



**THE MAKING
OR FAKING OF
EMOTIONALLY
SIGNIFICANT BRANDS**

**CREATING A GENUINE
FEEL-APPEAL
FOR YOUR BRAND**

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The Making or Faking of Emotionally Significant Brands

Creating a *genuine* 'Feel Appeal' for your brand

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Brands can be emotionally powerful, but...

The emergence of new phenomenal brands is truly awesome. Do you remember 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' (1977)? At the beginning of the movie, an amazing occurrence takes place. Masses of people from all over the world, dream of a certain place where they feel compelled to be. Later it transpires that unknowingly, they all arrived at the alien-landing site. To me, this scene illustrates what happens in the marketplace at the appearance of an ace brand such as 'Harry Potter'. Millions of people suddenly feel that they just have to be there. This paper is about the erudition and the know-how necessary for the purposeful creation of such emotionally powerful brands.

It is widely accepted that brands can offer the consumer extrinsic psychological and social benefits. These benefits extend beyond the intrinsic benefit that springs from the product's basic functions (whether tangible or intangible). They also extend beyond extrinsic tangible benefits added in the marketing mix, e.g. sensual experiences such as the aesthetic pleasure derived from an exquisitely designed package. This important notion has unfortunately been the source of many misconceptions in marketing, mainly because of over-personification of brands, to the point of treating them as almost actual human beings.

Metaphors have been carried on a bit too far. It has been claimed that brands have personalities and charisma, and that they incarnate myths and values; it has also been claimed that consumers love them, have committed relationships with them even worship them. Such fetishist ideas are insupportable by our knowledge of consumer psychology and are at odds with common sense as well. By immersing ourselves in our jargon we get increasingly less attentive to consumer reality. Clearly, this is damaging the ability to successfully create and manage brands.

In fact, even the relatively mild concept of "brand personality" clouds our professional thinking. When consumers describe a brand in terms of personality traits, they do not really describe the brand but rather the experience that they expect to have when consuming or using it. The consumer describes Vodka Absolut as a 'sophisticated' brand, and means that his guests will perceive him as a person who appreciates esthetics and understands subtlety. The consumer describes Disney as a 'cool'

brand and means that he expects to experience excitement and childish wonderment watching a Disney movie.

Now here is the problem: should a brand have a human-like personality, disconnected from the need to evoke consumer's anticipations of benefit, then it follows that such personality can be produced in a purposeless creative-artistic process. This may be all right for marketers willing to receive recognition only posthumously. Others should insist that whatever we coin "the brand's personality" will be a well-planned system of expectations on account of which the consumer will desire the brand.

For the benefit of those in doubt, let me spell out clearly what differentiates whatever attachment consumers develop towards brands from true human relationship and love. Brand affinity merely constitutes a meeting of interests (interests that may be personally essential for the consumer and therefore emotionally involving). It is always rather limited in scope. It never constitutes a mutual commitment, a partnership, in a true interpersonal sense. It is only self-delusory to think otherwise.

Enjoyment is not love, and repeated enjoyment is not a relationship. The impression that no other brand provides at present a greater benefit - whether justified time and again by experience or persistent by habit and laziness - should not be labeled "loyalty". Keep in mind that few devoted consumers ever volunteered to help in the manufacturing plant or offered financial support when their 'beloved' brand got into trouble.

Data from both Israel and other countries paint a clear picture: when a rival brand appears offering an definitive greater benefit - invariably "loyalty" breaks. It may take some time until consumers will begin to pay attention to the rival brand, and develop the expectation for its greater benefit, but it will happen inevitably. The emerging trend is even gloomier. Consumer loyalty (if it ever existed) seems to be a vanishing phenomenon. Consumers' readiness to try new products and brands is higher today than ever before.

"Customer clubs" and even "loyalty plans" are terms cultivating a big fallacy. Consumers do not feel any profound sense of affiliation to consumer clubs. They hold the card to receive the benefit, nothing more. Even that has its limits. Largely, such programs fail to alter behavior. Accumulating experience throughout the world has shown that when consumers are rewarded for what they are doing anyway, they are happy, that is all. The reward succeeds in encouraging consistency only within narrow boundaries.

Consumers are enthusiastic about brands that hit a sweet spot, that offer and deliver a vital and unique benefit, tangible or intangible. My contention is that consumers want brands solely because they expect to benefit, and only if indeed they experience such anticipation (which is consistently gratified). This is obviously true for tangible benefits. However, the same rule applies to psychological and social benefits as well. Furthermore, preference for a brand endures only as long as the anticipation of benefit is greater or more certain than the anticipation of

benefit evoked by competing brands (efforts and costs of switching, whenever relevant, are also elements in this equation). Understandably, some marketers react to this harsh and demanding reality with escapism.

'Emotional Branding' (a new and less accurate substitute term for what has been formerly known as 'psychological or social value added') has become very popular in recent years. Emotional Brands are supposed to be brands with which consumers form an emotional bond that is independent of any benefit derived from the brand. While brands certainly can have value that is largely independent from the product's function, I believe that the assertion above is a severe misconception. The benefit is not tangible in these cases, but it is nonetheless a benefit. I argue that we can deem emotional branding successful only when consumers expect the brand to have social and/or psychological usefulness, or even instrumentality (I will clarify the meaning of this instrumentality shortly).

Devotees of the naïve popular version of emotional branding claim that the human emotional assortment is an unlimited resource for building well differentiated brands and thereby the rainmaker of huge profits. They contrast emotions with reason saying that reason leads to conclusions while emotions lead to action. They would have us believe that in order to succeed it would suffice for a brand to have a unique creative approach (expressed in the brand's symbolizations and advertising) steering emotions by use of stories, metaphors, sensual and aesthetical stimuli.

What a tempting thought! If only it were true, it would have been a paradise for carefree creativity, finally ridding us of the loathsome demands of this profession, as well as toils of expertness. Unfortunately, of course they are wrong. First of all, not all emotions lead to action. Emotions elicited by sheer entertainment, e.g. telenovelas, lead to no motivation whatsoever. Furthermore, while it is correct that human actions are always powered by emotions, it is also true that emotions are ignited by conscious and non-conscious cognitive processes (as I shall explain subsequently). It is by understanding underlying cognitive processes - particularly thought and imagination - that we understand the origins of motivating emotions.

Having said that, are inspiration, creativity and great ideas - still indispensable for the creation of powerful brands? You betcha! Building brands is a task for the passionate, the visionary, the insightful and the originative. It is a chore for the plenteous minds and personalities. But remember this. Leonardo de Vinci was a scholar of materials, tools, techniques as well as themes and subjects - not just a creative genius. Rembrandt hailed the study of anatomy. Most of the past and present masters of all art forms were/are lifetime students and researchers of human nature, human interactions and human situations. Being knowledgeable is, of course, an absolute necessity to masters of applied arts such as architects and products designers. Similarly, the master of brand building must also be guided by expertise to produce the desired effect.

The popularity of the unsophisticated emotional branding and of ESP (Emotional Selling Proposition) was often based on the erroneous assumption that emotions can be simply 'glued' to brands by means of advertising. This assumption originated in the Classical Conditioning theory (you will recall Ivan Pavlov and his experiments with the salivating dogs). Today, this theory is largely obsolete, and thus abandoned as a means for modeling the human attribution of emotional significance. The unfortunate result of branding efforts based on these assumptions was the ineffectiveness of many branding campaigns.

In other words, this kind of Emotional Branding is faking rather than making emotionally significant brands. It creates look-alikes. The symbolizations, the advertising, the packaging may evoke emotions and impress the untrained eye, but the brand will lack genuine feel appeal to its target consumers.

In this paper, I set out to present a comprehensive account of why and how brands become (and can be designed to be) desirable even irresistible and achieve emotional significance. Some of the material will be novel to you while other parts will be familiar, even trivial. As a whole, however, the material herein forms a complete and very practicable approach that is undoubtedly tenable in the light of up-to-date theory and research. I therefore advise you to patiently follow the unfolding of the entire framework.

With a little help from our brands

Why do people want brands? If you will indulge me, I would like to clarify a more preliminary question first: why do people want products and services? I think that generally we fail to appreciate to what extent products and services serve us as basic building blocks and managing tools in our lives. We are constantly dealing with a multitude of tasks using products and services. Right from the start, please let a critical point be at the center of your attention. From the many ways in which products and services are useful to us, a considerable share is either psychological or social. That's right. We pursue psychological and social goals; and products and services are instrumental to us with these tasks as well as with the more material ones.

Let's have a look at the wide scope of our use of products and services. We use them for:

- Managing our sensations.

We provide ourselves with pleasant sensations, and we avoid unpleasant ones, with the help of products and services. For instance, we take a bubble bath to pamper ourselves and we swallow a pill to stop a headache. We try to arrive at an optimal arousal level of our sensations, for instance: not too cold and not too hot, by means of clothing and of air conditioners. We try

to make ourselves as comfortable as we possibly can and to maintain a sense of physical well-being.

- Managing our moods and satisfying our psychological needs.

We control our moods by wearing tough-looking sunglasses, by listening to nostalgic music, or by watching a comedy. We supply ourselves with opportunities to compete and win. We take measures to protect ourselves from bodily harm, as well as from emotional harm. We protect our property.

- Managing our living conditions (thereby managing long term sensual experiences and emotions).

Some of our purchases are fundamental and could be regarded as infrastructure. For instance: styling and furnishing our home, or purchasing a car. By these purchases we create for ourselves long-term daily recurring experiences.

- Structuring our time and shaping our lifestyle.

A large part of our time is structured by consumption, starting with establishing a routine by adopting habitual activities, all the way to taking time off for vacations and to celebrating meaningful dates. Our lifestyle largely consists of consumption habits and rituals.

- Signaling to others.

For instance, we dress in ways that ascribe us to certain groups and we acquire certain products that identify us as having a certain status.

- Managing relationships.

We meet people and go out with them to restaurants, to coffeehouses or to the cinema. We entertain them in our homes and we buy them presents.

- Defining our identity.

We use products and services to demonstrate, both to ourselves and to others, what kind of people we are. Our culture presents us with a menu of identities and stereotypes. For intricate reasons, we destine ourselves to become 'feminine and motherly', or 'fame fatal', or 'career women' and we purchase products and services that fit the image, until everyone, including ourselves are convinced (sometimes for the duration of our entire lives).

- Shaping our future and the stories of our lives.

