemed sufficient to achieve data saturation and provide a thorough understanding of the branding landscape within the organization.

Moreover, the decision to stop at 12 interviews was also informed by practical considerations, such as time constraints and resource availability. Conducting additional interviews beyond the point of saturation would have yielded diminishing returns in terms of new insights gained, while also imposing unnecessary burden on both participants and researcher. Overall, the decision to stop at 12 interviews was guided by the principles of data saturation and practicality, ensuring that the study achieved its research objectives effectively and efficiently.

Instrument Development

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviews allow for comprehensive and informative conversation among participants (Ruben & Ruben, 2012). Using semi-structured interviews also allowed for the questions to be asked in a flexible order best suited for each interviewee. Several key studies were consulted to ensure that the interview questions were grounded in theoretical frameworks and best practices. For example, Crowe (2011) provided insights into the importance of case study methodology for investigating specific instances, such as branding strategies within organizations. Additionally, Flick (2018) offered guidance on qualitative research methods, emphasizing the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry and the significance of studying phenomena in their natural setting. The interview guide was structured to explore various dimensions of Purple Wave Auction's branding strategies, including objectives, challenges, outcomes, and organizational culture. Questions were designed to elicit rich, detailed responses from participants, drawing on their experiences and perspectives related to branding within the organization. For instance, questions regarding the company's branding objectives were informed by literature on strategic branding (Keller, 2008), which highlights the importance of clearly defining brand objectives and aligning them with organizational goals. Similarly, questions about organizational culture and its impact on branding efforts were informed by research on the role of culture in shaping organizational identity and brand image (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). The feedback was incorporated to finalize the interview guide, resulting in seven focus questions, with accompanying follow-up questions. The focus questions were intended to be research questions asked using everyday language (Hernmanns, 2004). Follow-up questions were used to “stimulate more details or depth at certain points in the interview,” (Flick, 2018, p. 217). During the interview participants were posed with a series of questions aimed at dissecting Purple Wave Auction's brand strategy and identity. They

were asked to describe the brand strategy employed by Purple Wave Auction, highlighting its key elements of brand identity. Participants were also prompted to evaluate the consistency of Purple Wave Auction's branding across various communication channels and assess how well its brand messaging aligns with its core values and mission. Additionally, they were invited to share insights on the role of external communication in reinforcing the brand identity and messaging of Purple Wave Auction, as well as how the company distinguishes itself from competitors in the market.

Interviews

To provide consistency in the data, the lead researcher interviewed all study participants. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and private setting, either in person or via video conferencing, depending on participants' preferences and availability. The interviews were conducted in March of 2024, each lasting for 15 to 30 minutes via Zoom or in person. Prior to the start of each interview, participants provided their consent to participate in the study via a consent form approved by the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board. At the beginning of each interview, participants were verbally told the purpose of the study and asked if their interview could be recorded. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate capture of information. Detailed notes were also taken during the interviews to supplement the audio recordings and capture non-verbal cues or contextual observations. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for open-ended questioning, encouraging participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and insights related to Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into specific topics or themes as they emerged during the conversation. Throughout the interviews, the researcher adopted active listening techniques to ensure that participants felt heard and valued. Following

the completion of each interview, participants were offered the opportunity to provide any additional comments or insights they deemed relevant. They were also thanked for their participation and provided with contact information in case they had any further questions or feedback. Overall, the interview process was characterized by professionalism, empathy, and respect for participants' time and contributions. It aimed to create a supportive and conducive environment for open dialogue and knowledge sharing, facilitating the gathering of comprehensive insights into Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts.

To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, their identities are not disclosed throughout this paper. Rev, a professional transcription service, was used to transcribe the interview data verbatim.

Data Analysis

The collected data for this qualitative study was analyzed using thematic analysis to depict the perceptions of Purple Wave Auction employees have regarding the company's branding efforts. As such, responses were reviewed to detect recurring concepts, themes, or patterns of significance to the research questions and purpose of this study, (Terry et al., 2017). The lead author and her faculty advisor analyzed the 12 interview transcripts using deductive and approach to coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracey, 2013). Deductively, the researchers searched the transcripts for examples of brand strategy, identify, consistency and differentiation we were already aware of based on our literature review. Following the recommendations of Creswell and Poth (2018), the researchers used reflexive iteration to work independently to review transcripts and develop codes, met three times during the process to compare codes and agree on the use and interpretation of codes, re-read transcripts, and applied the final codebook to all transcripts. The researchers each maintained a project memo to leave an audit trail. Using

the coded transcripts, codes were used to summarize themes separately, then collectively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For a topic to be considered a theme, at least six of the 12 interviewees must have independently mentioned the topic.

