

Lecture 3- The Symbolic Meaning of Brands

Thursday, January 28, 2016 11:08 AM

- Genuine, inspiring, reliable -- language used to describe an emotional connection to a brand
- Brand relationships (Fournier 1998)
 - Explores the brand-self relationship
 - Proposes that a brand can be an active relationship partner-- giving something back to you
 - Reciprocity between you and that brand
 - Feel as if you can trust the brand
 - Consumers create and perceive bonds with brands
 - Relationships require interdependency and reciprocity
 - Can a brand give back? In what ways might it do this?
 - Source of self/identity, support, happiness, reliability
 - 6 facets of brand quality:
 - Love and passion
 - Self-connection
 - Interdependence
 - Commitment
 - Intimacy
 - Brand partner quality
 - Reebok example-- woman speaks about it like a partner
 - "consumers do not choose brands, they choose lives"
 - Implications
 - Consumers' understandings and experiences with brands are often distinct from those assumed by managers- subjectivity
 - Consumers are subjective
 - Embedded in everyday lives, feeds our self-concept (even low involvement- tomatoes)
 - Allow us to organise and make sense of our lives
 - Brands can be important on the basis of goal compatibility
 - ◆ Not just on functional/symbolic, but more holistic
 - Brand management= brand relationship quality
- Functional and symbolic --does not exist in the real world, but is useful for managing campaigns
- Symbolic- going beyond the tangible/utilitarian, concerned with identity, personality, heritage, values, aesthetics
 - A strong brand will possess both F+S elements...symbolic typically stressed more in luxury brands
 - Some things are more symbolic than others
 - Cars, cosmetics, alcohol (linked to nationalities), clothing, tech
 - Public vs private consumption -- opportunity to communicate things to our peers about us
- Symbolism in consumer culture - material possessions have a profound symbolic significance for their owners, as well as for other people and the symbolic meanings of our belongings are an integral feature of expressing our own identity and perceiving the identity of others.' (Dittmar in Elliott et al)
 - Important to remember -- unbranded things can have meaning as well (necklace)...not always the brand that causes the symbolism
- Identity
 - Often referred to as your Self-concept- how you understand yourself beliefs a person holds about their attributes and how they evaluate these qualities – positive and negative
 - This can be broken down into different types of self
 - Actual self- work in progress...always engaged in the maintenance of the self throughout life
 - ◆ the self is a work in progress "the project of the self" (Giddens 1991), the self as "symbolic project" (Thompson 1995), can be fragmented – think of the various roles you play
 - ◆ You in the classroom is different than you in the pub
 - Ideal self- who I would like to be, impression management, a source of unhappiness? -- if we're always looking for this and never find it, we will become unhappy
 - ◆ Kellogg's Special K uses this a lot -- offers you something to improve yourself...website basically

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- offers a service to improve yourself
 - **Social self**- how I present myself to others
 - ◆ Clothing is important in different social settings
 - **Possible selves** -- linked to the ideal self, but more linked to the future...who I could be, who I might be in the future, marketing messages give fuel to these fantasies – positive and negative
 - ◆ Marketing messages fuel these kinds of fantasies (using regret)
 - ◆ Negative- smoking messages
- The self and consumer culture (**Wattanasuwan 2005**)
 - Contemporary society is first and foremost a consumer culture – where our social life operates in the sphere of consumption:
 - Consumption is central to the meaningful practice of our everyday life.
 - Commercially based or freedom-based decision making?
 - We employ consumption not only to create and sustain the self but also to locate us in society
 - Idea that consumption is distinction...the use of brands affiliates us with certain groups
 - Products that we buy, activities that we do and philosophies or beliefs that we hold tell stories about who we are and with whom we identify
- Modernity and Self- Identity: The project of self
 - 'What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity - and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour.' **Giddens** (1991: 70)
- Market based solutions
 - Shopping is not merely the buying of things: it is the buying of identity. Clammer 1992:223
 - In a sense, we need them
- **Interbrand**- best global brands
 - **Mecosystems** idea that you as an individual are creating brand spaces around yourselves that help you in various ways
 - a select set of brands that create unique experiences around a single individual, where every brand in consideration slots in seamlessly, and where the most valuable micro moments are curated, connected, and choreographed
 - People are actively managing the brands in their life, consciousness of management
 - Everything is becoming framed down to that personal level
- Identity and times of transition
 - **Life-stages** – self-concept becomes unstable...when life-stages alter
 - •Tweenagers - 8-12, brands can exploit this
 - •Puberty and adolescence
 - •Beginning our career •- symbolic suit or bag
 - Personal relationships •
 - Parenthood •- brands love this
 - Illness and bereavement •- services to guide and help you
 - Retirement •- idea of a 'second youth'
 - Older age
 - Coke Life- currently struggling, draws on the idea of transition...different Coke for a different kind of life
- **Undesired self** Another reading to do apparently
 - Emotional driven choice encourages refusal of other tastes: rejection of brands forms a powerful element of taste, creates classes of consumers, reject certain consumption lifestyles and accept others, distinction
 - Brands can have a negative symbolic element that you would dissociate yourself with
 - **Hogg and Bannister (2001)** – avoiding the “undesired self” – avoidance of products and images which are not congruent with one’s sense of self
 - “The pursuit of self-esteem involves the maintenance or enhancement of self via the purchase of positively valued items; and the avoidance of self-abasement by rejecting negatively valued products.” (Sirgy 1982 in Hogg and Bannister 2001)
 - Notion of resistance based on principles
 - The notion of consumer resistance come to the fore – explore this further in context of subcultures and tribes and the dark side of branding
 - The idea of sustainability, eating healthy, etc.
 - **Brand management implications:** must be aware of negative stereotypes
 - Awareness of the importance of negative stereotypes – counter these in marketing communications (e.g.

Lecture 7- Managing Brands

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- Note-- see lecture 1 slides on this
- "The brand is out there. Brand management, like parenting, is for life, yet the brand takes on a life of its own." (Boyle 2007:130)
 - Brand management tells us about the brand, but then we also give it our own meanings
 - Can't really control certain elements of how the consumer decodes the brand



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Managing uniqueness

"In the parity world of standardized production and mass consumption few products can stand out without a supporting brand identity." Goldman and Papson (2006)

Brand elements = identity

Name	The WHY	
	Values	
Logo	Personality	
	Positioning	
Design e.g. packaging	Differentiation	
Music	Marketing	
Character	Communications	
Slogan	Internal and external Territories/spaces	



- Creates meaning and positions brand thru management process
- Brand is a combo of their key elements
- Managing brands is about finding and communicating the why...the why sometimes comes about later
 - Brands that do the best already have a why at their heart before they go to marketplace
- Lots of brand management focuses on internal (not to public) management
 - Companies like Unilever, many brands internally competing for funding, etc...how to position the brand within the company
- **Territory**- ex= could be for the UK, or for Europe
- Or working within a space--often what they mean by this is the market...ex the shampoo market
 - Just a term used in the industry to refer to a market
- **Brand positioning**- the position of a brand within a market relative to the other brands in that market...in the mind of the consumer
 - All elements and communications of the brand
 - Values of the brand can be aspirational -- attempting to secure a position in the market
 - Brand can position itself within a market where it aspires to be luxury
 - Brand managers map the position of the market brands to find gaps
 - A lot of brand management is focused on placing a brand within a market
 - Look at the Ugov article on Facebook
- **Resonance** area (top block) of the brand-equity pyramid
 - Functional and symbolic elements come together to make resonance
- **Symbolic and functional strategy** -- Volkswagen and the Force
 - **Symbolic elements**- The kid as Darth Vader
 - Family, trying to make the kid happy...car is meant for the whole family to enjoy
 - Middle class, stay at home mom, quite young, traditional gender roles, peanut butter sandwich, comforting and warm elements
 - **Functionally**- learn some of the car design with the keys, inside of the car, German--reliance, good engineering
- **Functional brand management**
 - Functional brands tend to be FMCGs (fast moving consumer goods) or technology
 - Key objectives with Low Involvement brands:
 - Brand salience and awareness is key
 - Begin with this, general awareness, what they understand your brand to represent and the product to do

- individualistic
 - Really important in emerging markets--China, shows you how to wear the brand, what type of person uses it, shows you what 'world' you can enter by using it
- Brand acts as guide or arbiter of taste
- **Luxury does not advertise to sell** – crystallise symbolism, awareness is required for social symbolism
 - Create widespread social awareness in order to enhance the sense of social security
 - Depends on those who do not own these products to make the meaning
- Make it difficult to buy – exclusivity, waiting lists
 - Have their own stores, don't necessarily sell in department stores, don't make enough to meet the high demand
 - Kylie lip kit
 - Membership clubs
 - High price, intimidate you in the store
- Raise your prices to raise demand (didn't work for Mulberry...)
 - Counter-intuitive...Mulberry lost their main consumer by making the price too high
 - Can be good with rarer materials, more craftsmanship, bigger logo?
 - Mulberry just didn't have the correct brand salience to be effective in emerging markets
- Employees and crafts-people will “live up to the price” ????
- **Masstige- mass prestige**
 - “Most luxury brands do market products that themselves are not luxury products: these trading-down extensions aim at leveraging the prestige of the name they carry in order to harvest the royalties of masstige fragrances, eyewear, accessories, and so on.” **Kapferer and Bastien (2009)**
 - Argue that the smaller items may be where the real profit is made
 - The brand association with fragrance creates the feeling, but it is not really luxury
 - Luxury brand management is a balance between ubiquity (profit) and exclusivity
 - Democratized luxury....Michael Kors <http://www.michaelkors.com/>
 - Co-branding is a new avenue to increase appeal
 - H&M and Balmain -- reaching a wider, mass market, creating aspirations for their main brand
 - Can create awareness of the brand
 - In general have been wildly successful
 - Two brands come together to appeal
- **Inconspicuous consumption Eckhardt et al 2015**
 - Low-key luxury – move away from conspicuous branding
 - Stealth luxury-- not logos, low-key, moving away from conspicuous
 - Logos are bigger in China because it is highly conspicuous
 - Taste – sophisticated society communicates to a smaller group of peers (or imagined community)
 - About communicating with those that are like you/ those you would like to be like
 - Not about communicating with everyone on the street with your bag
 - Significant cultural capital required to decode signals – exclusivity
 - They don't want the ordinary person to understand it
 - Enjoying luxury in the company of other elite consumers
 - Discreet signals, low visual prominence
 - Personal meaning is important but it's still about distinction...harder to emulate – social distance is preserved
- Luis Vuitton as an art space--short youtube clip
 - All of their stores are made with interesting architecture
 - Architecture creates word of mouth ... Harrods, can even attract tourists
 - Enhancing their uniqueness by creating their buildings, statement of investment and differentiation
 - Retail experience is a brand experience

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