Study programs, psychotherapy, investment management services as well as many other products and services - are designed to create future possibilities, and to direct and navigate our biography.

The key word is: Choice. We do all that by choosing certain products and services. Moreover, we choose certain brands.

Our enriched reality

People hardly ever satisfy their needs with bare reality. Think of the following points, and please try to be honest with yourselves:

- We constantly delude ourselves, thinking that basically we are good folks regardless of our actual deeds. Most of us think that our intelligence is above the average, that we are better drivers than most, that we contribute to our relationships more than our partner does, etc'. Overall – we feel that we have a good grip on our lives, that we can maintain our good health, that we constantly learn, develop and advance, and most importantly: that we know ourselves very well, all this in spite of uncontestable and disturbing evidence that it is just not so (ever felt surprised watching yourself on video?).
- We live by interpretations of reality, which make it hard for us to sort facts ('I have been sacked', 'she did not say good morning') from automatically attached meanings, judgments and forecasts of the future.
- Our attitudes are guided by 'rights and wrongs', by principles, and by 'must haves'. Changeable as they are, as long as they prevail we regard them as absolutes. Sometimes they even contradict one another, but we behave as though they are God's given truths.
- Anyone listening to stories about events in our lives might get the impression that we were the 'star' of the event, but someone listening to another participant's description of the same event might get quite a different impression.
- We talk to ourselves. We reproach ourselves, are angry with ourselves, praise ourselves, encourage ourselves, etc' as if several persons inhabited our mind.
- We fantasize on 'correcting scenarios' to embarrassing or frustrating situations that occurred to us, thus we assist ourselves to recuperate from unpleasant experiences. Fantasies also help us alleviate emotional distress (like loneliness and

longing), motivate ourselves and arouse enthusiasm; or enable us to experience or to revive emotions, which are unavailable to us in reality. We have fantasies of adventure, of omnipotence, of irresistible sex appeal as well as other fantasies of grand achievements and tremendous successes that in all probability shall never be realized. Some of the fantasies we enjoy - if realized will be unlawful.

- We perform - in complete faith and conviction - acts that have statistically slim chances for success, such as entrepreneurial ventures and certain investments. As a rule, we mostly fail to assess our chance of making a mistake.
- We fall in love and adore our beloved even when all around us no one quite understands what we see in her/him.
- We maintain that we are in control of our behavior even though we are subject to unexpected emotional swings and seemingly whimsical desires (even when we are not pregnant), and we get 'carried away', doing things we later regret.
- On the social-cultural level, we hold religious beliefs and superstitions. We have sanctified symbols, places, objects and animals. We attribute elevated statuses to certain people. We adhere sacredly to certain values, fashions, trends, slang, and proper modes of behavior (until they change).

Believe me; I could have gone on and on. Bottom line: our lives are not all reality. We live an 'enriched' reality, both subjective and shared. Our subjective enriched reality helps us maintain a sense of self-complacency, a feeling of well-being, a positive attitude and an optimistic outlook on life. We create enriched shared realities, from folie-a-deux to culture, in order to cement togetherness. Then, piercing becomes 'cool', if you are at the right age group and if you belong to certain social circles. Research shows that depressed people have a keener and more accurate perception of reality than well functioning individuals that usually have a tendency to view reality through rosy spectacles.

Products and services support our enriched reality. For example, they support illusions we entertain. Taking vitamins helps us feel that we are leading a healthy lifestyle even though we may be harming our health in other ways. In spite of the fact that we deal here with non-tangible benefits, these are nonetheless true needs.

The psychological and social instrumentality of products, services and brands

Since I specialize in creating psychological and social value for brands, I quite often work on the development of prestige brands and on the designing of exclusive services for affluent customers. During one such

project for a large bank, years ago, I gained an interesting insight although not surprising in hindsight. A major covert expectation of most of the bank's affluent clients was that rules and regulation be bent in their favor.

After dozens of in-depth interviews it became increasingly percipient that the attractiveness of the special benefits they had received was important but actually secondary. An improved standard of service would have been welcomed, but would not constitute a decisive factor, in assuring their loyalty to the bank. What these consumers really wanted was a very high level of informality. For instance, they wanted the branch to be opened especially for them at unconventional hours, if the need arises. They wanted urgently required documents to be delivered to their home during the weekend. They wanted procedures to be circumvented. They wanted direct access to high rank executives. And so forth. Analyzing their motivations I could see that these clients wished to use banking services as a means to feel elevated from the ordinary. The psychological and social instrumentality took precedence over the financial one. Following my advice, the bank extended a very secret permission to branch managers 'to deviate from the rules, with great apprehension and severe remorse'. This policy proved to have an enormous influence on feelings of association and on loyalty.

This case exemplifies once again the psychological and social instrumentality of products and services. Next to usages leading directly to experiential benefits (desired sensual or emotional experiences) and usages resulting in tangible benefits (desired effects in the physical world, including in one's body), we use products and services to achieve intrapersonal and interpersonal ends.

Following is a more orderly list of the ways in which products and services (and eventually, brands) are instrumental in the attainment of psychological and social purposes.

Consumers use certain products and services,

- To reassure themselves and to relieve anxiety
- To bring about mood changes and to create a sense of being refreshed
- To feel active and alive
- To keep well informed and to understand the meaning of occurrences, situations and processes in the surrounding world
- To exercise control, autonomy and freedom
- To exert power, skill and resourcefulness; to win and to achieve an impact
- To encourage themselves; and to inspire optimism

- To cultivate motivation for demanding tasks
- To strengthen their sense of individuality ('otherhood')
- To invigorate their self-image; and to build consistency into their personal story, often justifying a core belief ("Luck is everything in life" or "I am in charge of my destiny")
- To reward themselves and to heighten self esteem, self worth and self importance
- To achieve and maintain a sense of purpose
- To shield and protect themselves psychologically; and to gain immunity and fortitude
- To take care of themselves, to pamper themselves
- To develop themselves
- To compensate themselves
- To obtain legitimization for certain demeanors, and to strengthen self-confidence
- To internalize social roles
- To build something, to create, to experience ownership and substance
- To assign personal meaning to certain dates, places and other components of the surrounding environment
- To support certain interpretations of reality (sometimes quite fictional) and self-delusions
- To escape, to take a break from both actual self and reality; and to experience emotions that are scarce in real life, and fantasies that are impossible, dangerous or very costly to realize

These are psychological uses.

Consumers also use products and services,

- To convey:
 - ⇒ Certain personality traits ('conscientious', 'sociable')
 - ⇒ Linkage to specific social stereotypes ('yuppie', 'intellectual')
 - ⇒ Belonging to particular groups ('brotherhood')

- ⇒ Having a social role
- ⇒ Having a socio-economic status
- ⇒ A certain level of sophistication and refinement
- ⇒ Having certain tastes and preferences
- ⇒ Values, positions, ideology
- ⇒ Consistency, dependability
- ⇒ Being up-to-date, connected, in on-going affiliation

etc', in order to manage other people's impressions thereby influencing their conduct

- To comply with a norm, to "do the right thing", to fulfill responsibilities
- To express emotions (love, appreciation, gratitude)
- To cater to the needs of others
- To mark transitions and liminal states
- To celebrate
- To single out others as having special significance and status in one's life (as in engagement)
- To create an atmosphere and to evoke emotions (thus preserving, shaping or furthering relationships)
- To create shared experiences, meanings and rituals (thus preserving, shaping or furthering relationships)
- To increase attractiveness
- To reciprocate or to retaliate, to "even the score"

These are social and interactional uses.

The psychological and social instrumentality of Short-Term Brands

Psychological and social instrumentality is relatively easy to associate with Long-Term Brands (LTB). However, Short-Term Brands (STB), the marketing meteors now growing in popularity in many product and service categories* offer the consumer psychological and social instruments

* To receive my free e-booklet (PDF) **Think Short! Short-Term Brands Revolutionize Branding**, e-mail request to: dan@danherman.com

almost equal in importance. STBs mark a shift from seeking "sustainable competitive advantage" to seeking "repeatable competitive advantage" and the benefits they provide are those gained through perpetually buying new brands.

Finding and trying new brands currently constitutes a factor of considerable importance in marital, familial and social life (social instrumentality). Openness to the new is obvious in products with a social character. However, it can also be seen in more personal product categories like toothpaste or body lotion (psychological instrumentality).

Buying a new brand can be psychologically instrumental because it -

- Strengthens the self-image of someone who is current
- Nurtures a feeling of liveliness and connectedness to what is happening in the world around us
- Provides a feeling of being renewed, stimulated and invigorated
- Facilitates mood management (breaking routine, liberation from a feeling of 'being stuck')
- Increases confidence in a purchase choice because 'new' often implies improved quality or 'state of the art' technology

Buying a new brand can be socially instrumental because it -

- Signals to others that you are up-to-date ('cool', 'fashionable')
- Is often a part of a continuous signaling of affiliation and active participation
- Conveys a message of 'youthfulness', openness and flexibility
- Enables you to arouse interest and encourage conversation
- Enables you to serve as an imitation model to others, and to exert influence upon them.

We can conclude that each type of brand, long-term and short-term, fulfills a basic human need. Long-term, fulfills the need of stability, continuity and security. Short-term, fulfills the need for renewal and of sensual, emotional and intellectual stimulation.

Designating brands for psychological or social instrumentality

There are three types of psychological and social instrumentality:

- Psychological or a social instrumentality as the intrinsic, core benefit of the product or service (e.g. motivational books and gifts).
- A psychological or a social benefit that results from the major tangible benefit (for example, feeling satisfaction following the conclusion that we acted sensibly taking advantage of an attractive deal).
- Psychological or social instrumentality as a value added which is, nonetheless, the major benefit.

Naturally, our interest focuses on the third kind since these are the "magical" cases where the brand surpasses the product as source of the major benefit for the customer.

Designating our brands, to be instrumental, psychologically or socially, is just a strategy option, not a necessity and not even a guaranteed advantage. Creating such an instrumentality means designating brands for a specific psychological or social function based on one of the options listed above; and supplying them with a specific content. In order to achieve that, we must gain insight into what consumers are trying to accomplish psychologically and/or socially, and we have to discover opportunities for such gratification.

There are two major prescripts for devising a strategy for a successful psychological or social instrumentality:

- Be specific. Specific is what does it. A major problem with the widespread practice of Emotional Branding is the attempt of many brand developers to associate their brands with general positive feelings (in order to appeal to a public that is as wide ranged as could be). However, it turned out that there are not nearly enough distinct positive feelings to allow differentiation between all rival brands.