Results

RQ1: How do employees perceive the company's branding?

The first research question sought to understand employee's perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's brand strategy and identity. This inquiry aimed to delve into the nuanced perspectives of employees across various departments and levels within the organization, shedding light on their interpretations, attitudes, and beliefs regarding Purple Wave Auction's branding initiatives. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this research question sought to uncover the underlying factors influencing employees' perceptions of the company's brand, including their understanding of Purple Wave Auction's market positioning, brand values, and strategic objectives. The analysis revealed several prominent themes that emerged from participants' responses, providing valuable insights into the ways in which employees conceptualize and engage with Purple Wave Auction's brand. Among these themes, participants emphasized the importance of building a balanced market solution, indicating a strategic focus on addressing customer needs and market demands effectively. Additionally, participants highlighted the company's commitment to serving as a trusted advisor, underscoring Purple Wave Auction's efforts to cultivate trust, credibility, and expertise within its industry. By exploring these themes and unpacking employees' perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's branding, this research question contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of internal stakeholders in shaping and reinforcing organizational brand identity and market positioning.

Building a Balanced Market Solution

Participants articulated that Purple Wave Auction is actively engaged in constructing a balanced market solution, employing various strategic initiatives to enhance its market presence and visibility. Central to this endeavor is Purple Wave's multifaceted approach, often referred to as the "trifecta approach," which encompasses a comprehensive suite of buyer and seller solutions tailored to meet diverse market needs. Participants noted that Purple Wave Auction's proactive stance in refining and re-messaging its brand messaging and offerings reflects a commitment to staying abreast of evolving market dynamics and customer preferences. As participant 10 remarked, "Purple Wave is working towards broader name recognition and to be on the forefront of people's minds when they think about buying and selling equipment." Participant 5 echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the importance of Purple Wave's brand strategy in communicating the company's identity and value proposition: "Our brand strategy is letting people know we're here, who we are, and what we do." These insights underscore Purple Wave Auction's concerted efforts to establish itself as a prominent player in the marketplace while fostering greater awareness and engagement among its target audience.

Striving to be the trusted advisor

Participants provided insights into Purple Wave Auction's commitment to positioning itself as the trusted advisor within the equipment auction industry. They emphasized the company's unwavering dedication to building and maintaining trust among its stakeholders. Participant 3 stated, "We are a trustworthy company. We are a team that will work for you." This statement underscores Purple Wave Auction's emphasis on integrity, reliability, and client-centric service. Furthermore, the participant elaborated on the company's dedication to meeting customer needs, emphasizing the meticulous attention to detail and proactive approach taken to ensure client satisfaction: "We care about what we do so much that we make sure that no page is

left unturned to try to get our customer base or seller base exactly what they want." This commitment to going above and beyond to fulfill customer expectations reflects Purple Wave's aspirations to not only meet but exceed industry standards. Similarly, participant 10 highlighted the importance of transparency and authenticity in Purple Wave's brand identity, stating that "a gimmick-free marketplace is certainly a strong component of our brand, a marketplace that is trustworthy." This observation underscores Purple Wave's strategic focus on cultivating a marketplace characterized by honesty, fairness, and ethical conduct. Overall, participants' perspectives shed light on Purple Wave Auction's concerted efforts to establish itself as a trusted advisor, rooted in principles of integrity, transparency, and customer-centricity.

RQ2: What factors inform employees' perception of the company's brand consistency?

The second research question sought to investigate the underlying factors that shape employees' perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's brand consistency across all departments of the company. This inquiry aimed to uncover the various influences, both internal and external, that contribute to employees' assessments of the alignment between the company's brand messaging, values, and actions. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, participants were prompted to share their opinions and observations regarding Purple Wave Auction's brand consistency, with a focus on identifying key drivers and barriers to maintaining a cohesive and unified brand image. The analysis revealed several prominent themes that emerged from participants' responses, providing valuable insights into the factors that inform employees' perception of the company's brand consistency.

One recurring theme highlighted by participants was the company's culture driven by core values, emphasizing the importance of fostering a workplace environment where organizational values are consistently upheld and reflected in employees' attitudes and behaviors.

Additionally, participants underscored the significance of making impressions count, suggesting that consistent branding efforts across all touchpoints and interactions are essential for creating a favorable and memorable impression among stakeholders. Furthermore, participants expressed a shared desire to elevate Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts from satisfactory to outstanding, reflecting a collective aspiration to enhance brand visibility, relevance, and impact in the marketplace. Finally, participants emphasized the importance of compounding growth, suggesting that sustained investment in brand consistency and coherence is essential for driving organizational growth and success.

