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MBA 640 University of Maryland Global Campus Conducting a Brand Audit Paper

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Description

Project 2: Conducting a Brand Audit

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Introduction

You have a total of two weeks to finish your brand analysis report and should complete the seven steps of this project by the end of Week 4:

- **Step 1: Review Slate Case File**
- **Step 2: Review the Branding Elements**
- **Step 3: Research Slate's Competitors**
- **Step 4: Discuss Competitors' Branding Strategies**
- **Step 5: Present Your Research Results**
- **Step 6: Submit your brand analysis report**
- **Step 7: Submit Your Work**
- **Step 8: Complete your brand analysis report**

If you have any questions, ask your instructor. To get started, click Step 1: Review Slate Case File.

Competencies

Your work will be evaluated using the competencies listed below.

- **1.1: Organize document or presentation clearly in a manner that promotes understanding and meets the requirements of the assignment.**
- **1.3: Provide sufficient, correctly cited support that substantiates the writer's ideas.**
- **1.6: Follow conventions of Standard Written English.**
- **2.5: Develop well-reasoned ideas, conclusions or decisions, checking them against relevant criteria and benchmarks.**
- **3.1: Identify numerical or mathematical information that is relevant in a problem or situation.**
- **6.1: Identify the general (external) environment in which an organization operates and discuss the implications for enterprise success.**
- **6.2: Evaluate strategic implications for domestic and international markets of an organization's industry.**
- **6.4: Develop and recommend strategies for an organization's sustainable competitive advantage.**
- **12.2: Analyze marketing information.**

Project 2: Conducting a Brand Audit

Step 1: Review Slate Case File

INBOX: 1 New Message From: Jillian Best, CEO, MCSTo: YouAttachments:Slate Case File

(<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/course-resource-list/slate-case-file.html?ou=541358>) Good Morning, I have attached the Slate case file to this email. It provides additional details you will need to inform your work with Carlos Chance, their head of branding.

Branding (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/learning-topic-list/branding.html?ou=541358>) is a very important element of marketing. As you work on this project, it is imperative that you stay focused on the consumer. Remember that a company's customers do not buy features; they buy benefits, both tangible and intangible. It is also critical to understand customers and how the brand influences their buying decisions. Best wishes, Jillian

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Jillian Best, Chief Executive Officer

3501 Development Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21230

Tel: 855.655.8682 Fax: 240.684.2644

After you have reviewed the Slate case file and read about branding, proceed to Step 2, where you will examine the elements of branding decisions.

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Step 2: Review the Branding Elements

Through correspondences with Carlos about his expectations for the brand analysis report, the focus of your analysis starts to become clear:

INBOX: 1 New Message

branding strategies of our competitors, as well as any brand extensions and their branding packaging decisions (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/learning-topic-list/branding-packagingdecisions.html?ou=541358>). This report will function as a brand audit (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/learning-topic-list/brand-audit.html?ou=541358>) that allows us to examine our competitors' strengths, weaknesses, customer expectations, and our own relative position in the market. These details form the basis of the main branding elements (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/learning-topic-list/branding-elements.html?ou=541358>). I met with our CEO, Shanice Watts, and she wanted me to emphasize the following eight categories we would like you to analyze in your report about our two biggest competitors:

1. brand personality
2. brand image
3. brand identity
4. brand differentiation
5. brand positioning
6. brand communication
7. brand loyalty
8. brand equity (including financial equity)

Slate's executive teams are really looking forward to your report. Thanks for helping us with this. Best, Carlos



Carlos Chance, Head of Branding

P: 855.655.8682 E: carlos.chance@slate.com

When you have finished reading about the branding elements, proceed to the next step, where you will begin your research on Slate's competitors.

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Step 3: Research Slate's Competitors

To carry out this assignment, you need to understand Slate's competitors' brand strategies, their consumers, how to acquire market knowledge through primary and secondary research (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/learning-topic-list/primary-and-secondaryresearch.html?ou=541358>), and how to use that knowledge to build and support a brand. To start your research, visit the websites of Slate's two biggest competitors and review both scholarly and reliable nonscholarly sources to explore their branding decisions. Your research of the two companies should focus on the branding elements discussed in the previous step. Consult a minimum of two scholarly sources and eight reliable nonscholarly sources (10 total). Make sure that you use reliable, nonscholarly sources such as Reuters, Bloomberg, Yahoo! Finance, Barrons.com, Morningstar.com, *Money*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Harvard Business Review*, as well as the UMUC Library databases such as Hoover's and ABI/INFORM. In addition, explore the following branding websites for relevant content:

- o www.adage.com (<http://www.adage.com>)
- o www.adweek.com (<http://www.adweek.com>)
- o www.brandchannel.com (<http://www.brandchannel.com>)
- o www.ama.org (<http://www.ama.org>)
- o www.cmo.com (<http://www.cmo.com>)
- o www.marketingprofs.com (<http://www.marketingprofs.com>)

Then proceed to the next step, where you will discuss branding strategy.

