

BRAND ANALYSIS

WHAT IS A BRAND?

A brand is often mistaken as a variety of different things and it's important to understand its ambiguous nature. A brand is not simply the logo, nor the visual identity. A brand is not the product, the slogan or the advertising campaign. A brand is not even controlled by the company behind it. Rather a brand is a collection of perceptions that reside in the mind of the customer. It is the gut feeling a customer has about you.

While you may not have direct control over your brand, you most certainly are its steward. Every interaction the customer has with you influences their perceptions. The product experience, customer service, slogans, ads, and even product manuals all contribute to the customer perception of your company or product. Your job is to cultivate, guard, and maintain a strong brand – the rewards of which are consistently loyal customers and a continual increase in customer preference.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BRAND?

A good brand communicates a clear message about what it stands for and how it differs from competitors. It stems from your product positioning and customers understand and internalize the brand through its consistent use. Each touch point within your customers' experience should seek to reinforce this same message.

With a well crafted strategy, a good brand begins to look more like a belief system than anything else. It takes on a vibrant life of its own, and customers will stand behind the brand, adopting its claims and evangelizing it to others. Major national brands know this and use it to great effect. Coke has us believing it is 'The real thing' and no other poor excuse for a cola will do. BMW owners believe they have the 'Ultimate driving machine', rather than just an ordinary, stuffy luxury car. These brand promises have grown beyond mere slogans, evolving into living mantras for the company and their believers.

PURPOSE OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

This analysis is designed to help us understand your current brand and the context surrounding it. This process may reveal a strong and vibrant brand – or it may illuminate missing areas and lack of focus. If the latter is the case, it opens the door for discussion on these points and will help you gain a razor sharp vision of what your brand represents.

YOUR COMPANY BACKGROUND & CULTURE

HOW DID THE BRAND OR COMPANY START? HAS IT EVOLVED FROM THE INITIAL VISION?

Understanding how a brand started can be an important aspect to its story. Where did it come from? Who was behind it? Has it changed or evolved?

WHERE IS THE BRAND GOING? WHAT IS THE 5 YEAR VISION FOR THE COMPANY AND ITS PRODUCTS?

The future vision of a company is vital to understanding a brand. Where a company is going is the basis of how it should position itself now. Note: Avoid general statements such as the 'global leader', instead define specific ways in which it will lead and how.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMPANY CULTURE?

How would you describe the personality of the company? What is the leadership like? How does the culture effect how you relate to customers?

THE CUSTOMERS AND MARKET

WHAT MARKET ARE YOUR PRODUCTS IN?

Describe the industry and the market your products or services are in. What makes this group unique?

WHAT ARE THE VALUES OF YOUR CUSTOMERS?

What are the most important issues to them as a whole? What do they value above all else in a purchasing decision?

WHAT SPECIFICS ARE THEY LOOKING FOR WHEN THEY LOOK FOR YOUR TYPE OF PRODUCT?

What are the values they look for in products such as yours? What are the 'top of mind questions' when you are first contacted? What concerns do they have before purchasing?

WHAT IS THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS CUSTOMERS USE (RATIONAL OR NOT) WHEN THEY PURCHASE YOUR BRAND?

List the key decision points in sequential order. Is it price then quality? Do they choose product integration over price?

WHAT WAYS DO YOU MARKET? HOW DO YOU REACH OUT TO NEW CUSTOMERS?

How you market to customers helps us to understand the context in which potential customers will first meet your brand.

BRAND POSITIONING

WHAT DOES YOUR BRAND STAND FOR IN THE CUSTOMERS' MIND?

How do customers perceive you? Who are you to them? Are you the industry leader or are you the up and coming innovator? How do they relate to you as opposed to your competition?

WHY SHOULD THEY CARE ABOUT YOU?

How do your products impact them or their business? What is the bottom line value or resulting effect? Think in terms of real bottom-line value. Example: A BMW offers customers a feeling of driving a high performance machine, not just getting them from point A to B.

WHAT ARE YOUR KEY DIFFERENTIATORS?

How does the above differ from your competitors? Given your both selling a similar product, what makes yours worth the customers money and not theirs?

HOW DO YOU ENVISION EMPHASIZING THOSE DIFFERENTIATORS?

Note the ways in which you emphasize them. Does your marketing materials revolve around your differentiators? What slogans have you used to highlight them? What key points do you market on?

WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY BRAND TAGLINE?

What single statement embodies all of the above? Visa claims "It's everywhere you want to be", Nike says "Just Do it", and Coke reminds us "It's the real thing." What promise does your brand claim?

BRAND TONE

WHAT ADJECTIVES DESCRIBE YOUR BRAND?

Note how your brand should be perceived by choosing from the adjectives below. Mark where your brand should sit on the scale between each opposing idea. Some sets intentionally overlap each other in meaning or are similar.

Conservative	Neither	Progressive
Cold	Neither	Warm
Traditional	Neither	Innovative
Fun	Neither	Serious
Masculine	Neither	Feminine
Casual	Neither	Formal
Energetic	Neither	Laid Back
Trendy	Neither	Classic
Spontaneous	Neither	Orderly
Loud	Neither	Quiet
Solitary	Neither	Popular
Unique	Neither	Familiar
Young	Neither	Old
Fresh	Neither	Established

WHAT TONE DO YOU WANT YOUR BRAND TO CARRY?

The tone of a brand is its character and voice. How should your communications sound? Energetic and youthful? Established and dependable? Somewhere in-between? Feel free to use words you selected above.

THE COMPETITION

WHO ARE YOUR COMPETITORS?

Identify the companies that believe the opposite of what you do. What do they stand for?
How are they trying to differentiate themselves from you?

WHY DO THEY GET IT WRONG AND YOU GET IT RIGHT?

Defend your brand as though you were in a court hearing. What are the problems with their products? How does your brands promise solve those problems?