By exploring these themes and unpacking employees' perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's brand consistency, this research question contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that shape organizational brand identity and reputation. The insights gleaned from this inquiry can inform strategic decision-making aimed at strengthening brand alignment, enhancing customer perceptions, and fostering organizational resilience in an increasingly competitive market landscape.

Culture Driven by Core Values

Participants articulated the significance of Purple Wave Auction's core values, including trust, care, teamwork, and passion, in shaping the organizational culture. These core values were consistently emphasized as foundational elements that permeate the company's operations and interactions, both internally among employees and externally with buyers and sellers.

Participants underscored the pivotal role of these values in fostering trusting relationships with stakeholders, which are deemed essential to the company's sustained success and growth trajectory. Participant 9 elaborated on this point, stating, "What our field events team is doing is trying to tie Purple Wave Auction's core values back to the customer through our messaging. We

trust you, we care about you, we're passionate about you, and we're part of your team." This perspective highlights the strategic integration of core values into customer-facing communications and interactions, with a focus on nurturing meaningful connections and building rapport with clients. Similarly, participant 7 emphasized the significance of culture in driving customer loyalty and satisfaction, noting that "culture is what we hear from our customers as a huge piece of why they love Purple Wave Auction." This observation underscores the symbiotic relationship between organizational culture and customer perceptions, with a strong emphasis on aligning internal values and behaviors with external brand promises and experiences. Overall, participants' insights underscore the pivotal role of core values in shaping Purple Wave Auction's culture and identity, with profound implications for brand positioning, reputation management, and long-term success in the marketplace.

Making Impressions Count

Participants articulated the importance of Purple Wave Auction's efforts to increase positive name recognition as a fundamental component of the company's strategic objectives. By prioritizing initiatives aimed at making a lasting and favorable first impression, Purple Wave Auction's endeavors to enhance its visibility and prominence among buyers and sellers in the marketplace. Participants emphasized that improving name recognition is crucial for expanding the company's reach and influence, particularly in competitive sectors where brand differentiation is paramount. Participant 5 elaborated on this point, stating, "I try to find new ways to get ourselves out there in front of thousands of people because I think one of our weak areas is name recognition." This perspective underscores the proactive approach taken by employees to explore innovative avenues for enhancing brand visibility and awareness.

Participants also noted that the current tradeshow booth utilized by Purple Wave Auction does not effectively convey the company's identity and offerings. As participant 9 remarked, "Purple Wave is a very ambiguous name, but it doesn't help convey who we are." In response to this observation, the marketing team is actively engaged in redesigning the booth backdrop to better showcase Purple Wave Auction's value proposition and services. This initiative reflects the commitment to aligning its visual assets with its brand messaging and identity, thereby maximizing the impact of its presence at industry events and trade shows. Overall, participants' insights underscore the strategic significance of making impressions count in enhancing Purple Wave Auction's brand recognition and market positioning, with implications for driving customer engagement, loyalty, and business growth.

Desire to Elevate from OK to Obvious

Participants conveyed a shared sentiment regarding Purple Wave Auction's branding and differentiation efforts, characterizing them as satisfactory but lacking clarity and consistency in execution. While acknowledging the company's commendable efforts, participants expressed a collective desire for greater cohesion and uniformity across all facets of branding and communication. Participant 2 remarked, "I think as a company we struggle with adopting and getting everybody to adopt the same brand," highlighting the challenge of ensuring alignment and adherence to brand guidelines among employees. She further emphasized the pivotal role of comprehensive brand guidelines in enhancing consistency and coherence in Purple Wave Auction's branding and communications, noting that, "Once our brand guideline is adopted more, our branding and communications will become more consistent."

Similarly, participants identified areas where branding consistency falls short, particularly in messaging. Participant 4 noted, "I don't think we're super consistent in the fact that

we're not all saying the same thing at the same time," pointing to discrepancies between messages conveyed by different departments. Despite having consistent visual elements such as colors and fonts, participants observed that the sales team sometimes diverges from the overarching brand message, leading to a fragmented communication approach. Participant 10 echoed similar sentiments, expressing a desire for improved execution and alignment in messaging: "The overall theme is right, but I would like to see us improve in execution...I want the message to be right, and the incongruencies frustrate me."

These insights underscore the imperative for Purple Wave Auction to elevate its branding efforts from satisfactory to outstanding by prioritizing consistency, clarity, and alignment across all touchpoints and communication channels.

