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Wed 11 Nov 2020 02:12 PM

What does the future hold for brand Trump in the Middle East?

Trump's loss of power and public failure, coupled with his long-standing anti-Muslim rhetoric, is sure to cast a long shadow on the desirability of his branded properties and business ventures in the region

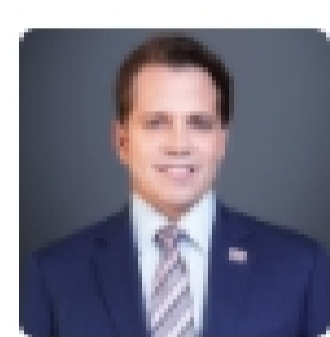


Zaib Shadani, PR consultant and media trainer at Shadani Consulting

Donald Trump may be on his way out, but his journey to the White House was nothing, if not, the culmination of a lifelong exercise in exception branding.

A man who spent his whole life selling an illusion, where perception trumped reality, every move was calculated to craft his persona as the most powerful business leader in the world.

Donald Trump's success is partly due to the fact-defying image of a strong and confident winner, able to overcome all odds, which cemented his reputation as the poster child for capitalism.



Trump's day of reckoning is here but what comes next?

Through a series of calculated moves, including publishing "The Art of the Deal" business manifesto, multiple appearances in film, tv and the hit series "The Apprentice," Donald Trump effectively established himself as the epitome of the American success story – his six bankruptcy filings becoming a mere foot note in this narrative.

Fast forward to the 2016 US presidential race, where Donald Trump used fundamental branding principles to inspire loyalty, create an authentic-sounding message and drive desirability for his rhetoric.

The aspirational nature of brand 'Trump,' coupled with Donald Trump's emotionally charged anti-establishment narrative, captivated millions of voters, enabling him to become the 45th president of the United States - with no political experience whatsoever.

His ability to survive an impeachment trial, fraud allegations, sexual misconduct and still remain unapologetic only cemented his reputation as the Teflon president and by extension, also eroded the lines between the man Donald Trump and the brand 'Trump.'

However, now that he has failed on the global stage, been ousted from the White House and been publicly branded a 'loser,' (with Twitter even showing Donald Trump's account first, when you search for 'loser'), brand 'Trump' also has to face a new reality. Will brand 'Trump' be able to survive this exit from the winner's circle?

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The reality is that Donald Trump is one of the greatest polarizing figures in history. While the 'Trump' brand was damaged by Donald Trump's abhorrent conduct during his presidency and many US citizens actively boycott his hotels and businesses, he still commands the adoration and loyalty of millions of Americans who continue to support him and believe that 'Trumpism' is here to stay.

The story across the Atlantic, however, is a different one. The allure of the 'Trump' brand in the Middle East lies in its representation of American success, opulence and wealth – and for the last four years, in its association with the US presidency.

However, Donald Trump's loss of power and public failure, coupled with his long-standing anti-Muslim rhetoric, is sure to cast a long shadow on the desirability of his branded properties and business ventures in the region.

In an era where brands need to be 'woke' and ensure their values are aligned in all partnerships, associations and endorsements, it seems unlikely that local brands will flock to support the 'Trump' brand in the region. With the crippling effects of COVID-19 on the hospitality, travel and retail sectors, many consumers are thinking twice about the brands they want to support and scrutinizing brands for authenticity, inclusivity and shared core values before they open their wallets.

Freed from the lure of Donald Trump's presidential powers and coupled with the social, economic and political winds of change, it also seems likely that wealthier consumers who may previously have been less bothered by Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric, will now follow suit and forego actively supporting the 'Trump' brand.

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So much depends on Donald Trump's ability to hold onto some semblance of power and his successful 'in command' image, but it would not come as a surprise if brand 'Trump's' glory days are over.

CNN's Anderson Cooper described Donald Trump as "an obese turtle on his back flailing in the hot sun, realizing his time is over." If this is indeed his lasting legacy, then it will be a very hard one to escape for brand 'Trump' and its namesake.

Zaib Shadani is a PR consultant and media trainer at Shadani Consulting



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ZAIB SHADANI TRUMP BRAND TRUMP PROJECTS US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP