

Chapter 6

The Brand Promise

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Discuss how personas and archetypes anchor Brand Promises and mantra's, taglines and slogans differ and inform them.
- Compare and contrast luxury, non-luxury and mass brand promises.
- Assess how brand promises differ in different company cultures.

"I'm not in the business of fashion, I'm in the business of dreams." – Ralph Lauren

What is a Brand Promise?

In the preceding chapter, we explored some of the antecedents and anchors of brand loyalty, including co-creation, brand experiences and touchpoints. Now we extend this analysis and explore the concept of the brand promise, its relationship to brand identity and the central role it plays in maintaining and optimizing consumer loyalty¹

A **brand promise** (sometimes referred to as the brand mantra²) is a promise to consistently deliver to a consumer a set of relevant, functional, and/or emotional experiences. The experiences can be **Transactional** which refers to purchases and the interaction with the brand's sales people and selling platforms (both off

and on-line) and **existential**, or those emotional takeaways that result from the latter and from the general everyday interaction with brand touchpoints. (for example, the use of the merchandise or merchandise returns)

Because there is no central depository or authority which sets the definitions in brand management, *promises, mantras, taglines and slogans* are sometimes used interchangeably. For promises or mantras this is not a major issue as both marketing practioners and marketing scholars often use them interchangeably. A **brand promise or mantra** is usually an internal company message (not to be confused with an advertising tagline) and is related to a positioning statement in that it says why the brand differs from competitors and suggests its unique reason for being, or unique value proposition. It is a guideline that all internal members who interface with the brand should use as a guidepost in their everyday decision-making.;as an example,recall our discussion of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in its internal marketing messages which states: “*We are Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlmen.*” and which provides such guidance.

The promise can, at times, be found in mission statements or in communiqués within the company. So for Nike, for example, the essence of why the company is in business is to create athleticwear that promises to provide “*Authentic, Athletic, Performance*”;you’ll hear this”mantra” in internal exchanges among personnel, again it not be confused with their **tag-line** “*Just Do It*”, which is consistent and related to the promise but subject to change with a change in

advertising direction. Think of the brand promise as a self imposed directive to the people within the company and a tag-line, as one, when it is consistent with the promise, made to its consumer outside the company.

Tag-lines are usually found under a brand logo and show up in advertising;

Slogans, on the other hand, are more often found in the headline for an ad visual or ad copy or in the form of a voice-over in a TV, Radio or on-line video which if it's the headline, alerts the reader as to the purpose of the content, in effect, prepping them to be receptive to it; if its at the conclusion of the advertisement, it's what the brand manager wishes the consumer to take away. As an example, think of the State Farm insurance company slogan, "*Like a Good Neighbor, State Farm is There*" which is meant to evoke a sense of dependability but is not unique, different or specific enough (in what way or how is it "dependable"?) to qualify as brand promise. So, for example the absence of uniqueness can be seen when compared with Allstate Insurance (a prime competitor to State Farm). Its ads have been using a similar slogan for several decades, "*You're in Good Hands with Allstate*". This affects a very similar association of the brand with dependable service and therefore doesn't work as a positioning statement.

Again, in some quarters, the words slogan and tagline are used interchangeably.

We'll also see as we proceed in this chapter that luxury brands most often donot have taglines and when they do, they are seldom changed (BMW's "*The Ultimate*

Driving Machine” has been in place, under its logo, for over 30 years); mass brand, on the other hand, change taglines with great frequency as they respond to both market conditions and shifts in competitive positioning, something that luxury brands find contrary to their brand management strategy of timeless identity.

As brand promises become consumer experiences they are transformed into consumer expectations. At this juncture, customers and brand managers develop an unwritten contractual obligation with each other. This obligation is contractual only in a metaphoric sense, but no less binding. Here, the venue that enforces this tacit agreement is the court of consumer opinion, dispensing “justice” by their support or rejection of the brand and its promise.

