

Creating Brands That Provide Psychological And Social Benefits Beyond The Product

The main reason for the general fascination with brands is their ability to provide the consumers an extra value in addition to what the product/service/company themselves can provide. A value which becomes the major motivation for consumers to desire the product. Everybody agrees about that, but from here on it becomes foggy. First of all, what is this value exactly Also, how precisely is this value being added and incorporated into the brand In this short article I attempt to provide a clear answer to both of these key questions and to suggest a workable approach to creating value added brands. By way of introduction, let me say that strong brands are perceived instruments, means to achieve goals or benefits, in the consumer's mind. They arouse emotions because they are perceived as a source of something beneficial. The positive emotions are direct outcomes of these anticipations. Their various symbolizations (name, logo, font, emblem, etc') have little impact of their own. Their importance is mainly as identifiers of sources of already attributed and anticipated benefits. The act of branding has ten different meanings which are ten different ways to create instrumentality or usefulness beyond the tangible benefits which the product/ service/ company themselves can provide. Creating a conceived linkage to a tangible benefit The most basic level of branding is creating a conceived linkage between the brand name and other identifiers and a tangible benefit. Huge brands like Pantene shampoo which promise to amend the six symptoms of unhealthy hair look, work in this level. Forming a mental context A "mental context" is a concept or an organizing principle which allows the consumer to conceive originally unrelated facts (such as: the various marketing activities of a company) as connected by a guiding intent or by some other common factor. For example: should you stumbled into a hotel like the "Hudson" or the "Royalton" in the heart of Manhattan, you are promised pleasure on different levels, but if you know you're in a "Boutique Hotel" your stay becomes a very different experience altogether. Directing an experience This is essentially a hypnotic effect, in some cases related to Placebo. The branding here is the creation of an expectation which alters the sensed experience and enables the consumer a richer experience than what the product alone can provide him with. For instance, the expectation that an energy drink like "Red Bull" will energize, makes the consumers feel a wave of energy beyond the physical effect of the drink. Creating a means of self presentation Here the branding creates a symbol with a meaning that is well known to everybody in a relevant group, which enables the consumer to characterize himself. The brand "ABSOLUT vodka" became a way for yuppies to signal their yuppieness to other yuppies and so became a huge success. Creating a means to deliver a message The branding role in this approach is to create a symbol of another kind, its meaning known for everybody as well. The diamonds giant "De Beers" made the diamond a means of expressing commitment, making the physical fact that a diamond is indestructible a metaphor for the lastingness of a relationship. Building a social-cultural authority The next branding approach is the creation of an authority which the consumers can use as a guide, to help them understand what's happening around them and to inform them which behavioral ways are normative, what will make them happier etc'. The brand "Apple" depicted the personal computer, not only as a working tool but also as a device for self expression and creativity. Creating "a long hand" In this approach, the branding is creating means for the consumer and empowering her to act for noble objectives and high purposes, which are important to her, but which she can't achieve by herself. The "Body Shop" network made buying a way for contributing to the preservation of the environment and helping people in need all around the globe. Creating an Alter Ego Here, the brand is a way for the consumer to behave (at least on a fantasy level) in a manner he would like to but doesn't dare, or isn't willing to pay the price for. The provocation of the fashion brand "Diesel" is made as if "in the name of" the brand customers. They can feel like they are provocative themselves every time the brand advertises one of its outrageous campaigns. Building an "Emotional Gym" Opting for our civilized and protected life style, we compromise (not once, happily) a lot of our possibilities as humans. We go to the gym to prevent the degeneration of our body which, in our life style, doesn't get to face the challenges it was designed for. Similarly, we watch movies and TV series' in order to "exercise" emotional skills which aren't legitimate in our life style. Brands like "Sicily" from "Dolce & Gabbana", allows us too to experience such emotional possibilities. Facilitating fantasies With only a fine difference from the previous approach, this branding approach helps the consumer to fantasize an alternative reality. The brand "Timberland" was designed as a way for consumers to fantasize about courageous adventures against the forces of nature. The understanding of the different kinds of added value, the ways by which these values are instrumental to the consumer and the methods by which brands can be destined to be means for the consumer for achieving his goals, makes the difference between masterful creations of brands and amateur imitation which produces mere look-alikes.

About the Author

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