Strong brands like Coca-Cola, Timberland and Versace, take an entirely different path. It is the path of specificity in their psychological or social instrumentality. Coca-Cola enables us, on a psychological level, to re-experience the primal and powerful feelings of youth unattenuated by experience and perspective. Timberland facilitates the fantasy of adventure confronting the powers of nature. Versace is a means for expressing extravagance and an eccentric personality.

When planning psychological or social instrumentality, I strongly recommend detailing a scenario of the brand being used by the consumer. The scenario should include situational aspects, actions, conversations, thoughts and feelings involved – all expressed

verbally. The brand's instrumentality in achieving the consumer's sought after benefit should be evident.

- Create an instrument for attaining an otherwise unattainable or hard to attain psychological or social goal. If you cannot spot such a goal, and admittedly it is becoming increasingly difficult, aim to create a considerably better or more specific instrument, or at least one that permits attaining the goal in a markedly new way (often sheer novelty is an advantage).

For most practical purposes, instruments designed for the achievement of psychological and social ends are not essentially different from means designed to create a desired experience, or from instruments to a physical effect. In all cases, people are trying to do something, be it to achieve some result in the physical world, to gain a sensual experience or to attain a psychological or social result. We marketers offer them our products, our services and our brands, as means they can use for that purpose. Therefore, I am of the opinion that the best approach is to treat developing brands for psychological and social instrumentality in the same way we treat developing products and services for experiential or physical instrumentality. This means seeking differentiation and positioning for competitive advantage.

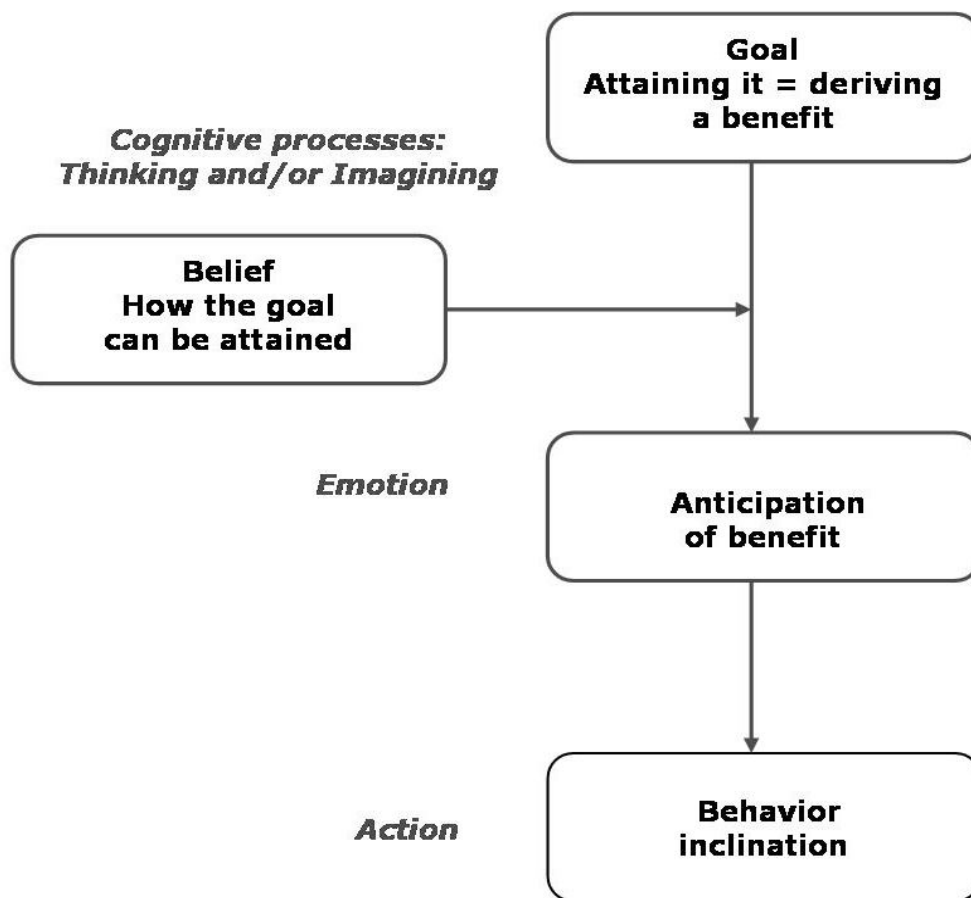
How do we know what to buy?

How do we choose what products, services and brands to buy? This question is closely related to a much larger one: how do we know what to do and how to behave moment-by-moment? The Goal-Directed Action approach in psychology provides us with an illuminating explanation that is particularly useful for brand builders. The basal postulate of the approach is that all of our behaviors or rather all of our acts are purposeful and directed, whether consciously or non-consciously, towards the attainment of goals.

The next diagram is a simple delineation of the approach.

The diagram contains three percepts that I would like to explain: goals, beliefs and desires.

If we will contemplate on the content of our thoughts throughout the day, we will realize that we regularly spend a large part of our time pondering our goals and the means by which we may attain them. Some of our goals are mundane (for instance – avoiding being out of means to freshen our mouths, e.g. toothpaste) and ephemeral (e.g. craving for something sweet). Others are life shaping (such as building a family). Our goals are states and situations we can envision as characterized by pleasant sensations or positive emotions. We are also able to imagine unpleasant and unwanted situations, which we try to avoid. These are goals as well.



We have innumerable goals. Some of them are experiential, including pleasant sights, sounds, flavors, odors, and tactile sensations. All of these have optimal measures, neither too much nor too little. Pleasant sensations are goals, and so is the avoidance of unpleasant ones. Furthermore, we have psychological, interpersonal and social goals. Some of them, like sex and intimacy, are also part of our physiology. Others we come to know imagine and seek through the process of socialization. Getting rich is a good example (even if underneath there are more basic goals like being safe, being appreciated or winning).

Our goals are organized in hierarchies. Tangible benefits, goals that are attained through effects in the physical world, are only intermediate. On last account, the act of managing our lives, both in bare reality and in enriched reality, has the same purpose: creating positive sensual and emotional experiences for ourselves, in the immediate present - integrated into our lifestyles and routines - or in the future.

You probably noticed that I am using the term 'goals' instead of other motivation related terms such as 'needs', 'impulses', 'values' etc. This particular term selection has both a reason and a purpose. The reason is that the term 'goals' is derived from up to date psychological approaches. The purpose, as will become evident later on, is, that 'goals' and the other

percepts that I use, form together a language which is very practical for brand developing.

In particular, the term 'goal' is superior to the more popular 'value'. Both terms are defined in a similar manner. Both refer to desired states and situation. However, 'value' is a passive-descriptive term (you *have* values) while 'goal' is an active-motivational term (you *seek* goals). 'Values' lead to the ineffectual idea that it suffices that a brand reflects your values for you to feel that it is "your" brand. Alternatively, 'goals' lead to the more demanding but incomparably more effective dictum that brands must be useful to you in order to gain your appreciation and endorsement.

Out of the multitude of our goals, only very few are active at any given moment. How are they activated? There are a number of ways: Maybe we have reached a stage in our lives at which some goals are naturally or normally activated; perhaps some circumstances aroused them; possibly a movie we have seen or a story told by a friend or some advertising stirred them up, or they may have been aroused by an opportunity that has presented itself, making it possible for us to realize those goals (like the aroma of a fine steak being grilled in a nearby restaurant).

When a goal is activated, how do we know by what behavior or course of action we will attain it? Here is where beliefs enter the picture. We drink coffee (an act) to wake us up (a goal) because we expect that coffee will wake us (a belief). We choose to buy certain products, services and brands, according to our beliefs as to their applicability in the attainment of our active goals at the time of purchase.

Reviewing the example above, one might say that presumably we "have a positive attitude toward coffee" but 'belief' is a finer concept than 'attitude'.

A well accepted model postulates that an 'attitude' consists of three parts: something we know about something (the attitude's object), an evaluation of that piece of knowledge and an affective reaction to that evaluation. A 'belief' is defined in a slightly different manner. Generally speaking, a belief is a conceived connection (e.g. causal connection), not immediately attested to by the senses, between any combination of sensate entities, abstractions and emotional experiences. Specifically however, our interest here is in beliefs regarding brands.

My own version of the well-known Means-End model, posits that such a belief consists of a known fact (regarding the belief's object), of an interpretation of that fact and of a perception of a resulting personal consequence (benefit/damage). The knowledge and the evaluation elements of the 'attitude' construct are thus shared by the 'belief' construct as well (the evaluation is implicit in the perceived benefit or damage). However, the 'belief' construct describes how they are related to each other. Furthermore, affective reactions are conceptualized by this approach as dynamic processes rather than passive constructs (these processes will be discussed instantly). I will elaborate on belief formation and on belief structure later on.

Based upon our beliefs we constantly predict the future, especially the consequences of alternative behavior options. We choose to act in a certain way (a cognitive process that does not necessarily require awareness and conscious deliberation), because in our imagination it attains an active goal, i.e. creates a situations characterized by pleasant sensations or by positive emotions. Some of these acts are purchases.

Imagination plays an important role both in the formation of beliefs and in the process of emotional arousal (however mild, in most instances) that takes place when a belief - regarding a means to attain an active goal - is retrieved from memory. Thought and imagination are the two major categories of cognitive processes. Thought processes involve handling symbols (including words), abstractions and concepts, while imagination processes deal with internal recreation and manipulation of sensory data.

How do you feel about it?

Desire is an emotion. Emotions mediate goals and beliefs on the one hand, and behavior inclinations on the other. Consequently, emotions are at the center of motivation. Contrary to the widespread opinion, there is nothing mystical or irrational about emotions. In fact, our emotions are quite systematic.

Our emotions function like inner detectors. We experience a rousing of emotions when events (or possibilities), people or objects, bring us closer to attaining our goals; or when we are being distanced from their realization. Positive emotions such as joy, satisfaction, love, hope, pride, excitement, and contentment – are testimony that something happened (or is about to happen or might happen), something that will bring us nearer to the attainment of a goal. Contrastingly, negative emotions like sadness, anger, disappointment, hatred, regret, frustration, disgust etc. – signal that we face a person, an event or a possibility that pulls us away from our goals. Emotions arouse as a result of a cognitive process of evaluation, which is usually very brief (not longer than a few milliseconds) and non-conscious. It is important to keep in mind that cognitive processes are not necessarily conscious or controlled.

