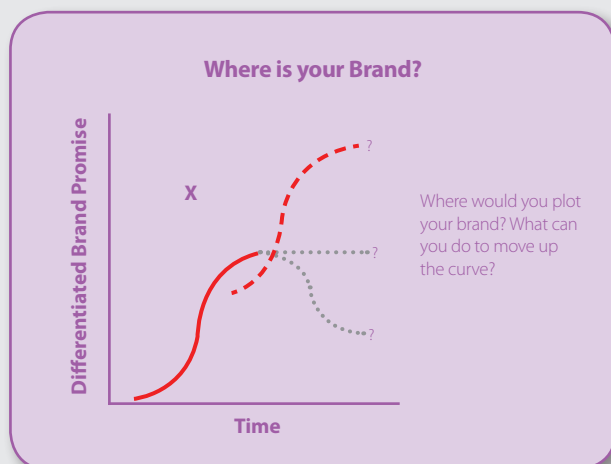


Refreshing the Brand: Focusing on Key Brand Elements

It is a far better battle to fight on the offense than on the defense. Indeed, we suggest that the question of refreshing the brand should be constantly on the radar for brand managers- to keep the brand relevant, differentiated, and valuable.

Is your brand current and impactful? Does it need to be refreshed? Where would you plot yourself on the following chart? Is your brand still on its initial growth curve? Is it starting to level off? Perhaps decline? Should the brand be refreshed and readied for its next evolution?



To answer the above questions, consider the following:

- Is market share growing?
- Is customer loyalty declining?
- Is company valuation slipping or undervalued?
- Are competitors being more aggressive in their marketing?
- Are competitors creating buzz at your expense?
- Are you seeing differences in customer segments, where newer segments are emerging with different needs?

Any of these factors and more could be warning signs that your brand needs to be refreshed. Or, as we say at Hansa, “rejuvenated,” using the Hansa Brand RJVNTR™ process.

The power of the brand rests in having a clear articulation of what it stands for. We like to use the following framework to think about the elements of a brand that need to be addressed:



The brand personality expresses how you act, how you come across, just as a person has a personality. You may be a maverick, you may be really smart, or fun, or caring, etc. From a branding standpoint, your personality should be intentional, like everything about your brand, and not left to chance. It is therefore always good to check whether your desired personality comes across with customers. I have worked with more than one brand where customers have said their personality is “arrogant.” Probably not a customer-winning proposition. (Typically we see this when the company feels they have the best or only game in town, which in itself is not bad, but then they start interacting with customers in a “take it or leave it attitude” and *that* is bad.)

Values also play through in your brand. What do you value? Engineering excellence? Design aesthetics? Responsiveness? Doing the right thing for customers? You can’t hide your values. They come across in your communications and how you treat customers. They are reflected in your products and services. Your brand needs to reflect what you truly believe as a company.

The third key brand element is benefit. How many times need it be said that customers buy benefits not features? Yes, features are important in brand communications – they grab attention and interest. I want to know the horsepower of the car when I am shopping for a new vehicle. But am I buying horsepower per se? No, what I am really buying is something like a feeling of exhilaration and thrill when I tramp on the gas pedal – benefits. We can communicate around features in product and brand communications, but what we need to be clear about is how those features ultimately generate a benefit – either a functional benefit or emotional benefit.

These benefits could be either explicitly known to the customer or perhaps subconscious (which can be particularly true with emotional benefits). The emotional benefit can be explicitly communicated, or left implicit. By the latter we mean the features are communicated, knowing that they will directly tie to an underlying implicit benefit.

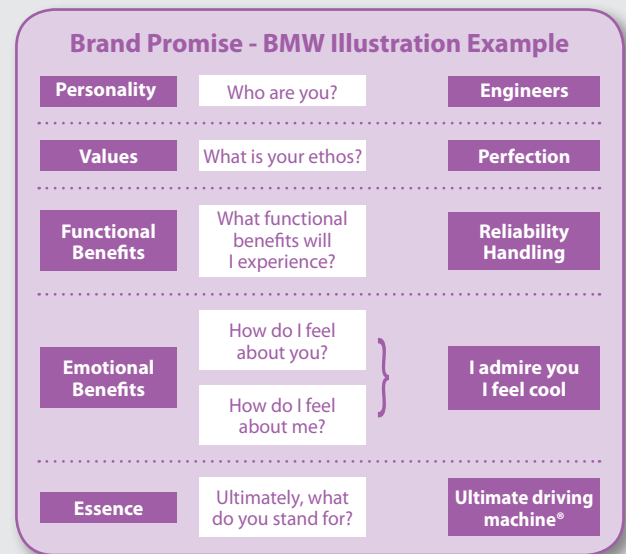
What resonates most should be validated with the market. Do customers and prospects need features to grab their attention? Do the features implicitly link to an underlying emotional benefit? Or, does the emotional benefit need to be clearly and directly stated? Avoid being caught in the trap of common knowledge about what should be done in brand communications. These are all testable questions. One thing, however, is true – the feature/benefit connection should be clear and purposeful in developing the brand positioning and messaging strategy.

Lastly, it is important to be clear about what the brand stands for if you strip it down to its core, its essence. This is the bull’s eye for the brand and indeed can serve to capture and engage customers, as well as employees. It is around the brand essence that we can develop a tagline or short, sharp articulation of the brand to be communicated to the market. For example: BMW – “The Ultimate Driving Machine®.”

Know, however, that managing and communicating the brand entails a focus on all the brand elements. All the elements together constitute your brand promise. Executing that promise throughout the customer experience, across all touchpoints, then becomes the challenge – that’s where the brand becomes real.

The following exhibit illustrates the brand promise using BMW as an example. The example is our own

interpretation of their brand, as it comes across in their marketing and brand delivery.



BMW was not always positioned as “the ultimate driving machine.” The brand and product has undergone tremendous evolution since its introduction in to the United States market with cars like the 1968 BMW 1600: a very economical few-frills automobile that had a superior engine with an overhead cam, strut suspension, independent rear suspension, and front disk brakes. At the time, these were not common features on an entry-level sedan. It appealed to the more sophisticated buyer of a lower price-point performance car who was looking for a sedan that could comfortably seat four while delivering superior handling. BMW today is still a performance machine, but admittedly with a broader customer base and brand identity. They have evolved considerably from their entry-level performance positioning to something very different today as an up-scale automobile appealing to a well-off

consumer. BMW is a good example of a brand that has been constantly rejuvenated.

If you have questions, comments, or would like to learn more about the Hansa Brand RJVNTR™ process for refreshing brands, contact us below.

Hansa provides a full range of qualitative and quantitative research services. Our experienced research and consulting team, including PhD-level statisticians, uses innovative, data-driven methodologies tailored to our clients' research needs.

We pride ourselves on our ability to truly understand the voice of the customer and translate that voice into winning strategies for brand development, marketing communications, customer relationship enhancement, and product/service innovation.