Each party to the contract, the manager and the consumer, obligates themselves in a **sympiotic** way; by serving and being mutually dependent upon each other for certain benefits and rewards³. The brand manager implicitly agrees to clearly and consistently provide the same relevant brand experience while consumers implicitly agree to behave at some point, as loyal customers.

The definition of relevancy in the brand promise includes large measures of **authenticity** seen as genuine concern for consumers’ well-being along with the alignment of the brand’s identity and business practices with this concern. Due to macro socio-economic trends detailed later in this chapter, authenticity becomes a

major standard to abide by in the “contract”.⁴ When the parties to the contract perform accordingly, both benefit. When either party fails to perform, repercussions follow. Both of these effects—benefits and repercussions—are discussed in the sections that follow.

For brand managers, the key to fulfilling the promise is to be clear about the **brand's essence**; that is its unique identity by which it differentiates itself from the competition and makes itself relevant to its key consumer cohort. So, for example, for Starbucks "The Third Place", for Volvo, "Driver Safety", for Disney, "Magical Family Entertainment".

We can also drill down passed the concept of brand essence into **Archetype**, that is those deeply held sub-conscious dispositions discussed in chapters 4 and 5 which anchor the brand essence and which each culture develops and each individual in the culture sub-consciously absorbs. In the Disney example, the archetypes are, as we discussed, the Jester and the Magician. Both of these are clearly in evidence in their marketing (the fun cartoons and The Magic Kingdom) and by referencing them internally through training and in meetings, enable their brand managers to stay-on brand. The brand promises are found in those communication elements (e.g. tag-lines) which are intended for the target audience and which capture and convey the spirit of the archetype.

[Figure 6.1]

Disney's Magic Kingdom & Archetypes



Image Id: 468137624

Source: Getty Images

Caption: Disney captures family, magic and traditional cartoons as part of their Jester and Magician archetypes.

Page 3 Chapter 6

FIGURE [6.17]

Brand Promises, Personas, and Archetypes

Brand promises are anchored in brand archetypes and brought to life by brand personas. The personality attributes of the brand persona humanizes the promise and serves as a metaphor for a more personal communication between consumers and the brand.⁵ It's part of the brand experience.

“When you connect an archetype to your brand promise, you have a better chance of delivering brand experiences that are...” “in voice”—the brand narrative which expresses the brand personality⁶, who it is for and why it matters.⁷

The archetype provides an example and a reference point to the behavior one can imagine the archetype would display in any situation, if the archetype were an actual person. This expected brand “behavior” can guide brand management in ensuring their decisions are “on brand” and thereby aligned with consumer expectations. Here is how one writer describes this effect:

“These archetypical expectations help people on the inside of a brand understand what is required to bring the brand to life...(and) they cue customers on what to expect in the brand experience.”⁸

How Archetypes Inform Brand Promises

As examples, if we look at Apple compared with Microsoft or IBM, what does the brand as a personality say to us? What might be our assumptions as to

which archetypes were in play?

We might say the Apple is ‘cool’, “approachable”, a leader without being autocratic. We could agree that Microsoft and surely IBM are perceived, to one degree or another, as the opposite types of brand personas. Beginning with the iconic Super Bowl ad in 1984 and the rebellious message which promised to launch a new era in consumer-friendly computers and its energizing “**Think Different**” tagline as a challenge to PC users, Apple’s personality is immediately seen as different from the other competitors.⁹ First look at their logo, an apple with a bite taken out of it. It is a logo with a “down to earth” feel. Then look at the structure of an Apple retail store, it is very democratic, easy to navigate and no one tries to sell you anything; it’s considered “friendly”. Finally, Steve Jobs, the former CEO, would appear publicly in jeans and turtleneck shirts, creating an unpretentious image.

[Figure 6.2]

Steve Jobs in jeans and mock turtle neck,as the approachable Brand Archetype



Contrast that with the IBM CEO's in blue suits, white shirts and ties, his persona is clearly more autocratic and a reflection of the **“Ruler” Archetype** (in control, follows the rules, must run the show).

[Figure 6.3]

Sam Palisano, when CEO of IBM, in less approachable suit and tie image



We could go on, but what begins to emerge is that seemingly disparate touchpoints (logos, store environments, the image of the CEO) are all consistently aligned with the values and the promise of the brand and anchored by archetypes which help to ensure its consistent execution; the **Creator Archetype** (for solutions innovation) and the **Rebel Archetype** (for disruption of the status quo, break the rules of the game) are the two that provide the underpinnings for the Apple brand persona and its personality. Although some might argue that Steve Jobs' personality was controlling and autocratic, we must separate the private persona of its leadership from the public persona of its brand personality. This

archetypal foundation and the expression of its value propositions serve as the guard rails keeping the brand promise and the brand persona in sync and on the same path with each other and with the brand's values.

The original Apple tag-line "*think different*", gives permission to the consumer to be innovative, break the rules, and to join the brand in a contract whose promise is that it is ok to "*think different*". Apple promises that it will be with you as it thinks differently as well. This proposition is the very definition of an authentic brand.

Tag-lines as Brand Promises

Although brand promises appear in various marketing sources (such as content in company blogs, and quoted commentaries of brand managers), they are most often found in company mission statements (which we'll re-visit later in the chapter). They are condensed into advertising taglines and are usually found just below the brand logo. **Tag-lines** are most effective when they are condensed brand promises designed to inform the target consumer. This is in part because they then align with internal brand promises and employee brand advocates, creating a seamless communication affect with less chance of disparities between what is valued inside the company and what is communicated outside the company.

Successful tag-lines, when they present a brand promise, follow the three

fundamental principles of sound brand management which inform this book:

1. They are highly relevant to the target customers' values.
2. They capture and convey a “solutions” rather than “product” promise.
3. They contain an implicit archetype anchoring the promise.

Using these as benchmarks, let's take a look at two competitors in the same service space and see how each meets the above criteria; United Parcel Service and Federal Express.

Case Study: UPS and FedEx: Comparative Tag-Lines

We've chosen to compare United Parcel Service (UPS) with Federal Express (FedEx). Both are global businesses that operate in the same competitive space; package delivery often with a targeted time or guaranteed delivery window. Below are the taglines each has used since the companies began up until 2015.

UPS and Fed Ex Tagline Comparisons

UPS

1. *“We run the tightest ship in the shipping industry”*
2. *“Moving at the speed of business”*
3. *“Synchronizing the world of Commerce”*
4. *“What can “Brown” do for you?”*
5. *“ We love logistics”*

FedEx

1. *“ When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight”*
2. *“ Relax, its FedEx”*
3. *“ The world, on time”*

The FedEx taglines follow a consistent, clear, compelling and memorable emotional promise that recognizes the very anxiety that generated the overnight delivery solution. Its first tagline put it on the map. But notice that all the taglines reflect this original promise; they promise the relief of anxiety as to whether your delivery will arrive as planned. FedEx is not in the package delivery business, it is in the business of peace of mind and its tagline delivers that highly relevant consumer message.

UPS, on the other hand, apart from the easy to remember alliteration of the “ship/shipping” metaphor, presents a series of uncertain promises. The first tagline suggests they don't waste money, but that isn't obvious; perhaps it's a statement about efficiency. The second tagline references “moving”, but moving what at the speed of business? And how do I benefit from this? The third tagline, “synchronizing” (much too long a word!) sounds like they are in the master clock setting business. Without beating the point to death, their other taglines are equally without internal consistency as to the problem recognized and the solution offered. This is the result of their focusing on what they do, rather than what they can do for you. Without this consumer relevancy, the purpose and effect of the brand promise—which is to inform and create a consumer expectation—is lost.

Aligning the Brand Promise with Consumer Relevancy

The importance of aligning brand promises with targeted consumer segments is not merely an exercise in communications but a fundamental business activity of brand management. It is made all the more challenging when there is a portfolio of many brands that need to be managed. Often some of the brands in the portfolio are underperforming or no longer fit comfortably within the overall corporation's **core competencies**, or what it does best. We saw this in our discussion of Kering in Chapter 3 when we discussed how brand portfolio management is critical to successful luxury brand business outcomes.

This challenge is not confined to luxury brands. Mass brands are also managed in this way. Proctor and Gamble (P&G), the household and personal care mass brand giant, has undertaken from time to time brand portfolio reviews. The most recent one by P&G offers us a look at just how strategic the relationship is between the brand promise and its targeted consumer. Here is what transpired.

In February 2015, A.G. Lafley, Procter and Gamble's CEO, reported at a Wall Street analysts meeting that P & G was continuing the dramatic overhaul of its brand portfolio which had been begun in the summer of 2014. This had been in response to falling stock prices and declining profits. As we've discussed, under review for possible selling or downsizing were as many as 100 brands in the portfolio of household and personal care brands! Here is a quote from the February meeting regarding Lafley's concerns and his strategy for meeting the

challenge he was facing:

“We have to understand... the different consumer needs and wants. We have to nail it with the brand promise.”¹⁰

With over \$84 billion in revenue, Procter and Gamble (P&G) is the oldest, largest and most successful consumer packaged goods companies in the world. Yet the CEO himself, apart from the brand managers, displays in the above quote both sensitivity to, and a struggle with, how to create and communicate the brand promise so it meets “...*the different consumer needs and wants*”! What makes this even more compelling is that it would be for a multitude of brands and therefore not simply one brand and one promise. Each brand and their corresponding brand promise must be tailored to, and aligned with, appropriate consumer segments and their “needs and wants”. Only then will they earn their place within the portfolio.

This is added confirmation of the strategic commitment to consumer-centricity reflected in Lafley's edict issued to the entire company (which we explored in Chapter 3) that, *"The Consumer is Boss"*!

This is quite extraordinary and it points to our need to carefully analyze the challenges in this dimension of brand management. By examining successful, and not so successful, iterations of brand promises, we can learn what is a winning approach, and what is not.

Successful Alignments

Brand promises in brand taglines are successful alignments when they meet two general criteria: the first is that they are clear, concise, compelling and memorable because they strike an emotional cord; and the second, and most critical, is that they align with the relevancy of the values of the targeted consumer. We need both standards.

The taglines that follow have stood the test of time. The companies that use them, Nike, Allstate Insurance, and DeBeers, have been using these taglines since the company's beginnings and/or from the tag-lines' inception.

Nike's "*Just Do It!*" is both a challenge and a promise. It provokes the amateur athlete to act and to do so, of course, in Nike gear. It addresses the anxiety that athletes feel when they are about to compete or to begin the physical commitment to the activity. But it carries an implied promise that it's not that hard, once you do it.

[Figure 6.4]

Nike's "Just Do It" tagline so resonates that it finds its way on to apparel



Like Nike, Allstate Insurance as referenced earlier in this chapter, has a tagline that has been from their inception their only brand promise, *"You're in Good Hands with Allstate"*. Insurance and insurance claims are uncertain landscapes for most consumers. So again, levels of discomfort and the need for a sense of security are constants that need brand promises that will allay the anxiety associated with accidents, damages and life's travails. Here, the promise is reassuring but more a slogan as competitors, entering the market (such as State Farm discussed earlier) have erased through co-opting or copying the association with the promise of reducing anxiety, any clear delineation of uniqueness in their claim.

Finally DeBeers, the worlds' leading merchants and purveyors of diamonds, have tapped into a deep emotional channel with their tag-line “*Diamonds are Forever*”. This plays on two levels; first the diamond as something of value that doesn't change in a changing world. Secondly, the association of diamonds with engagements and marriage and the hope and dreams that it will be forever. Here the diamond and by implication, the ring, is presented as the seal of commitment symbolizing and validating entry into a timeless relationship.

Unsuccessful Alignments

An example of a misalignment is Coors beer. Coors has been using the tag-line “*The world's most refreshing beer*”, for some time. It is part of a more general campaign theme that attempts to anchor the brand in the Colorado Mountains and its allegedly clearer, crisper mountain streams that are drawn upon to make the beer. Besides being flat (no pun intended) that is, less than a memorable or emotionally charged promise, is it relevant? Do beer drinkers drink beer to be refreshed?

In reviewing the Coors TV commercials, they display a certain consistency: young 30-something year old handsome guys and pretty gals at a bar, party or event having fun and drinking Coors. The link to "refreshing" is not in evidence. In addition, there is no apparent archetype driving the brand persona or

its promise. The absence of an archetype is often a sign that the brand persona, and therefore the promise, is either unclear or not relevant to the targeted consumer.

Volkswagen provides us with another example of a tag-line which fails to communicate a promise of any consequence. “*Das Auto*” is the tag-line appearing at the end of each ad of the brand’s 2015 television campaign. In German, it means “The Car”. One assumes that the intention is to suggest that a VW is THE car! Firstly, not everyone knows the translation (for which there is no voice over explaining it even in TV ads). Secondly, how does this specifically meet the relevancy criterion? What is being promised?

Figure [6.5]

Volkswagen's Das Auto Tagline

FIGURE [6-5]



www.shutterstock.com · 24182959

Source: Shutterstock

Caption: Volkswagen's slogan Das Auto

Page 14 Chapter 6

Finally, Circuit City (at one time a prime competitor with Best Buy in the

electronics space) devised the following tag-lines, replete with similar shortcomings and others including, “*Imagine That!*”, “*Just What I Needed*” and “*Circuit City Makes it Simple*” are three of the taglines that were used from 2000 to 2007. There is an absence of any connection with the challenges that consumers have with electronics. “Circuit City Makes it Simple”, comes closest, but we never know what is simple. Is it the purchasing process? The usage of the equipment (do they have an educational learning program)? Credit availability? All of these? Does “Just What I Needed” refer to the consumer or to the store?! And, if the consumer, what is it that's needed that Circuit City would provide? Consumer relevancy again left curbside! (As a footnote, in 2008, Circuit City filed for bankruptcy and in early 2009 closed all 569 retail outlets in the U.S.).

Managing the Brand Promise in Luxury, Non-Luxury and Mass Brands

As we indicated earlier, brand promises are most often found in company mission statements and presented through advertising taglines. However, today they can also be found on websites, in interviews and in other public speeches by CEOs and brand managers.

Whatever the source, brand promises must be managed to ensure that they are consistent with brand personas and archetypes. This applies to both luxury and non-luxury brands.

When we look at luxury brands we discover an added dimension than isn't found in non-luxury brands. In the creation of brand promises, luxury brands reach back to their heritage to find the values that will inform the mission and, therefore, the brand promise. Non-luxury brands look to their history. This may seem like a small difference but heritage is not at the mercy of history; in fact, it frames and animates history. History is subject to interpretation, and to the opinions of the many; heritage is not. This tends to make luxury brands more grounded.

The Luxury Brand Promise

One outcome of being grounded is that luxury brand promises eschew the features and benefits strategy which animates most non-luxury brands. Here are some examples of luxury brands and how they construct their brand promises.

The highly successful luxury handbag and accessories brand Bottega Veneta has as its tagline this brand promise: *"When your own initials are enough"*. This alludes to the artisanship in the product and heritage in the brand, therefore, the fact that you have chosen it is proof of your discriminating taste. This captures the need for luxury brands to create a *"griffe"* (from the French word for "scratch") or *"...a set of special signatures...subtle cues that identify their products as their own even in the absence of an explicit logo or brand name."* ¹²The design and unique artistry of each bag conveys the brand identity.

There is no need for displays of logos or icons to show off to others that you "have arrived" (a disposition of the "Patrician" luxury consumer which we presented in Chapter 5).

In a similar vein, Patek Philippe mentioned in an earlier chapter is one of the most successful timepiece brands in the world. On their web-site is an invitation to "*Begin your own tradition*". This suggests that your purchase will align you with what the brand promises, a heralded tradition of excellence which the brand now shares with you. As such you have begun your own tradition and perhaps it will become for you, through additional purchases, a time honored one.

Taking these experiential and emotional promises to an even more profound promissory level is Montblanc. The luxury writing instrument and professional accessories brand honors these aforementioned promises and goes beyond them to forge an even deeper meaning of the luxury ideal. Here is a quote from Lutz Bethke, the CEO, about the experiential effect of ownership. When interviewed by Forbes; he spoke of both giving a gift to yourself and receiving Montblanc as a gift from someone else.

*"As a gift to you...it becomes a lifetime companion worthy to be handed down to the next generation"*¹⁴ The brand as an affirmation of how you are perceived and a confirmation without the conspicuous symbols that you own something of value that transcends time and place. A lifetime companion and heirloom for generations to come.

Taken together, these luxury brand promises reflect the **Ruler/Creator** archetype; one who has the power to create an experience of lasting consequence. This archetypical combination is, psychologically, very powerful and helps to explain the staying power of luxury brands. The brand promise is that you will be able to create a world that is of your own doing and be elevated in the process. This strategy, which is elegantly presented and persistently managed by luxury brands, builds upon profound insights that consumer science research has discovered regarding the link between brand identities and personal identities and how they congeal into becoming our social identities.¹⁵

Empirical research confirms that we choose the brands that are like ourselves, or as we believe we are, or as we wish ourselves to be. The bridge, in this dynamic, which joins the brand to the consumer and the consumer to the brand is the brand persona; whether it's Burger King's cartoon character crown prince or Armani's understated elegance, by putting a human "face" on the brand identity, it transforms an abstract word into a concrete image and, with our psychological consent, into someone like ourselves or whom we wish ourselves to be. Will explore this in greater depth in Chapter 11.

