

Ensuring Brand Clarity and Consistency in Today's Multi-channel World

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ABSTRACT: *Strong brands influence customer choice. A brand becomes strong when it retains its core values and purpose with time. Manifestation of these might change from time to time depending on internal and external factors. The key to combat is to have a strategic consistency for the brand to maintain its distinct identity.*

A brand is an intangible asset and also a critical component of what a company stands for. Brands never become icons over night and many of them have failed because they couldn't "connect" with their audience. Name of the brand, Positioning and Packaging are the ingredients to be used so that the customer is not confused and a unique and distinct identity is built for the brand. (Jagdeep Kapoor, Managing Director, Samsika Marketing Consultancy)

*So how do brands consistently ensure that they create their value?
How can the brands change the world in which they operate?*

This research work has been carried out by forming and analyzing the propositions right from the foundation of environment, employing people, owning a brand name (Geoffrey consulting), strengthening brand association (Nodal Map), creating emotional branding to stay in customers' minds, tackling crisis and providing the best moments of truth to engage the people in bringing the brand into their life.

All the information specified in this paper comes from a self-reported survey and is the result of analysis of the data. It is our opinion; the information presented in this report represents an insightful and valuable assessment of the state of branding which can be applied for any products/services in today's multi-channel world.

Keywords: *Brand Mantra, Nodal Map*

I. BRANDSOME” - REDEFINING BRANDING STRATEGY

Strong brands become transferable in this multichannel world. They can move across markets, extending their propositions into new service areas. Extending the brand relationship and transferring these loyalists into new markets to ensure brand that it does so in a manner that is complementary to its original business proposition with all marketing strategies.

A. Employees act as face of any brand to become brand.

The employee reflects the image of the company intends to be. They are the mirror of what the company stands for—its values, culture, ethics, working, etc. For employees to project this image in front of their customers, the company must instill and spread these values and echo the mission statement, time and again, everyday. What lies in the company's genes must be spread across its workforce, so that it is embedded within every employee. It has to be built in the processes and the day-to-day working. It has to seep through their people's psyche, and they have to willingly understand, accept and exhibit the same. To put it simply to say the employees have to breathe the brand .The core values of a brand should be aligned with the organizational vision and culture to deliver consistent performance (De chernatony, 2002) in a cut throat competitive market.

While massive efforts are undertaken to project the company's right image in front of the public, they stand meaningless if these are not concentrated towards the internal customers, viz. employees of the company. If employees are happy, it would transpire into better clientele. The positioning attribute designed by the company to differentiate itself in the market should be propagated initially to the internal brand ambassadors (i.e) employees who act as the face of the brand to the customers. The internal translation of brand positioning should be strengthened (Brand Mantra) to convert into perfect translation of positioning in the customers' mind. (Keller 1999)

How can we make this happen in this multi channel world?

The intersection of employees' value, customers' value and the organizational value can be a point initiated by influencing the internal customers to own the brand.

The 'what is said' and 'how things happen' are strongest expressions that companies focus on to build powerful internal brands.

For example: "A promise is a promise" by Ratan Tata for Nano and "how we made that happen" by the Tata employees in Nano.

B. Brand that provides best moments of truth makes the ultimate difference for it to be consistent.

A field study on 23 stores including retail outlets and restaurants to find out the moments of truth experienced by the customer. After the closer observations, it was found that the first moment of truth occurs at the Retail stores - when a consumer selects the brand from the counter over competing brands, and the second moment of truth is in the display cart, where the customer gets the reputation??? for choosing the renowned brand, the third moment of truth is in the way the customer pays the bill with full satisfaction, the fourth moment of truth is the time saved during the billing counter. The customer uses the brands and their performance truly delights them! Parallely, the brand as a socially responsible corporate citizen has consistently demonstrated its commitment to touching lives and improving life - beyond just products. Apart from the generic touch points in restaurants, from the research it was observed that moment of bidding adieu by the customer in Pizza Hut is the best moment of truth experienced by them. In Pizza Hut we observed that if a customer has had a nice time, he/she rings the bell situated at the entrance of the restaurant, immediately you will hear all the staff members of the restaurant saying "thank you". It is not their way of expressing thank you but building a brand by joining and participating in the customer's happiness. They just don't celebrate customer's birthday in public but also brand themselves in public. Everyone wants to feel special; every team wants to feel special and they succeed in doing the same by celebrating small moments of joy in public.

C. Clarity is ensured when brands connect through emotions and remains consistent if backed up by logic.

Brands become charismatic if they appeal to both the left and right brains of the people. In the present scenario, emotional connect is given the opening priority by the brand managers to the customers. Brands primitively differentiated themselves in the market by associating the benefits and appealing to the mind. Brands need to orient themselves towards the feelings created by the features promised by them. Psychologists are considered to be paramount consultants for rolling out consistent messages from time to time for the brand communication in a multi-channel world. Common advertisements of Airtel, Surf Excel, Hutch, Dettol, TOI have always made it to the top of the charts by communicating the emotional attributes attached with the brand without even sometimes placing the product/service in the messages. The Image of the product can be built around some deep archetype— the hero, antihero, siren, wise old man—that resides in the collective unconscious (Kotler 2003).