Just as our five senses help us experience the physical reality of our environment, emotions make it possible for us to experience our inner reality. Consequently – just as pleasant sensations usually encourage us to act in order to experience more similar pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations encourage us to try and avoid similar situations. The same goes for positive and negative emotions (please disregard for a moment complex situations). In other words: The second important function of emotions is to ignite behavior inclinations. Therefore, emotions are the starters of all our acts, including purchases. There is no such thing as 'rational' motivation. Where there is no emotion, there is no motivation.

To sum up:

Cognitive processes, whether conscious or non-conscious, match an active goal with a belief regarding an act leading to its attainment. The vivid possibility of attaining the goal gives rise to positive emotions. Emotions are the motivating power behind acts. Thus the positive emotions create desire (motivation) to follow through with the specific behavior. Please note that goals, beliefs and cognitive processes are absolutely essential to emotional arousal.

Now let us apply this model to purchase decisions:

When we hold a belief that a certain brand is a means to attain a certain goal, and when this belief is retrieved from memory (e.g. following the activation of that goal) – a positive emotional reaction results. This reaction has two components: the positive emotion / sensation that typically accompanies the attainment of that goal (at that point vivid in our imagination) and the desire to experience it. This emotional reaction is the reason for our motivation to buy the brand. These feelings form the emotional meaning of the brand.

When considering advertising we should also take into account the emotions inspired by the ad. These emotions should usually facilitate the ability to grasp the benefit promised by the brand, as a basis for belief formation or reinforcement. Let's see: I understand the subtle humor in the advertising of Chivas Regal; I am amused, and I feel a mild self-satisfaction. Yes, those are the emotions I should feel when pouring my guests Chivas Regal and sensing their appreciation of my connoisseurship.

Some brands, offering psychological instrumentality, are designed to facilitate fantasies (more on that later). Feelings evoked by the fantasy are the brands' promised benefit. For instance: I perfume myself with Giorgio Armani's Eau Pour Homme and fantasize (fleetly at the background of my cognizance) about boundless sex appeal and sweeping eroticism, which stirs up intense excitement and feelings of powerfulness. For these feelings I have come. They are the major benefit, which I derive from the brand.

If emotions and cognitions are both parts of one system, then what are the dilemmas between emotion and reason? From this perspective, the term 'dilemma' means a collision between two coexisting and contradictory 'goal – belief – desire' systems, each creating a different emotional reaction. One of them is mistakenly labeled as 'emotion' while the other is mistakenly labeled as 'reason'. Analogously, in case the first one prevails we tag the resulting behavior 'acting emotionally' and if the second system predominated we tag the resulting behavior 'acting rationally'.

When we say that a person 'acted emotionally', we, in fact, describe a situation where there is an active goal (for instance: to experience excitement) and a belief that a certain act (an erotic adventure) is a viable means for its attainment. The anticipated positive outcome that this person imagines instills desire. Since the emotional reaction is immediate, we define this behavior as 'acting emotionally'.

When we say that a person 'acted rationally' we refer to a somewhat more complex situation. In consequence of the above example, the imagination of our hero or heroine may portray a less favorable outcome of the adventure: that of abandonment and emotional hurt. This uncalled for possibility naturally leads to fear. The fear activates the goal of avoiding hurt. Not surprisingly, a different behavior is believed to be instrumental here, e.g. waiting until a more substantial acquaintance is established before getting involved in an emotionally vulnerable situation such as sexual intimacy. Both the resulting desire to feel secure and the behavior tendency are completely different in this alternative. Since the emotional reaction is more complicated and less straightforward and since considerations are intricate, we define this behavior as 'acting rationally'.

Usually, behind 'rational behavior' we can detect fear of a negative outcome (and fear, of course is an emotion). "Acting rationally" normally means choosing the most cautious behavior option.

Surprising as it may seem, there is no such thing as 'dilemma between reason and emotion'. What we actually discern in the example above is two conflicting goals: 'having exciting experiences' versus 'avoiding hurt'. One goal drives us to get into bed on a first date ('emotional behavior') while the other holds us back, telling us to wait a bit ('rational behavior'). The first alternative promises the emotional gratification of excitement, the second one promises the emotional gratification of tranquility. This is the true dilemma.

A new definition of brands

I invite you to a short imaginary trip to Manhattan, just the pair of you. Wow! Even if it is your first visit, you can surely imagine the immensity of the skyscrapers, the hectic pace of the world's capital, the countless options.

You are about to reside in one of the amazing tower suites on the 22nd floor of the Carlyle on Madison Avenue at 76th Street, overlooking Central Park. You have never been there? Never mind. I am certain that you have no difficulty imagining the luxurious suite complemented by a Steinway grand piano. You rent a B.M.W. Z4 Roadster Coupe (can you imagine your hair blowing in the wind as you drive through Central Park?). And now, it's time for some shopping. You park near the Donna Karen store on Madison Avenue to buy something elegant and sexy (can you see that?). From there, you jump to Tiffany & Co. at the corner of Fifth Avenue and the 57th to buy an Elsa Peretti ring and a necklace. Just imagine the elegance at

Tiffany & Co! Next stop is at Bergdorf Goodman's between the 57th and 58th where you get a pair of Manolo Blahniks, a matching Kate Spade bag, some Bobby Brown makeup and a bottle of Alexander McQueen's Kingdom perfume. Getting hungry? Good. You have reserved a table at Daniel on the 65th (between Madison and Park Avenue), one of the very best French restaurants of New York. A fine bottle of 1996 Lafite Rothschild is already decanted and breathing for you. As the evening falls, you dress up for the premiere of the new James Bond film. You are a bit tired but you are not going to miss it for the world! Action all over the globe, air of heights (both geologically and socio-economically speaking), fantastically beautiful women, witty flirtation even some soft sex, at least one ugly villain, altogether highly stylized entertainment, good pace, suspense, some fantasy, the works. Later on you go listen to one of those great old jazz masters at Blue Note. Can you still breathe? Well, this is just your first day.

Are you fit to analyze what just happened? The fantasy you have just celebrated, contained a whole list of brands, among them Manhattan, the Carlyle, Steinway, B.W.M, Donna Karen, Tiffany & Co., Elsa Peretti, Bergdorf Goodman, Manolo Blahnik, Kate Spade, Bobby Brown, Alexander McQueen, Daniel, Lafite Rothschild, James Bond and Blue Note. Some you knew and some you didn't, but trust me it is worth your while to know them all.

Here is my point: Each and every brand I mentioned and you recognized, brought forth a very unique experience in your imagination. I trust those are pleasant experiences. They are characterized by either pleasant sensations (the Jacuzzi at the hotel) and/or by positive emotions (your eyes mesmerized by the depth of his gaze at the restaurant). In other words, these are experiences by which you attain goals, tangible and intangible. The brand's name served as a trigger to the feeling of anticipation towards the benefit that you attribute to the specific product or service.

I maintain that this specific anticipation actually is the brand. You have probably come across several definitions of what a brand is, so here is mine:

**A brand is the anticipation consumers feel,
towards a specific benefit about to be derived
from an identified source (a product, a service, and so forth) often
associated with a standardized set of symbolic representations
(name, logo, emblem, color, tagline, image, etc.).**

If the anticipated outcome of consuming using or owning the particular product or receiving the service, is beneficial in a personally significant way, and there are no doubts to cloud the prevision of the benefit, we want the brand. We want it even more if the benefit is unique and if it is not accompanied by any drawbacks (perceived damage resulting from the price or the calories, for instance), which might impair our enjoyment.

From this standpoint, a marketer can claim ownership of a brand only if his target consumers attribute to his product and/or service the ability of consistently delivering (exclusively, if possible) a certain desired experience or a beneficial result. The more motivating and unique is the expected benefit – the stronger the desire and the more persistent the preference.

The brand's strategy

The consumer buys your product (repeatedly, I hope), because she knows what to expect, and because what she does anticipate is probably desirable. How does she know? Maybe by personal experience and maybe someone told her, or she may have read about the product in a magazine. It is also possible that she does not know yet, but she believes your advertising. Anyway, she has anticipations regarding your product – this exactly why she wants it.

These anticipations constitute your brand. You do not have anything else. The customer's loyalty is assured only as long as these anticipations exist and only as long as they are stronger than the anticipations aroused and preserved by your competition (or at least have the advantage of being better attested to or confirmed). Your brand's 'Equity', is the result of these anticipations. They are what ensures some stability in your revenues. They are what gives you time to get organized when something happens in the market.

Consequently, the brand's strategy must be about creating anticipations. Anticipations are often the result of direct or indirect promises. Therefore, the brand's strategy is its promise to the customer. The term 'Promise', in this context, has a specific meaning (as well as a formulation that I will detail later on). The promise is the way by which we present our product as a means for the consumer to attain a goal.

I would like to propose the following definition of the 'brand's strategy'.

.....
The brand's strategy ('Promise') is the choice of –
.....
1. What anticipation of benefit we intend to evoke in our customers
.....
2. How the benefit will be attributed to our product or service.
.....

We make promises to consumers; and their anticipations of the promised benefit are what we must measure to monitor our brand's success. We normally do it using various methods of consumer research. My own method consists primarily of the following five measures ('The ABCDE of a

brand's success'), which are used for diagnostic purposes as well as for comparing between competing brands and for tracking their relative strength over time:

- Attribution – Do the target consumers perceive the brand as source of the intended benefit?
- Believability – How trustful are the consumers that the benefit is indeed forthcoming?
- Craving – To what extent does the anticipation motivate to buy the brand?
- Differentiation – Is the brand perceived as a unique (or at least: a hard to find) source for that specific benefit?
- Ease – Is the motivation easy to act upon and free of impediments such as a perceived damage that comes with the benefit?

An anticipation of benefit will not last if not consistently fulfilled. According to my approach, **Branding is the creation of a system consisting of both - arousing anticipation for, and providing fulfillment of, brand benefits ('Promises').**

The benefit that you promise your customer can stem from one of three sources:

1. It can be closely connected to the product's core function (especially if there is something unique, perhaps innovative, about your product; or if it enjoys a sustainable competitive advantage).
2. It can be an extrinsic benefit, a value added in any ingredient of the marketing mix. Possibilities include among other options, an esthetically rewarding product design or packaging, an adjunct service, a purchasing experience, payment terms, delivery systems, your customer service or even the entertaining value of your advertising (even though I bet that you are not in the habit of considering any of these factors as parts (elements?) of your 'product', they still are parts of the 'whole' your customer is willing to pay for).
3. It can be an extrinsic benefit, an added value that makes the brand psychologically or socially instrumental.