Compound the Growth

Participants underscored the importance of leveraging past experiences and successes as a springboard for penetrating new markets and expanding Purple Wave Auction's presence in the equipment auction industry. By capitalizing on previous wins with agility and tailored solutions, Purple Wave Auction can sustain its brand identity and drive continued growth. Participant 11 articulated this perspective, stating, "We need to repurpose or reassess what we have done and continue to compound that growth of repeatable successful outcomes rather than get stuck on things that maybe didn't work in the first place." This strategic approach emphasizes the importance of learning from past endeavors, iterating on successful strategies, and adapting to changing market dynamics to fuel sustained growth and innovation.

Moreover, participants highlighted the role of social media as a key driver in compounding growth and reinforcing Purple Wave Auction's brand identity. By strategically utilizing social media platforms, the company can amplify its reach, engage with new audiences,

and showcase its value proposition to potential buyers and sellers. Participant 8 emphasized the impact of social media in shaping perceptions of Purple Wave Auction, particularly through seller interview videos and customer testimonials: "I think the way we represent ourselves in seller interview videos and the way customers speak about how easy it is to sell a Purple Wave, it really aligns with our mission statement where we're the easiest and most straightforward way to buy and sell equipment. People are talking about their experiences and they're reinforcing our brand." This observation underscores the power of authentic storytelling and user-generated content in strengthening brand authenticity and resonance, ultimately contributing to Purple Wave's reputation as a trusted and reliable partner in the equipment auction industry.

In summary, participants' insights underscore the strategic imperative for Purple Wave Auction to compound its growth by building on past successes, embracing agility, and leveraging digital channels such as social media to amplify its brand message and reach new markets.

RQ3: What forms employees' perception of the company's brand differentiation?

The third research question aimed to explore the various factors that contribute to employees' perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's brand differentiation. This inquiry sought to uncover the underlying dimensions of brand differentiation perceived by employees, encompassing both factual and emotional appeal marketing strategies, as well as the importance of personal connection in shaping customer relationships.

One prominent theme that emerged from participants' responses was the role of factual appeal marketing in positioning Purple Wave as a unique and trustworthy brand. Participants highlighted the company's transparent practices, such as no-reserve auctions and fixed fees, as key differentiators that instill confidence and credibility among buyers and sellers. Additionally, participants emphasized the significance of emotional appeal marketing in forging personal

connections with customers. By fostering empathy, authenticity, and relatability in its communications and interactions, Purple Wave Auction cultivates a sense of trust, loyalty, and emotional resonance with its target audience. Participants also underscored the importance of personal connection in driving brand differentiation, highlighting the value of personalized service and meaningful interactions in fostering customer loyalty and advocacy.

By exploring these themes and unpacking employees' perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's brand differentiation, this research question contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of brand identity and market positioning. The insights gleaned from this inquiry can inform strategic decision-making aimed at enhancing Purple Wave's competitive advantage, fostering customer engagement, and driving long-term business success.

Factual Appeal Marketing

Factual Appeal Marketing stands as a foundational pillar within Purple Wave Auction's comprehensive branding strategy, serving as a powerful tool to communicate the company's unwavering commitment to transparency, reliability, and customer satisfaction. Participants underscored the pivotal role of factual appeal marketing in distinguishing Purple Wave Auction from its competitors, highlighting key elements such as no-reserve auctions, transparent fee structures, and full concierge services.

No-reserve auctions emerged as a cornerstone of Purple Wave Auction's brand identity, offering a unique selling proposition that removes barriers to bidding and fosters unrestricted participation among buyers. Participants emphasized the benefits of this approach, noting its potential to drive higher prices and maximize returns for sellers. Participant 8 aptly noted, "Since no reserve is a big part of our brand identity, we should put more effort into explaining why it's not as high of a risk as sellers perceive it to be. If it's worth that much, it will sell for that much."

This sentiment reflects the company's commitment to educating and empowering sellers, instilling confidence in the auction process and positioning Purple Wave as a trusted partner in asset disposition.

Purple Wave Auction maintains a transparent fee structure, characterized by a flat \$100 fee and a 10% buyer's premium, which ensures clarity and fairness in all transactions. Participants lauded this approach, highlighting its alignment with the company's brand promise of simplicity and honesty. Participant 6 remarked, "We're not changing the percentage on the buyer's or the seller's end," underscoring Purple Wave's commitment to consistency and integrity in its fee policies.

Additionally, participants described Purple Wave Auction as a full concierge service, offering comprehensive support to sellers and buyers throughout the entire auction process. By acting as a one-stop shop for all their needs, Purple Wave streamlines transactions, enhances convenience, and elevates the overall customer experience. Participant 3 eloquently captured this sentiment, stating, "We give them the opportunity to be hands-off and know that things will be taken care of...by educated employees that have a history in the industry." This personalized approach reflects Purple Wave's dedication to providing value-added services and fostering long-term relationships with its clients.

Emotional Appeal Marketing

In the realm of marketing, Purple Wave Auction recognizes the profound impact of emotional appeal in cultivating enduring relationships with its audience and distinguishing itself as a trusted partner in the equipment auction industry. Participants echoed the sentiment that long-term relationships are a crucial factor in Purple Wave's brand differentiation efforts,

underscoring the company's commitment to fostering a sense of trust, reliability, and loyalty among its stakeholders.

Central to Purple Wave Auction's emotional appeal marketing strategy is the emphasis on building lasting connections with customers through its dedicated team of full-time employees. Participants highlighted the unique advantage of the company's employment model, wherein all employees are employed full-time, fostering consistency, reliability, and familiarity in customer interactions. Participant 2 articulated this perspective, stating, "Our sellers and the people that are in the field know that they're going to see the same person every time. We have longevity with our employees unlike our competitors, and many have been here for several years along with extra knowledge and background equipment in the equipment we sell." This emphasis on continuity and expertise not only instills confidence in customers but also reinforces Purple Wave Auction's reputation as a reliable and knowledgeable partner in the industry.

Similarly, participants emphasized the deep investment and dedication of Purple Wave Auction's employees, highlighting their unwavering commitment to the company's mission and values. By prioritizing employee well-being and professional development, Purple Wave Auction cultivates a culture of loyalty, passion, and authenticity that resonates with customers. Participant noted 9, "Our employees are benefited and invested. They are full-time, living and breathing Purple Wave." This alignment of employee values with the company's brand ethos fosters a sense of authenticity and trust, further strengthening Purple Wave Auction's emotional appeal and differentiation in the marketplace.

In summary, Purple Wave Auction's emotional appeal marketing strategy revolves around the cultivation of enduring relationships, built on a foundation of trust, reliability, and authenticity. By leveraging the dedication and expertise of its full-time employees, Purple Wave

forges meaningful connections with its audience, positioning itself as a trusted partner and driving brand differentiation in the competitive equipment auction industry.

Personal Connection

In an era where emotional personal connections are increasingly valued as a pivotal differentiator in branding, Purple Wave Auction distinguishes itself by prioritizing authentic human connections that transcend mere transactions. Participants highlighted the pivotal role of personal connection in shaping Purple Wave's brand differentiation efforts, emphasizing the company's commitment to fostering meaningful relationships with both buyers and sellers.

Central to Purple Wave Auction's approach is the cultivation of a culture where employees across diverse teams actively engage with customers, going above and beyond to provide personalized service and build rapport. Participants underscored the importance of this personal touch in driving customer loyalty and satisfaction. Participant 7 remarked, "People love Purple Wave employees. Our auction specialists go out and take photos and talk with the sellers. The personal touch of things is really what we hear from our customers as a huge piece of why they love Purple Wave." This emphasis on genuine human interaction fosters a sense of trust, empathy, and connection that resonates deeply with Purple Wave Auction's audience, distinguishing the company in a crowded marketplace.

In summary, Purple Wave Auction's emphasis on personal connection represents a key pillar of its brand differentiation strategy, allowing the company to cultivate authentic relationships that transcend transactional boundaries. By fostering a culture of empathy, engagement, and genuine care, Purple Wave Auction positions itself as more than just a service provider but rather a trusted partner invested in the success and satisfaction of its customers. This

commitment to personal connection not only drives customer loyalty but also reinforces the company's reputation as a beacon of authenticity and integrity in the equipment auction industry.

Conclusion & Recommendations

RQ1: How do employees perceive the company's branding?

The findings underscore the significance of stakeholders, particularly employees, in shaping and embodying a company's brand identity, as highlighted by Biedenbach and Manzhynski (2016). Themes such as "Building a Balanced Market Solution" and "Striving to be the Trusted Advisor" resonate with the literature on internal branding, emphasizing the role of employees as brand ambassadors and the importance of aligning internal perceptions with external branding initiatives (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2017).

The emphasis placed by employees on factors such as transparency, reliability, and personal connection in Purple Wave's branding efforts reflects the principles of emotional branding, as discussed by Franzen and Moriarty (2015). The findings suggest that emotional appeal marketing plays a pivotal role in fostering meaningful connections with customers, thereby enhancing brand loyalty and differentiation (Roy et al., 2019).

Importantly, the alignment between employee perceptions and Purple Wave Auction's brand promise underscores the importance of brand consistency and authenticity, as advocated by Hermanns (2004) and Keller (2008). The findings suggest that the company's branding efforts resonate with employees, fostering a sense of trust, loyalty, and pride in the company's mission and values.

In light of these insights, it is clear that Purple Wave Auction can leverage the perspectives of its employees to further refine its branding strategies, enhance brand coherence, and drive competitive advantage in the marketplace. By fostering a culture of brand advocacy

and aligning internal perceptions with external branding initiatives, Purple Wave can strengthen its position as a trusted leader in the equipment auction industry.

RQ2: What factors inform employees' perception of the company's brand consistency?

The examination of how employees perceive Purple Wave Auction's brand consistency illuminates the critical role of internal stakeholders in shaping and maintaining a cohesive brand identity. The findings underscore the importance of a culture driven by core values, as emphasized in literature on internal branding (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2017). Themes such as "Culture Driven by Core Values" resonate with the notion that organizational culture plays a central role in shaping brand consistency and coherence (Keller, 2008). By fostering a culture grounded in trust, care, and passion, Purple Wave Auction can ensure that employees embody and reinforce the company's brand values in their interactions with customers and stakeholders.

The emphasis placed by employees on making impressions count and the desire to elevate from satisfactory to outstanding aligns with literature on brand differentiation and customer experience management (O'Rourke et al., 2022). The findings suggest that Purple Wave Auction can differentiate itself by delivering exceptional experiences and consistently exceeding customer expectations (Hatch & Schultz, 2004).

The insights gleaned from employees regarding the importance of compound growth underscore the significance of continuous improvement and innovation in branding strategies (Sharp & Dawes, 2001). By compounding successes and leveraging past experiences, Purple Wave Auction can sustain its competitive advantage and drive long-term growth in the marketplace.

RQ3: What forms employees' perception of the company's brand differentiation?

The findings of RQ3 underscore the significance of both factual and emotional appeal marketing strategies in shaping Purple Wave's brand differentiation efforts. Themes such as "Factual Appeal Marketing" and "Emotional Appeal Marketing" resonate with literature on brand differentiation and customer relationship management (Franzen & Moriarty, 2015). By exploring these themes and unpacking employees' perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's brand differentiation, this research question contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of brand identity and market positioning. The insights gleaned from this inquiry can inform strategic decision-making aimed at enhancing Purple Wave's competitive advantage, fostering customer engagement, and driving long-term business success. Also, when emphasizing transparent practices, such as no reserve auctions and transparent fee structures, Purple Wave establishes itself as a trustworthy and reliable partner in the equipment auction industry (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). Factual appeal marketing plays a vital role in shaping Purple Wave Auction's brand differentiation strategy, enabling the company to communicate its core values, unique selling propositions, and commitment to customer satisfaction. By leveraging these factual appeals, Purple Wave Auction strengthens its brand identity, builds trust among stakeholders, and maintains a competitive edge in the equipment auction industry. Moreover, by leveraging emotional appeal through personalized service and meaningful interactions, Purple Wave forges deep and lasting connections with customers, enhancing brand loyalty and advocacy (Roy et al., 2019).

The emphasis placed by employees on personal connection as a factor of brand differentiation aligns with literature on the importance of humanizing brands and fostering authentic relationships with customers (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). By prioritizing personal interaction and empathy, Purple Wave Auction distinguishes itself as more than just a

transactional service provider but rather a trusted partner invested in the success and satisfaction of its customers (Vandiver, 2023).

By integrating factual and emotional appeal marketing strategies and prioritizing personal connection, Purple Wave can strengthen its brand identity, differentiate itself in the marketplace, and cultivate meaningful relationships with customers. Moving forward, continued alignment of internal perceptions with external branding initiatives will be essential in driving sustained success and competitive advantage for Purple Wave Auction in the dynamic auction industry.

The findings regarding employee perceptions of Purple Wave Auction's branding exhibit consistency with existing literature on internal branding and employee engagement to a large extent. Several themes emerged from the study, including the importance of core values, brand consistency, and emotional connection, which resonate with findings from previous research.