D. A brand should own a word to remain in the customer's mind and should be reinforced by communication through all multi-channels. (Geoffrey consulting)

A positioning statement is a one or two sentence statement that clearly and succinctly explains how a brand (company) is different from the competitors. It ensures delivery of a consistent message and the best product message. "A brand should not try to own an already existing association which is owned by someone else" (Jack Trout and Al Reis 1993). Positioning is the foundation for strategic brand planning. Its time horizon is usually one or two years in technology markets. It needs to be credible and believable from the beginning and should be updated over time as the product or company evolves.

Positioning requires something to position against. Position can be expressed, or mapped in a visual format, on an X/Y axis, explained by Geoffrey Moore (Crossing the Chasm, 1991). The survey of 250 respondents on cold drinks market was conducted to analyze the perceptions and the buying process. Here X axis is the key benefit that buyers, either consciously or unconsciously, want from the purchase is placed in horizontal X axis. This could be just about anything: a feature (e.g. packaging), benefit (e.g. refreshment), a culturally based factor (e.g. prestige, status), or a specific need (e.g. thirst). This is the way customers sort their buying choices.

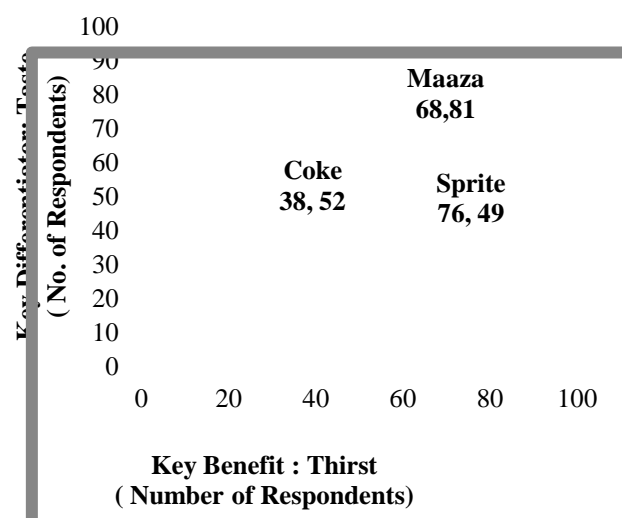


Fig 1 Geoffrey Moore Consulting Chart for Cold drinks

It was found that Sprite is the top choice followed by Maaza and Coke when customers want to quench the thirst. After assessing these brands the Y axis is the final sorting factor which helps to decide among the remaining choices(all the brands are assumed to be present).Here, If the customer thinks of taking Maaza, it means he/she wants taste (Key Differentiator) rather than going for coke or sprite. If Sprite is preferred, it would probably mean fun and Coke for excitement. The goal of this analysis is to create a new space in the market for the brands to position themselves outside the gravitational field of the competitors so that the brand identity can be clearly defined in the multichannel world. If a brand studies the purchasing behavior of the customers and included that information in the positioning statement, it is likely that the brand will capture a large market share.

E. Brand Information is stored in nodes or concepts in the minds of consumers which leads to purchase/experience products or services.

Brand association can be defined by the method called Network Activation theory. It states that brand information is stored in the memory in “nodes”. Each node can store very different things, like describers of the brand, company names etc are tied to the purchase decision of customers. Research had been carried out with 250 respondents for the construction of nodal map on TATA GROUP. Node associations like TRUST ,NANO, ETHICS RATAN TATA etc. are stored in customers’ memory and how they are organized in order to make the brand easy to remember were found out from the research. The value of mapping association and creating nodal maps is that they give a mental picture of the brand that can be used to bring consistency to all forms of marketing communications, regardless of the media used.

As seen above in the model, the marketing message is unified together to deliver a unified message(α) can be delivered, monitored, measured and optimized for each customer, regardless of the channel. To maximize the impact of campaigns, a unified marketing communication message enables brands to present appropriate, relevant and consistent messages across multiple channels based on each user's interests and needs, regardless of where they are. The most involved and detailed part of the promotional planning process occurs at stages as decisions have to be made regarding the role and importance of each IMC tool and how they coordinate with one another (Kevin B Tynan 1995) and should not overlap each other in sending conflicting and inconsistent messages like advertising, direct marketing/e-marketing, internet and digital/on-line marketing, public relations and proactive media relations, event marketing and exhibit strategy, publications, print /educational material, strategic alliances/partnerships. Monitoring and Evaluation are the most important steps in continuously evaluating the progress made in the entire process. It can be done by gathering feedback concerning how well the IMC program is working and whether it is meeting its objectives. Results of the monitoring and evaluation should be used in subsequent IMC planning and strategy development.