In options 1 and 2, it is clear how the promised benefit is related to the product or service. In option 3, we face an entirely different challenge.

How do we actually create the psychological or social instrumentality?

Consistent with the classification above of alternative sources of benefit, my methodology for crafting brand strategies defines and provides tools for the creation of seven extents of branding. The role of branding is different in each of these extents. The extents ranges from brands meant to facilitate the enjoying of intrinsic benefits (as well as extrinsic benefits originating in the marketing mix), to brands designed to deliver extrinsic benefits resulting from psychological and/or social instrumentality. It is the strategist's responsibility to choose the suitable extent for the brand to be developed.

The seven extents are growing in complexity with each one inclusive of all the 'capabilities' of those who precede it.

Here are the seven extents and a definition of the role of branding in each one of them:

The First extent –

Arousing anticipation of benefit by focusing the consumer's attention on an intrinsic benefit of the product or on a tangible (experiential or physically instrumental) value added in the marketing mix.

This is the approach to use when the product or service (or the marketing mix) has a substantial and lasting competitive advantage. The role of branding in this case is simply to make the advantage apparent to the consumer and to associate it closely with the source. A good example is Domino's Pizza - the pizza delivery champion, expediting the experience of enjoying Pizza.

The second extent –

Arousing anticipation of benefit, and to some degree, also contributing to its fulfillment, are both achieved by creating in the consumer's mind a mental context for interpreting product or service related facts. This context, a unitary and specific beneficial concept, serves for associating and interpreting all the diverse product or service elements that the consumer may come across. This is the minimal amount of psychological added value.

At this level of branding, we seek to give to the various marketing efforts, the service, innovations, etc, one particular umbrella meaning, emphasizing a benefit (for example: Easy Group's dedication to accessibility, affordability and ease of use services).

This way we create a cumulative impression that is repeatedly reinforced.

Let's take another example. The Boutique Hotel concept is an almost total inversion of the traditional hotel chain concept. To mention only a few dissimilarities: every hotel in the chain is unique and offers a distinct experience. Moreover, each room in the hotel is largely different from others in design and atmosphere. Despite all these facts, a consumer ignorant of the Boutique Hotel concept entering the Ian Schrager's Royalton on the 44th in Manhattan, the premier luxury hotel designed by Philippe Starck, may perceive it as a merely somewhat unusual hotel. However, cognizant of the notion, the visit becomes a spirited game of observing and appreciating the unique characteristics, both within each hotel and between the various hotels of the chain.

The simplest form of this extent of branding often occurs spontaneously and is familiar to us as 'reputation'. It is based upon inferences made by the consumer from facts like 'long lived', 'a very large corporation', 'has many branches', etc. In this manner, well known brands can reduce anxiety regarding mistakes in choice and contribute to making our reality more predictable. Mega brands also create a global 'brandscape' making new places more 'familiar' and thus friendlier.

The third extent –

Arousing anticipation of benefit as well as contributing to its fulfillment by suggesting a crystallizing concept meant to direct and influence an otherwise ambiguous product / service experience.

At this level of branding, we create expectations that will be transformed into a self-fulfilling prophecy, thus creating an experiential value that is being added to whatever benefits the product supplies. Many consuming experiences are of an ambiguous nature and can be perceived and then conceived, in a multitude of ways. The expectations we induce direct this process, as in the placebo effect. This is accomplished by suggesting to the consumer a concept (like Haagen Dazs' sensual, erotic and indulgent ice cream for adults) that will alter to some degree, or enhance, his/hers subjective experience of the product or service.

The possibility of actually creating brand benefits by means of the Placebo effect should receive further attention in future consumer research. Placebos have been shown to effect physiological as well as psychological processes. Could it be then, that Pantene's brand building efforts contribute to the beauty of your hair beyond the effects of the shampoo itself? Theoretically – it could.

The fourth extent –

Simultaneously arousing anticipation of benefit, and in fact enabling its fulfillment by creating a symbol that has a shared meaning within a social group, thus serving as a token of meaning.

This is the first level where benefit is altogether extrinsic even though usually it befits intuitively the nature of the product or service. By creating a symbolic meaning for the brand, we make it useful to consumers, both in internal dialogue (psychological instrumentality, for instance Zippo – use it to start something), and in interpersonal communication (social instrumentality, e.g. Harley Davidson that serves as a symbol of being free and wild at heart, if not in actual life). All brands that are symbols of identity or status (which include most prestigious brands) – are of this extent.

From this extent on, the extrinsic psychological or social instrumentality takes precedence over benefits derived from the product or service or from any element of the marketing mix.

The fifth extent –

Simultaneously arousing anticipation of benefit and enabling its fulfillment, both achieved by assuming social and/or cultural authority.

At this level, brands post themselves as a source of legitimacy and become useful for the consumer in learning accepted values and norms of behavior: what is proper, what is admirable, what will bring success and happiness, etc'. The Martha Stewart brand (at least, before the recent crisis) is a great example. While her products are arguably no better than competitive offerings, Martha provides validation of her customers' worldview. Also, Nokia's ad portraying a woman romancing another woman in a bar comes to mind.

The sixth extent –

Simultaneously arousing anticipation of benefit and enabling its fulfillment, both achieved by offering to serve as an extension of the consumer's reach and power, as an envoy; or by suggesting being an Alter Ego.

At this level, brands propose to

- Serve as 'the long arm' of the consumer, doing something that the consumer would like to do but is unable to accomplish by himself or herself such as protecting the environment and helping the needy in disaster struck areas of the globe (e.g. Body Shop)
- Act as the consumer would like to but dare not (provocative, audacious, autonomous, rebellious – take Virgin, for instance)

The seventh extent –

Simultaneously arousing anticipation of benefit and enabling its fulfillment, both achieved by inviting the consumer to create and/or to personalize a fantasy.

At this final level brands facilitate fantasies of omnipotence, of unlimited sex appeal, of importance, of adventure, etc. They also allow exercising emotions that are of little use in daily life (practically - an 'emotional gym' – or workout).

First, we instill a promise of a certain fantasy and its accompanying emotional experience, into the consumers' minds. This is accomplished mainly but not exclusively by advertising. Consequently, consuming or using the product becomes a cue to 'connect' to that fantasy and to experience it (think of Marlboro and the feeling of powerfulness that results from self restraint and control). This is a genuinely hypnotic effect. From a different perspective, it is not unlike buying a ticket to a certain genre of film, promising a predictable type of emotional experience.

While the promises of brands of extents 1 – 3 originate in product or service facts, brands of extents 4 – 7 derive their potency exclusively from the consumer's disposition to find in them a means to a psychological or social end.

Having chosen our brand's intended benefit to its target consumers, and the extent of branding, we can then proceed to articulate the brand's promise. A brand promise is a suggestion to the consumer of a certain

linkage between our product and the attainment of a goal. It is an invitation for the consumer to accept our brand as his or hers preferred means to the goal and to form a belief regarding the brand's instrumentality. If exposed to our promise, the consumer will process it consciously and/or non-consciously and form a personal belief, hopefully not very dissimilar to our intended one.

The anatomy of our brand related beliefs

According to the Means-End approach, the process by which the consumer develops a desire for a specific brand unfolds (at times, instantly) as follows: The consumer comes across a certain fact about the product, service, company or brand. At this point, the consumer interprets this fact. From merely a piece of information (objectively verifiable) it becomes a personally relevant (and alas, subjective) meaning or consequence. This interpretation in turn, might give rise to the possibility of benefit, of attaining a goal.

This cognitive process, this crystallizing, creates a cognitive structure, a belief. Such beliefs bridge the product's realm (by means of the fact in focus) and the consumer's realm (through the active goal) and thus posit the product as a source of benefit. Thenceforth, when such beliefs are retrieved from memory to match active goals, imagination processes animate the attainment of these goals and the accompanying positive emotions or pleasant sensations. The possibility of attaining the goal/benefit arouses desire (an emotional reaction). Such beliefs cause anticipation, the same anticipation that consumers feel towards certain products, the anticipation that is the brand. Where there are no brand related beliefs – there is no emotional significance.

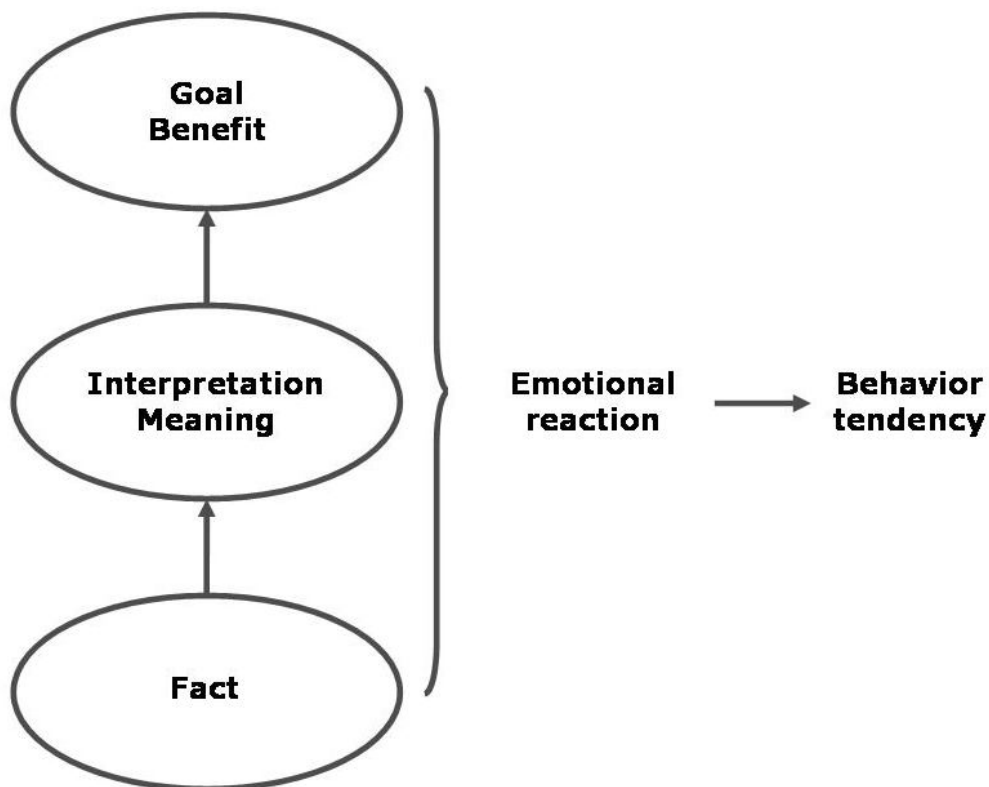
Often, the consumer is only aware of the emotional reaction and completely unaware of the process. He or she, just 'likes' the brand or simply craves it.

The next diagram outlines the model.

What qualifies as a 'Fact'? What is an 'interpretation'? What is a "benefit"?

- A Fact – An information item that can, in principal, be verified objectively. It is free of evaluation or judgment. It is something the consumer thinks he knows, even if he is mistaken.

The fact is any information item related to the product such as a feature, a component, the inventor, the manufacturing method, the country of origin, the identity/characteristics of current users or their number, certification or award received, result of tests, personal memories of past events and experiences, opinions expressed by users or experts (careful! In this case it is a fact that such opinions have been expressed, not their content), etc'.



In certain cases an advertising theme consistently used over an extended period of time, can become a fact related to the product. When one thinks of Marlboro, the cowboy riding his horse in the wild landscapes of 'Marlboro Land' comes to mind before the product or package does. Similarly, the name Absolut Vodka immediately brings to mind its distinct and unmistakable advertising style.

- An Interpretation / A Meaning – A subjective understanding of the fact, a personally meaningful generalization or an induction from the fact, a perceived consequence of the fact or a deduction made from it, etc'. The interpretation/meaning relates to personal possibilities and is often debatable.
- A Goal / A Benefit – As I have already submitted earlier, a benefit means the attaining of a goal, and it is characterized by pleasant sensations and/or positive emotions.

A strong affirmation of the Means-End approach is that all brand related beliefs rest upon facts that the consumer 'knows', whether true or false.

At this point, the questions we must tackle are: In what ways do facts attain meaning? How are subjective meanings conceived as beneficial? Do all these inferences stand to reason and scrutiny? If not, are unrealistic beliefs constructed methodically, and why do we readily adopt them?

Let us get started. There are four ways by which consumers assign meanings to facts, ranging from perfectly reasonable inferences, to total bestowals of meanings - entirely divorced from solid reality.

1. The fact is perceived as the causal agent of some effect, or the origin of some outcome, which is its meaning. Differently put, in this category the meaning of the fact is its result.

Recognizing a causal connection is the simplest form of meaning attribution. The subjective meaning in these cases is the result perceived in personal terms.

For instance: The fact is that a food product is low on cholesterol means that it can be useful in my attempt to avoid cholesterol-related health hazards.

Even with such a simple example, we can see that a background of knowledge and beliefs must exist to guide the interpretation of facts. This 'lexicon' or 'code' is borne out of familiarity with symbolic meanings, paradigms and dogmas prevalent in the surrounding culture. For example, a 'platinum' credit card on your name, (fact) leads people to be aware of your wealth (meaning) because they know what 'platinum' means.

2. The fact is perceived as evidence of something, as attesting to the existence, or to the nature/quality of something, or as demonstrating it. This meaning is often true.

'Manufactured in Japan', 'purchased by 75% of Americans', 'recommended by the dentists' association', 'the most expensive product on the shelf', 'played perpetually on MTV' – all of these are facts that can easily be interpreted as signifying something.

3. The fact is perceived as a symptom, as an indicant or as a particular case of a much wider phenomenon / system / reality. In this category, one element of a gestalt settled in the consumer's culture (a stereotype or a lifestyle, for example) is being interpreted to suggest the existence of the entire gestalt. While it is possible that the one element is really (and not just perceptually) indicative, this is rarely the case with this option.

You can travel almost everywhere worldwide with a GSM/Global band cellular telephone like NOKIA 8890 or Motorola Timeport (fact). This can be taken to mean that using such a device indicates that its user is a frequent traveler and a cosmopolitan (meaning). Such an interpretation can seem plausible even though it does not stand to reason. A frequent traveler will probably tend to use such a phone but causality does not work the other way around.

These 'leaps of meaning' are vital to the creation of psychological and/or social instrumentality of brands. The

customer is willing to suspend, unknowingly, his critical faculties, because he is highly motivated to claim a certain identity or to deceive himself as to the true circumstances and facts.

4. The fact is being interpreted as an analogy to real, aspired or fantasized life situations, as a symbol or a metaphor for emotional or sensual possibilities (frequently by way of identification, or by imaginary substitution of self for a model). The fact is often an advertising theme or a brand symbol.

This type of link utterly denies any critical examination. Consumers will make such inferences purely on the basis of their need to find a means to attain their active goal, which is, without exception, psychological. Therefore, the creation of such a link is completely dependant upon the existence of an opportunity to do so.

The Prudential insurance company uses a rock as its emblem (fact), which suggests stability the customer can rely on (meaning). Merrill Lynch uses a bull (fact), which symbolizes potency in the financial markets, transferred to their customers (meaning). Marlboro's cowboy (fact) is a symbol of powerful control and restraint the consumer wishes to experience (meaning).

It is possible for a product fact to be perceived as a metaphor. Let us consider again the Timberland example that I mentioned earlier. Timberland shoes are manufactured to endure the extreme climatic and terrain conditions of Alaska (the brand's advertising campaigns continually excite my imagination with stories and images). I put them on and in a fleeting semi-conscious way I experience a fantasy of an audacious adventure in which I struggle the mighty forces of nature, without even having to pay the flight fare. This fantasy rewards me with a feeling of being courageous and unassailable (emotions that I seek and that are rather rare in my real life).

In the 'Meaning' part of the Means-End formulation a possibility for the consumer becomes evident. Meanings fall into three categories that determine the way they translate into conceptions of benefit:

1. The meaning is a sensual or emotional experience that the consumer has while using/consuming the product or receiving the service.

There are products and services that are enjoyable by themselves (they have 'sense-appeal'). Those are usually products acting on the senses and arousing pleasant sensations: for instance, a piece of chocolate, or a massage. Another type of products services and brands

allows us to indulge in "emotional exercising" by activating feelings. Movies and music for instance.

The verbalization of such beliefs is oftentimes awkward and the break down into the three components seems artificial. Take chocolate for example: I remember the taste of chocolate (fact) > It always tastes so sweet and delicious (meaning) > what pleasure! (benefit).

2. The meaning is a beneficial result, or an effect, of using, or consuming, the product, or of receiving the service.

Think about a vacuum cleaner, a baking oven or a computer. Consider wall paints or medical treatment. In these and many other examples, the derived meaning is the outcome of using the products or getting the service, and the benefit follows.

Want an example? A digital camera makes it possible to transfer pictures to the computer's storage (fact)> It is possible to send the child's photographs by e-mail to grandpa and grandma (meaning)> I feel close to my parents (benefit).

Here is another example, this time of a psychological benefit: Body Shop products are not tested on animals (fact) > if I buy at Body Shop I help prevent animal suffering (meaning) > I am a positive person (benefit).

3. The inferred meaning is a beneficial result that occurs in someone else's life stimulating a reaction desired by the consumer.

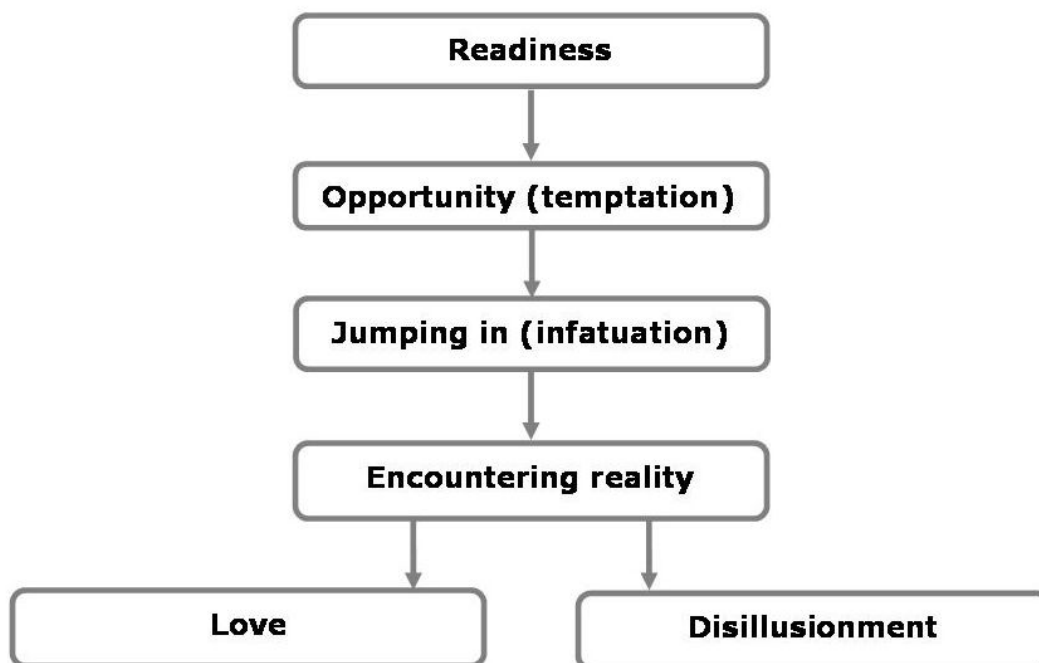
Examples are ample. Sometimes, it is joy (a gift) or pleasure (a pampering product) brought to someone. In other cases it might be an expression of appreciation, or thankfulness, towards the consumer. Yet in other cases it is an impression that the consumer gets a chance to make on another person. Whatever this other person undergoes, and the response that follows – is the meaning. The consumer derives benefit from that.

Here is an example: People identify the New Yorker as being an intellectual magazine (fact) > my neighbors who see the New Yorker arriving at my postal box will think that I am an intellectual (meaning) > my neighbors will appreciate me (benefit). This belief is of course a negligible one among the many reasons for being a subscriber of the New Yorker.

The dawn of desire

In order to deepen my understanding of how we form our brand related beliefs (and I must confess this was not the only reason) I took an interest in the strongest awakening of desire known to us as human beings, which is falling in love. I want to clarify: people do not fall in love with brands. Nevertheless, the process by which desire is aroused is similar in both cases.

My desperate attempts to understand infatuation resulted pitifully in a model (the following diagram). I hope you will forgive me for my momentary lack of romantic spirit. Let us look at it together. I will talk about a man falling in love with a woman, but you are free to direct Cupid's arrow at any direction you fancy.



It all starts with 'Readiness'. Sometimes we know about it ('a planned purchase') and sometimes we have no idea how ready we were, until we happen to encounter the one and only ('impulse purchase'). This readiness is not just the predisposition to fall in love. It is a set of pre-existing expectations that determine with whom we shall fall in love. All we may be aware of is the intoxicating and dazzling 'Yes! YES! YEEEEES!' scream within us. The burst of enthusiasm, the fascination, seems haphazard and totally spontaneous ('she just does it for me').

More often than not, we are unaware of the inner image to which we compare the candidate, an image that is often utterly different from our proclaimed 'shopping list'. We usually discover this elusive image that we unconsciously seek only in hindsight, analyzing the patterns that reveal themselves in our relationships over time. The fateful encounter (the 'Opportunity') is a result of a match, immediate and non-conscious;

invoking in us the fantasy that here great happiness awaits us. We become tempted.

If other options (the competition) do not blur the picture too much, our newly found source of joy appears to us as the perfect incarnation of our envisioned beloved. Ultimately, the art of seduction is the ability to appear in someone's eyes as the embodiment of her/his inner image of 'The Beloved'. The problem is to discover the characteristics of this unconscious image, when even our object of desire herself/himself cannot describe it.

On the optimistic assumption that the fascination is mutual, and that the aspirant couple succeeds in overcoming dread of being hurt (often masked as cynicism, individualism or doubts), the longed for feeling of falling in love may happen at last. This is the 'jumping in' or allowing oneself to become infatuated. Two people who have an impressive mutual history of minutes, hours or several days max – plunge into a surprising level of intimacy. "I feel as if I had known her all my life" you tell your friends. Almost true! After all, you have known your readiness for most of your life. I am sorry to say that at this stage your beloved is not a real person but rather a perceived answer to your readiness.

As you spend more and more time together, you reach the encounter with reality, and with your new and very real partner. When it is good – it is bliss. Maybe she really is all you have ever dreamed of. Maybe she is not, but your dreams pale compared to this unexpected marvel. Now you love her, the real person she actually is. When it is bad, it is sad. The disillusionment: "she is not at all who I thought she was".

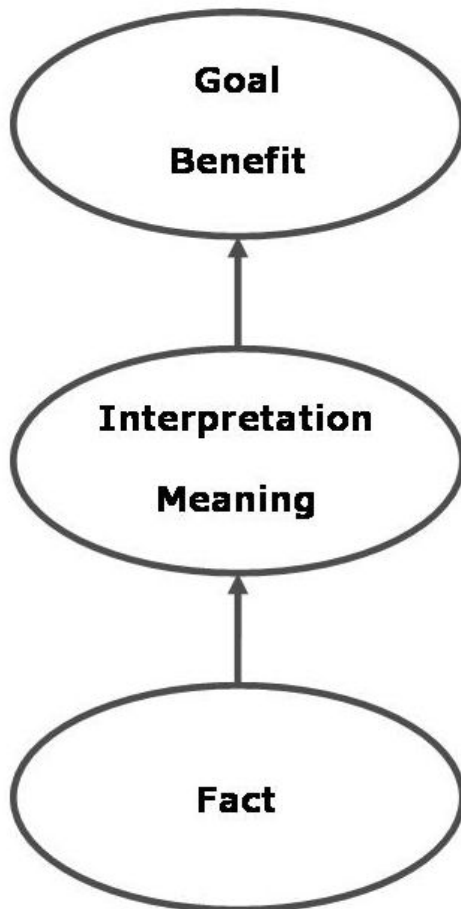
Can you see the structural parallelism between the falling in love processes and trying out a new brand?

Zoom-in on the 'Opportunity' stage

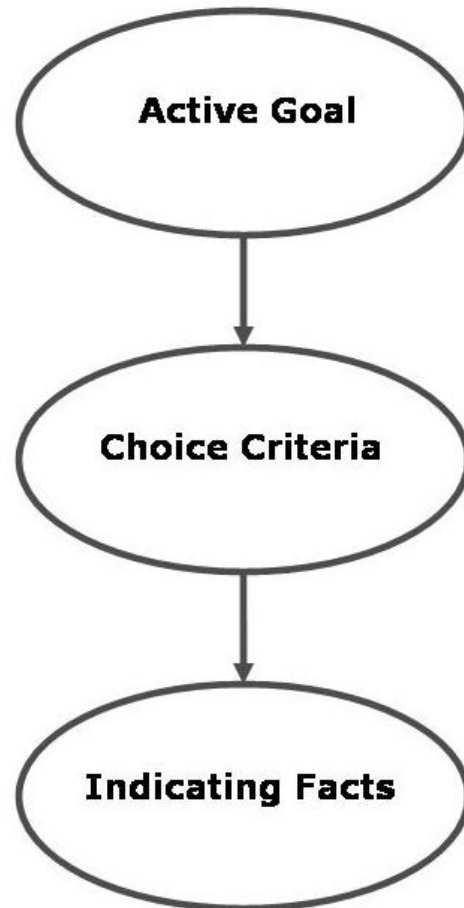
The crucial stage, for the purposes of our discussion about brands achieving emotional significance - is the 'Opportunity' stage (or: temptation, enticement, enkindling, etc'). To observe in vivo how the process unfolds, let us take a scenario. Our story this time is not about a genuine falling in love, but all the same. I went to a party, had a few drinks, danced for a while, when all of a sudden I saw her. I almost choked, and something inside me screamed "WOW!" Images of us together in a bacchanalia-a-deux turning the Kama Sutra into rookies' stuff swamped my mind. For an exalted split second there I touched heaven, drums and all. Cold water please! What the hell has happened? That brand, sorry: lady, most certainly delivered a promise! Yet ... spontaneous, sensitive, intelligent with a great sense of humor, as I may well be, how could I tell what she is like in bed?

Have you calmed down? Good. Then let us look at the next diagram.

The Brand's Promise



The Choice Process



Please observe the right side (The Choice Process) first. My preexisting readiness activated a goal. It was non-conscious, I swear. "I've had enough of these parties," I said to a friend of mine on the phone just an hour earlier (not inviting her to join me). Now, I have all kinds of goals in life, I just wanted you to know that! On that particular evening, thinking about the party activated in me a particular one. That is how it was, and there is no point denying it.

The active goal dictated (as active goals do) my choice criteria, thus creating a temporary partial blindness, or a selective perception, if you prefer the term. The criteria are results of background beliefs on what may get us to our goal. Were it some other evening, my interest surely could have been focused on the lady's intellect. It has been known to happen.

Nonetheless, where has this Uri Geller screaming inside me, praising the erotic marvels of that sweet maiden - come from? I hope that you are still looking at the right hand side of the diagram. We look at certain facts to find indications that our criteria are being met. Again, Background beliefs determine what sorts of facts are indicative. This process, swift and normally non-conscious, enables us to foreknow the future.

What were the indicative facts in her case? I swear to you, I cannot say for sure. Maybe it was something about her cat-like dance movements, her ecstatic facial expression, her semi open lips, or the impatient shortness of her skirt. I will not presume to have been aware of - nor interested in - how my inference occurred.

Excuse me, what is it that you are asking? You inquire whether the Uri Geller inside me was correct. Well, I guess you do not really expect me to answer that, do you?

A somewhat less ardent example may be in order. When buying a watch for instance, the consumer may look for massiveness and multiplicity of mini-watches inside (indicative facts) to form the impression that the watch is sportive (choice criterion), because sportive watches signify masculinity (goal).

I have described two choice processes initiated by an activated goal. Although this activation frequently occurs outside awareness, the 'purchase' behavior is purposeful (sometimes tagged: planned). However, oftentimes it is the presence of indicative facts that actuate choice criteria and thereby, goals. This inverse process is known as an impulse-buy. The latter, ever more than the former, is dependant upon the pre-existence of background beliefs ready to be retrieved, and to guide the choice process. In a consumption context (but not exclusively), these background beliefs are often brand related.

How brand related beliefs create 'opportunity'

It is worth repeating: a brand related belief (suggested in the form of a brand promise and adopted by the consumer) must exist, to be retrieved from memory and guide the choice process. Otherwise, no desire will be felt and no purchase will follow. A brand is irresistible, the inevitable choice, when the brand related belief 'clicks' immediately and naturally with the consumer's choice process. A path to attaining an active goal should be immediately accessible (by the way, the promise of immediacy is sometimes a form of differentiation). Such beliefs create the 'Opportunity' stage in my 'Falling in Love' model. The achievement of this desired spontaneous reaction of the consumer requires some effort and sophistication on the brand builder's side.

Now you should pay attention to the left hand side of the previous diagram ('The Brand's Promise'). We formulate our brand's promise to match the consumer's choice process. We choose to focus on a fact of the type which the consumer identifies as indicative. We interpret it to satisfy the choice criteria she uses (of course, we can teach the consumer new criteria if it suits our purpose - however in these cases we should be aware of both - the need to do so, and the extra effort it requires). We mold our fact and meaning so as to construe our product as a means for attaining a goal that the consumer associates with the product category.

The core of the promise is the interpretation of the fact, and the meaning we attach to it. Why? The meaning is what connects our product (through the fact in focus) and the consumer (by the goal, the benefit, motivating him). In their classic campaign, AVIS claimed that number two is preferable to number one because number two puts in more effort. For many years, Coca-Cola claimed that to be the first cola drink on the market is to be the real thing. Pepsi-Cola responded by the claim that to be newer is to be more up to date, more suitable for the new generation (and not just an imitation as implied by Coca-Cola's advertising). These are ingenious interpretations/meanings of otherwise trivial facts.

The 'meaning' in the brand's promise formulation has to fit the consumer's choice criteria. The consumer uses these criteria to discriminate, evaluate (vis-à-vis the active goal) and choose between brands. That is why the choice criteria are in fact the positioning axes available to us. 'Differentiation' means teaching the consumer a new choice criterion.