The emphasis placed by employees on Purple Wave's core values, such as trust, care, and passion, aligns with literature on internal branding, which suggests that organizational values play a crucial role in shaping employee perceptions and behaviors (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2017). This consistency suggests that Purple Wave's Auction's efforts to instill and reinforce core values within its workforce are effective in fostering a strong organizational culture aligned with its brand identity.

Similarly, the findings regarding the desire for brand consistency across all departments and the recognition of the importance of making positive impressions are consistent with literature on brand coherence and customer experience management (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). This suggests that Purple Wave Auction's emphasis on maintaining brand consistency and delivering exceptional customer experiences resonates with employees and contributes to a shared understanding of the brand's values and objectives.

However, there may also be some inconsistencies between the findings of this study and existing literature. For example, while the study highlights the importance of emotional appeal marketing and personal connection in Purple Wave's branding efforts, some literature suggests that employees may prioritize differentiating factors such as product quality or pricing over emotional connections (Roy et al., 2019). This suggests that while emotional appeal marketing may be effective for Purple Wave Auction, its relevance may vary depending on the industry or organizational context.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate a high level of consistency with existing literature on employee perceptions of branding, particularly regarding the importance of core values, brand consistency, and emotional connections. However, there may be some discrepancies in the relative emphasis placed on differentiating factors, highlighting the need for organizations to tailor their branding strategies to their specific contexts and target audiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study to track the evolution of Purple Wave Auction's branding strategies and their impact on both internal employee perspectives and external communications over time. This longitudinal approach would allow for a deeper understanding of how branding efforts unfold and adapt in response to changes in the market landscape, customer preferences, and internal organizational dynamics.

Additionally, qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys with customers and external stakeholders could provide perspective of how Purple Wave Auction's brand image is perceived in the broader marketplace and how it influences decision-making processes. Furthermore, a comparative analysis with competitors in the equipment auction industry could offer meaningful

observations into areas where Purple Wave Auction excels and areas for potential improvement in terms of branding and differentiation efforts.

Finally, exploring the role of digital marketing channels, such as social media and online platforms, in shaping brand perception and differentiation could provide valuable insights into emerging trends and best practices in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Overall, a multifaceted approach combining longitudinal analysis, qualitative interviews, comparative analysis, and digital marketing research would offer a comprehensive understanding of Purple Wave Auction's branding and differentiation efforts and inform strategic recommendations for future internal enhancement.

Research into Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts would offer deeper insight into the concept of branding by providing a real-world case study of how branding strategies are developed, implemented, and evaluated within a corporate context. By examining Purple Wave Auction's branding initiatives, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of branding, including the interplay between brand identity, brand image, and brand equity. Through this analysis, researchers can identify the factors that contribute to the success or failure of branding efforts, such as consistency, authenticity, and alignment with organizational values.

Studying Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts can contribute to our understanding of corporate branding as a whole by illuminating broader trends and best practices in the field. By comparing Purple Wave Auction's strategies with those of other companies and industries, researchers can identify common challenges and opportunities faced by organizations in developing and managing their brands. This comparative analysis can help uncover universal

principles and strategies for effective corporate branding, regardless of the specific industry or market context.

The insights derived from research into Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts can be applied to a larger use case, benefiting practitioners and scholars outside of Purple Wave Auction. For example, companies in various industries can draw upon the lessons learned from Purple Wave Auction's branding experiences to inform their own branding strategies and decision-making processes. By understanding how Purple Wave Auction has navigated challenges and capitalized on opportunities in the branding landscape, organizations can gain valuable insights into how to enhance their own brand positioning, communication efforts, and customer engagement strategies.

Overall, research into Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts has the potential to advance our understanding of branding theory and practice, offering actionable insights and recommendations that can be applied to a wide range of corporate contexts. By examining a specific case study within the broader context of corporate branding, researchers can identify key drivers of branding success and develop frameworks and guidelines that can be leveraged by organizations seeking to strengthen their brand presence and competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the insights gleaned from the employee's perspectives on branding at Purple Wave Auction, several practical recommendations can be made to further enhance the company's brand strategy and differentiation efforts.

Firstly, it is evident that Purple Wave Auction's commitment to building a balanced market solution and striving to be a trusted advisor resonates strongly with employees. To

capitalize on this, the company should continue to prioritize authenticity and integrity in its branding efforts. To uphold authenticity and integrity, Purple Wave Auction can continue to prioritize transparency in its communication with customers. This can involve openly sharing information about the assets being auctioned, including any relevant details about their condition or history. Additionally, the company can demonstrate integrity by consistently delivering on its promises and commitments to customers, ensuring a positive and trustworthy experience at every interaction. Another way Purple Wave Auction can exemplify authenticity is by showcasing real stories and testimonials from satisfied customers, illustrating the genuine impact of its services. Through these efforts, Purple Wave Auction can strengthen its brand reputation and foster long-term trust and loyalty among customers.

Secondly, the findings highlight the importance of maintaining brand consistency across all departments. To achieve this, Purple Wave Auction should invest in comprehensive brand guidelines that clearly articulate the company's core values, messaging, and visual identity. Regular training sessions and internal communications can help ensure that all employees understand and adhere to these guidelines, thereby reinforcing brand consistency and coherence. Regular audits and reviews of marketing materials, both internal and external, can also help identify and address any deviations from brand guidelines, ensuring ongoing alignment with the company's overarching brand strategy. By prioritizing brand consistency and coherence in these ways, Purple Wave Auction can cultivate a unified brand identity that resonates with customers and strengthens its competitive position in the market.

Additionally, there is a clear desire among employees to elevate the company's branding efforts from satisfactory to outstanding. By addressing the identified challenges and discrepancies, the company can enhance its brand visibility, credibility, and relevance in the

marketplace, ultimately strengthening its competitive position and fostering greater customer engagement and loyalty. Purple Wave Auction should seize this opportunity by fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Encouraging cross-departmental collaboration and soliciting feedback from employees can help identify areas for enhancement and drive initiatives aimed at enhancing brand differentiation and market positioning. Employees should also be encouraged to participate in industry conferences, workshops, or training programs focused on branding and marketing so a culture of learning and development can be fostered. This empowers employees to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices. Purple Wave Auction can also leverage technology and data analytics to gain deeper insights into customer preferences and market trends, enabling the company to tailor its branding strategies and messaging accordingly. By embracing a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, Purple Wave Auction can effectively harness the collective creativity and expertise of its workforce to elevate its branding efforts and achieve sustained competitive advantage in the marketplace. By adopting a forward-thinking and adaptive approach, Purple Wave Auction can position itself for sustained success and differentiation in an increasingly competitive landscape, while staying true to its core values and mission.

The findings also underscore the importance of leveraging both factual and emotional appeal marketing strategies to differentiate Purple Wave Auction from its competitors. The company should continue to highlight its transparent practices, such as no reserve auctions and fixed fees, to build trust and credibility among buyers and sellers. Additionally, efforts to foster personal connections with customers through personalized service and meaningful interactions should be prioritized, as these can contribute significantly to brand loyalty and advocacy. This can include assigning dedicated account managers to assist clients throughout the auction

process, sending personalized thank-you notes or follow-up emails after transactions, and hosting customer appreciation events or webinars to engage with the community. By prioritizing personalized interactions, Purple Wave Auction can create memorable experiences for customers, strengthening their emotional connection to the brand and fostering long-term loyalty and advocacy.

The insights gathered from this case study hold significant potential for transferability to other corporations seeking to enhance their own branding strategies. By examining the intricacies of Purple Wave Auction's branding process, including objectives, challenges, and outcomes, this research provides valuable lessons and best practices applicable across diverse industries. The qualitative nature of the study allows for a deep exploration of the meaning people attribute to branding within their natural organizational settings, offering nuanced insights that can inform strategic decision-making for other companies. Additionally, the methodological rigor employed in data collection and analysis sets a benchmark for future research endeavors seeking to investigate branding strategies in organizational contexts. By leveraging the findings and recommendations derived from this study, organizations outside of Purple Wave Auction can gain actionable insights to refine their brand positioning, communication efforts, and overall brand strategy, thereby fostering greater resonance and relevance with their target audiences.

While this case study offers significant understandings into Purple Wave Auction's branding efforts, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in the research methodology. Firstly, the study's reliance on qualitative data gathered primarily through interviews may introduce biases stemming from participants' subjectivity or selective recall. Additionally, the lead author's role as both a social media content marketer for Purple Wave Auction and the principal researcher may inadvertently influence data interpretation or analysis,

potentially compromising the study's objectivity. The sample size and selection process for interview participants could limit the generalizability of findings to the broader population of Purple Wave Auction employees. Finally, the study's focus on internal perspectives may overlook external stakeholders' perceptions and experiences, thus providing an incomplete picture of Purple Wave Auction's branding effectiveness. Despite these limitations, the case study represents a valuable starting point for understanding and improving Purple Wave Auction's branding strategies.

In conclusion, by implementing these practical recommendations, Purple Wave Auction can further strengthen its brand strategy and differentiation efforts, ultimately solidifying its position as a trusted and valued partner in the equipment auction industry.

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