G. Tackling crisis can lead a brand to move from good to great

Brands make a strong impression when they wholeheartedly satisfy the promise of what they pledge to the customers. The main obstacle in carrying down the process is when crisis blocks the way in reaching the pinnacle of a market. Crisis management is the most pivotal part in making the brand to perform consistently in a multi-channel world. Behemoth brands can crumble to ashes if they react like snails towards a whirlpool. The employees are the only saviors who can pull back the reputation of the brand when struck with the debacle. It is the employees who had breathed the brand in, will reflect it in the reaction towards the crisis. Internal communication is the part where the organization has to be taken into account for clearly laying out every single move. There need not be any separate crisis management committee if the brand sticks to its promise, but to tackle uncertainty the brand must go back to its values to stay in the consumer's mind. Odwella –which defines itself as health Juice Company faced a big blow when its apple juice had E. coli 0157:H7 resulted in death of a child and 60 people sick? Within 48 hours, the products were recalled from 4,600 retail stores promising that it will be tested with the best comprehensive quality control and safety system in the fresh juice industry. By leveraging internal and external communication, Odwella took the problem singlehandedly and surprised everyone by getting its place in San Francisco Magazine as "Best Brand Name in the Bay Area". Every brand should know that the best ever credit it can get from the crisis management is from the victims themselves. Odwella became good to great when they made the father of the child who died said. "I don't blame the company". "They did everything they could". Crisis strikes to prove that tough moments don't last, but tough brands do. No marketing person will be unaware of Johnson & Johnson's awesome response to the Tylenol crisis

H. Delusions of grandeurs of a Brand "X" results in rising of competitors to capture the X's Market.

Strong brands sometimes perceive themselves as larger than what they are actually, which leads to unrecoverable blow to their identity. There are only few brands which have sturdily associated their identity which results in permanent dwelling in the customers' mind. One such Brand which suffered due to delusions of grandeur is Xerox corp. Think of a situation, when we enter into a photocopier shop named as some "ABC-Xerox" store, we would say "make a Xerox copy of this sheet rather than saying, make a photocopy". The word "Xerox" has entered as photocopy in the consumers' lexicon so powerfully, in which Xerox cannot try to make over the transition from photocopier to other business. In reality, the reaction to the above situation the shop person takes a photocopy in Canon or HP copier machine, rather than using a XEROX machine. Where did XEROX make the mistake in spite of bringing revolutionary changes in the photocopying world?

Xerox tried to compete with IBM in the office automation systems rather than concentrating its own innovative document business. It lost to HP and Canon because it didn't concentrate on lasography where it was the main pioneer. As Jack Trout says, "If you are known for one thing, the market will not give you another thing."

I. A website is now the integrated component of the brand.

Website is the single best advertisements on the Internet. The website is a mix between direct selling (it can engage the visitor in a dialogue) and advertising (it can be designed to generate awareness, explain/demonstrate the product, and provide information- without interactive involvement). All sorts of sales

promotions ranging from competitions to collecting electronic coupons with each visit can be carried out by websites. In a sense a URL address listed on a piece of FMCG packaging containing a sales promotion should invite the audience to check out the website (Smith et al 1998).

BUY – STAGE	EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOL		
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1. Anticipation of recognition of a problem and general solution	Personal Selling	★	Advertising
2. Determination of characteristics and quantity of needed item			★
3. Description of characteristics and quantity of needed item			★
4. Search for and qualification of potential sources			★
5. Acquisition and analysis of proposals			★
6. Evaluation of proposal and selection of suppliers		★	★
7. Selection of an order routine		★	★
8. Performance feedback and evaluation			★

Table 1: Website as part of the marketing communication mix

Source: Pitt et al, 1996 \ = WEBSITE

Website has a lot in common with a trade show, where potential buyers can enter at will and visit exhibitors and prospective sellers. In the table above, the industrial buying process can be thought of as a series of stages (left hand side), the relative effectiveness of a particular marketing communication tool on the right hand. For example, new product achieved through advertising, whilst closing a sale would be best achieved face-to-face (Pitt et al, 1996).

Apple follows that website leaves customers with clarity via a tight, memorable message or image, even if they do not purchase.

II. CONCLUSION

“I’ve never been particularly good at numbers, but I think I’ve done a reasonable job with feelings. I’m convinced that it is feelings, and feelings alone, that account for the success of the Virgin brand and all its myriad forms.”

- Sir Richard Branson

As a brand ambassador, he linked branding directly with the feeling of the customers. Their mind is the key hub, understanding that would ensure a brand reach them in the right way, with the right message and at the right time.

In the olden days, providing a car park is guaranteed-consumer pull. In recent days, faced with an abundance of options, consumers would show a gravitational drag towards one brand and a total rejection of another, with a frustrating and commercially penalizing the degree of choosiness. Something had changed. The

consumer world had changed and so the brands people wanted in their lives should also need to change. Checking their clarity and being consistent in the marketing evolution is indispensable for the brands people want in their lives.

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