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Step 4: Discuss Competitors' Branding Strategies

Importance of Branding

As you are researching Slate's competitors, Carlos asks you to participate in a meeting on the importance of branding (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/course-resource-list/meeting-on-the-importanceofbranding.html?ou=541358>) with his team. Review the meeting details, then go to the discussion area and begin by posting your main response to Carlos's questions. Support your arguments with at least one source from the course readings, and three reliable nonscholarly sources derived from your own research. Then respond to at least two postings in the discussion group. Complete all discussion posts and responses by the end of Week 3 at the latest. Review the MBA Discussion Guidelines (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/course-resource-list/mba-discussion-guidelines.html?ou=541358>) for instructions on participation in discussions. In the next step, you will respond to your boss's request for a vetted list of references you are using to support your report.

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Step 5: Present Your Research Results

When you are just about finished with your research, MCS CEO, Jillian Best, decides to check in on your progress. She emails you requesting that you provide a list of the sources you are using for analysis:

INBOX: 1 New Message

Subject: Sources for Slate Project
 From: Jillian Best, CEO, MCSTo: YouI know that you're deep into your analysis of the Slate, Inc. case, but I wanted to preview your work and check in on the sources of information you are using to develop your report. Slate has asked to examine the sources of secondary research that we are using in our report to ensure their quality and originality. Accordingly, I want you to share the list of references you have been using to research Slate's competitors.
 Deliverable: Provide a reference list derived from your research that has a minimum of two scholarly and eight reliable, nonscholarly sources (10 in all). I suggest using reliable nonscholarly sources, such as Reuters, Bloomberg, Yahoo! Finance, Barrons.com, Morningstar.com, *Money*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Harvard Business Review*, as well as UMUC Library databases, such as Hoover's and ABI-Inform. All sources should be referenced using APA formatting. Thanks for your hard work. Jillian

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Jillian Best, Chief Executive Officer

3501 Development Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21230

Tel: 855.655.8682 Fax: 240.684.2644

Submit your reference list to the dropbox located in the final step of this project. Then proceed to the next step, where you will write your brand analysis report.

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Step 6: Submit Your Brand Analysis Report

Deliverable: Based on your research of the two companies' brands, write an eight to nine-page report (four pages on each company under its own heading, and each brand element discussed and supported separately under its own subheading) that addresses the following branding elements (<https://leocontent.umgc.edu/content/umuc/tgs/mba/mba640/2211/learning-topic-list/branding-elements.html?ou=541358>):

1. brand personality
2. brand image
3. brand identity
4. brand differentiation
5. brand positioning
6. brand communication
7. brand loyalty
8. brand equity (including financial equity)

As you examine these branding elements, your report should also answer the following questions:

1. How strong are the companies' brands in the market?
2. What are the factors contributing to their strengths and weaknesses?
3. How are these two brands competing against each other? How strong is their global performance?

4. How do consumers perceive their brands?
5. Are there any sub-brands? Are there any brand extensions?

Support your work with course readings, scholarly sources, and reliable nonscholarly sources, such as Reuters, Bloomberg, Yahoo! Finance, Barrons.com, Morningstar.com, *Money*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, the *Financial Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Harvard Business Review*, as well as UMUC Library databases, such as Hoover's and ABI-Inform. All sources have to be cited using APA formatting, both within the text and in the reference list. Your report to Carlos should be eight to nine pages, excluding cover page, the reference list, and appendices. Any graphs, tables, and figures should be included as appendices. Your report should have one-inch margins and be double spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. The report should be organized using headings and subheadings to improve its readability. By midnight on Saturday of Week 4, submit your report to the dropbox in the final step of this project.

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Step 7: Submit Your Work

By the end of Week 4, submit all of your work to the dropbox below. Take note of the recommended delivery dates and file-naming protocols in the table below:

Recommended Project Delivery

Step	Submission Week	Deliverable	File-naming protocol/Submission instructions
Step 4	Week 3	Branding Strategies discussion	Submit discussion posts in the Branding Strategies Discussion area
Step 5	Week 3	Reference list	lastname_references_date.docx
Step 6	Week 4	Brand Analysis Report	lastname_brand_analysis_date.docx
Step 7	Week 4	Final Brand Analysis Report	lastname_final_brand_analysis_date.docx

Check Your Evaluation Criteria

Before you submit your assignment, review the competencies below, which your instructor will use to evaluate your work. A good practice would be to use each competency as a self-check to confirm you have incorporated all of them. To view the complete grading rubric, click My Tools, select Assignments from the drop-down menu, and then click the project title.

- o 1.1: Organize document or presentation clearly in a manner that promotes understanding and meets the requirements of the assignment.
- o 1.3: Provide sufficient, correctly cited support that substantiates the writer's ideas.
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Step 8: Complete Your Brand Analysis Report

- o A one-page executive summary that highlights the most important findings of your analysis.
 - o A Go/No Go recommendation with your rationale at the end of the paper.
 - o A one-page table in an appendix at the end of the paper that compares the eight brand elements for the two brands.
- Your final report to Carlos should be eight to nine pages, excluding cover page, executive summary, the reference list, and appendices. Any graphs, tables, and figures should be included as appendices. Your report should have one-inch margins and be double spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. The report should be organized using headings and subheadings to improve its readability. Submit your final report to the dropbox in the final step of this project.

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