Note that when people are asked to compare brands, their replies tend to be on the level of the meaning. They might say that a certain brand is more 'sophisticated', 'motherly', 'natural', 'prestigious', 'big' etc' than another brand. The comparison is guided by their choice criteria. Therefore, they actually refer to the positioning level. The 'Laddering' questioning method of the Means-End model avails the unearthing of implicit facts - from which meanings are derived - on one hand, and the goals/benefits perceived related to these meanings - on the other. Other methods, such as metaphor elicitation are helpful as well.

A brand is activated in the consumer's mind with the first brand related belief that the consumer adopts. With time and experience, a whole system of brand related beliefs evolves, enriching the personal meaning of the brand, strengthening the anticipation of benefit, and cultivating more benefit anticipations, making the brand more and more powerful in the process.

Mind Surgery?

The approach that I have described in this paper is equipped with precision tools for creating almost overpoweringly attractive brands. It appears to be some kind of mind surgery for implanting brand related beliefs and thus inciting desire. But this impression is far from being true. Precision is a prerequisite for effectiveness in both - creating value and communicating it. Preciseness improves the odds that our brand will become a valuable instrument for achieving a vital goal, and that our targets will adopt our brand's promise and turn it into a personal belief. However, all we can do is create a desirable opportunity for the consumer and then suggest the possibility to her and make a compelling promise as best as we can.

The five dimensions of brand actualization

In contemporary branding we have the option to not just 'brand' products, services or organizations, in order to make them more appealing to consumers. Brands are now often conceived as well-differentiated concepts of novel and exclusive ways to provide a benefit (of any sorts) to consumers. These concepts are becoming driving forces of our conduct as marketers. They are being realized through products, services, organizations, and increasingly, in many other diverse ways. The same viewpoint applies to corporate brands as well as to all additional kinds of brands. This new paradigm removes branding from under the authority of the marketing division onto a larger, more strategic status deserving the direct attention of the highest-level management.

Starbucks and its concept of the 'third place' (the other two being home and work) illustrate this trend. During a now mythological trip to Europe, Howard Schultz noticed that unlike Americans many people of European nations enjoy such a 'third place': The Italian espresso bar, the French café and the English pub, are but three examples. The concept of the brand 'Starbucks' preceded the creation of the organization as we know it, and therefore guided the design of its coffee shops and the selection of food and beverages there, as well as the ambience and the nature of the service. Virgin's spirit (and experience) of "let's be puckish, screw the big fat corporations, and have lots of fun" is another great example already available in some 200 product and service categories breaching all traditional rules of brand extension.

Brand Actualization is performed by my methodology in five interlinked dimensions (although there is no necessity to use all five), all serving our dual purpose of both arousing anticipation of benefit and fulfilling them. Two questions referring to each and every one of the five dimensions (although there is no necessity to use them all) should be leading the process of creating the brand's actualization plan. The first one is: how can we use this dimension to help our target consumers grasp the brand's promise, and develop an anticipation of benefit? The second question is: how can we use this dimension to provide our promised benefit in more ways?

The five dimensions are:

- Brand Experience.

The consumer's experience of the brand is designed to be not merely any pleasant experience, but a consistent experience that integrally arouses anticipations of the benefit we promise and also delivers it.

The brand experience is a wide concept. It encompasses all the various direct and indirect contact points in time and space with the consumer, as well as all his sensorial, savvied and/or emotional experiences. The brand experience includes, among

other aspects, reactions to the brands communications, the experiences of shopping, buying, consuming/using/owning, receiving instructions/service/support, disposing of waste, encountering social feedback, etc'.

- Brand Community.

The brand community is a totally different concept from customers' clubs. These are carefully designed; planned and orchestrated contexts/opportunities for customers to interact and socialize in manners that simultaneously deliver the brand's promised benefit promise and reinforce anticipation of the benefit. Such community structures and activities subtly encourage the emergence of authentic brand evangelists, and the formation of a cult-like following of the brand. Harley Davidsons's HOGs, the Apples users' groups, the Trekkers (Star Trek fans) and Vans enthusiasts – are all outstanding examples.

- Brand Culture.

A brand culture is fostered inside the organization. In many cases my methodology prescribes the brand's promise (when it is a derivative of the long term competitive strategy) as the prevalent inspiration for the organization's vision. This shared purpose serves as a managerial tool for aligning the entire organization with the task of providing the consumer with the promised benefit. The brand promise, as an exalted *raison d'être* of the organization, incites a spirit of brotherhood, and thereby a sentiment of belonging and pride, forestalling all the perils of cynicism. Furthermore, the brand becomes a living entity in the ambience, the practices and the processes of the organization. Even the organization's very structure and staffing considerations are being subjected to this supreme mission.

- Brand Communications.

Advertising has for long been considered to be 'The' major brand-building device, due to its ability to raise anticipations of benefit. The Integrated Marketing Communications approach has broadened our perception of multiple contact points and opportunities - both in space and in time - intended and unintended, that form the totality of brand communications.

However, it grows increasingly apparent that brand communications serve not only to raise anticipation but also to deliver the brand's promise. Brand communications should also be thought of as a facet of the brand's experience. Consumers now often consider the brand's communications to be an actual attribute of the product/service.

- Brand Innovations.

A brand is solidified by consistently fulfilling its promise. The brand, as a concept of benefit, inspires innovations that will deliver the benefit more often, and in more diverse ways. These innovations may include additional products and services, events, activities, promotions – all fulfilling the brand's promise in novel and contemporary ways. Such perpetual innovations naturally reinforce the anticipation of benefit, which is the brand.

From brand strategy to Brand Drama

Brand symbolizations were absurdly overrated in recent years. The sole utility of these symbolizations is in the anticipation of benefit that they cue, when the benefit is already well associated with the specific product/service. By themselves, these symbolizations do little to create anticipation. They only trigger it when it is already there. Unfortunately, the preoccupation with the naming process, the logo and emblem design, etc' (that have some merit), frequently took precedence over the devising of a powerful and well differentiated brand strategy.

Far more important is the creative approach that can be implemented in all five dimensions of the brand's actualization, and that does actually activate the cognitive and emotional processes that turn the brand's promise into a brand belief. The creative approach, concordant with the chosen extent of branding (as I have outlined above), has the leading role in creating salience for competitive advantages, in shaping mental contexts, in directing sensate experiences, in imparting symbolic meanings, in emanating socio-cultural norms and values, in exhibiting or making known consumer endorsed acts, or in triggering fantasies.

Important as it is, the creative approach has but one function: to maximize the likelihood that the brand's promise would be adopted by the target consumers as a brand belief. The creative approach is analogous to the capsule destined to bring the medicinal substance to the destination in the body where it needs to take effect. As an anticipation raiser the consumer does not have to be aware of its affectivity. It should invoke the intended anticipation in the consumers mind, and then fade out. However, if it takes part in delivering the benefit it should be a consistent and vital part of the brand experience.

One of the most challenging tasks of brand development is the transition from brand strategy to a creative approach that achieves the desired cognitive and emotional effect. My branding methodology addresses this challenge with the Brand Drama approach.

The Brand Drama approach is a method I use to bring brand strategy to life by aiming to move consumers, and to create truly emotional brands. It is an orderly application of the principles of drama theory (usually applied in creation of theater plays, scripts for the cinema, tales, stories and

fiction novels) to the conception of creative approaches for brands. The most fundamental tenet of drama theory is that at the heart of every drama there is somebody (with whom we can have some empathy) who desires very badly something which is difficult (although not impossible) to achieve. The relevance to brand strategy should be quite evident. The best brand strategies suggest a means for the consumer to achieve something that he wants badly and that was not readily available beforehand.

At the risk of being overly simplistic I will describe the process briefly. The first step of the method is the translation of the brand's strategy into dramatic terms. The following steps include the creation of a multitude of plots and 'staging' options for a multi-dimensional actualization of the brand.

The brand drama approach is especially fruitful when the brand has Psychological or Social instrumentality. In these cases, we invite consumers to experience a Trance Logic. Examples of trance logic are the internal consistency of fiction, dreams, hypnotic states, religion, and cult-like shared convictions. As long as we immerse ourselves in the trance logic, we are willing to accept and experience a reality that is detached from the input of our senses, suspending critical faculties and common sense. However, every incompatibility disrupting the internal consistency can break the spell, and waken us to reality in acute disappointment and frustration. The ultimate contribution of the brand drama approach to branding lies in the ability to create and maintain the trance logic.

And this is how brands truly achieve emotional significance.

* * *

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About The Author

Dan Herman, PhD, is the owner and CEO of Herman – Strategic Consultants, a consulting firm based in Tel-Aviv, Israel, and serving clients both locally and internationally. The company specializes in:

- Developing brand strategies that create the Psychological and/or a Social instrumentality of brands to their buyers/users.
- Implementing the Short-Term Brands (STB) approach alongside Long-Term Brands (LTB), in the context of competitive strategy.
- Utilizing the Brand Drama approach for creating the Brand's Trance Logic.
- Integrating projects of branding, re-branding and shaping or re-structuring brand architecture.



In conjunction with his consulting practice, Dr. Herman is a seminar leader, workshop moderator and conference speaker, on the various aspects of managing brand desirability for competitive advantage. Dr. Herman lectures at the Bar-Ilan University in the Master of Communications program, as well as in several MBA programs.

Dr. Dan Herman is the author of the best selling 'The Brand Builder's Guide: The First Step-by-Step Approach to Unique and Irresistible Brands' (Tel-Aviv: Cherikover Publishers, 2001, due in English by the end of 2003), of the e-booklets 'Think Short! Short-Term Brands Revolutionize Branding' (November 2002), and of numerous journal articles. He co-authored 'Marketing Plus' edited by Yaron London and Amnon Levav, (Tel-Aviv: Achad Publications, 1995).

Positions held in the past include:

- Senior VP at Dahaf Group - Marketing Communications (then, part of the Bozell Worldwide network)
- CEO of Cyrano – Competitive Strategy Consultants
- Executive Marketing Director of Migdal, Israel's leading group of insurance and financial services
- Executive Director of Strategy and Research at Baumann-Ber Advertising (Saatchi & Saatchi)

Among the many organizations and brands, he has worked with are Apple computers, Coca-Cola, Unilever, Motorola, Holiday Inn, Suzuki, Chrysler, Warner Brothers. The list also includes many of Israel's leading companies in the fields of banking and financial services, telecommunications, health services, food and beverages, toiletries and cosmetics, public transportation, hotels, retail chains, the national lottery and several non-profit organizations, government agencies and political parties.

Would you like to

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