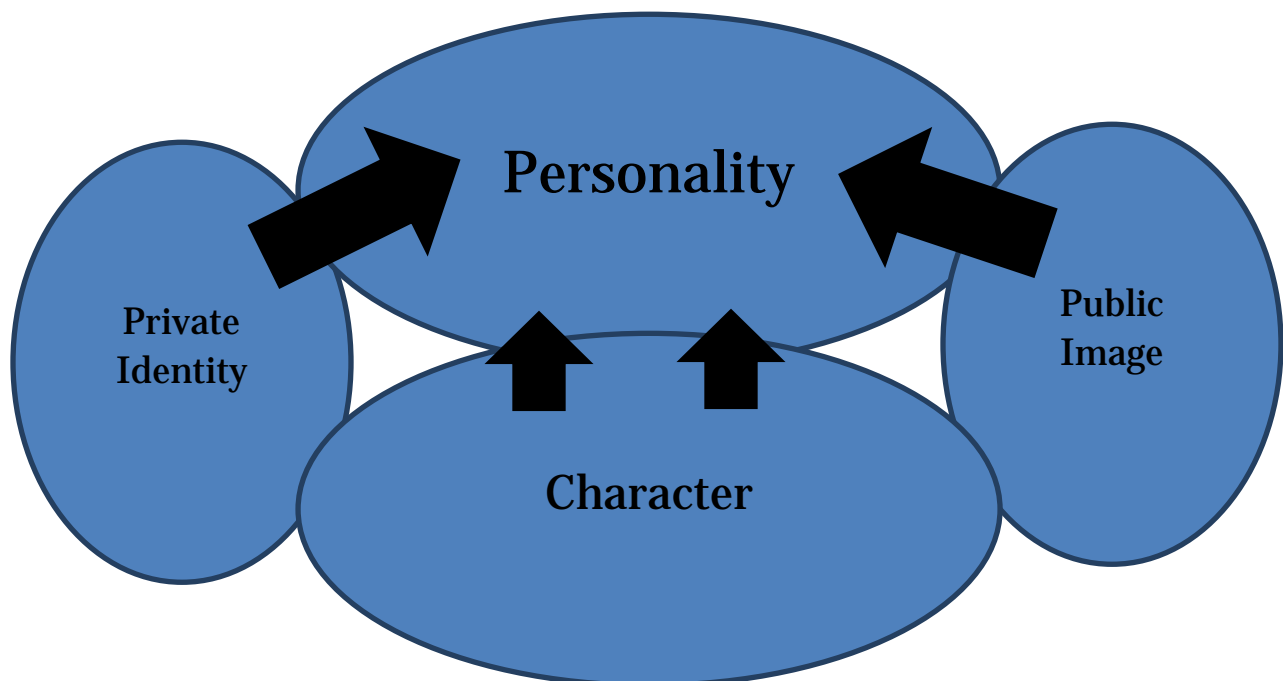
Brand Character

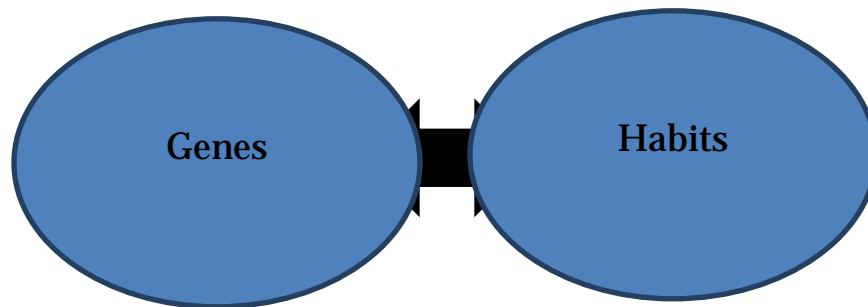
One significant outcome of this is that a luxury brand has a more clearly defined **character** or invariable identity over time; non-luxury brands have more clearly

defined **personality** or variable identity over time. The former provides a more solid foundation for developing a brand promise because, coming from its heritage, it has deeper roots which resonate with authenticity. And it is authenticity, as we will see below, that is a key consumer value in the Internet Age.

[Figure 6.6

Human Character & Personality: A Model for Understanding Brands





Character is meaningful because it goes to the essence of what a brand is, (its being), and is defined by its unalterable DNA. This quality manifests itself in action, or what it does for others and how it forges relationships with them.

Personality goes to the essence of who a brand is and is defined by its social self. It manifests its identity in words, or what it says to others. To a large degree, it is based on traits that others perceive in the brand (brand image) that the brand has internalized (brand identity). As such, it tends to be less definitive and more subject to the changing dynamics of market pressures.

One set of outcomes from this distinction is that luxury brands do not chase trends or do consumer research prior to the launch of a new line. Non-luxury brands do both. Luxury brands have personalities but these are based on their character because they emanate from their heritage wherein their character resides; non-luxury brands are in search of character that they hope will develop over time through consistent behavior confirmed by consumer loyalty. Time and

consistency will result in defining who they are (the brand image) and can create a more solid foundation for defining what they are (the brand identity), or wherein character resides. The brand promise, once you know your character, is clearer and its impact on business practices more direct and immediate.

One reason for this impact is that its pronouncements and identity are seen as more authentic by target audiences and core consumers. Authenticity is, and will continue to become, a key dynamic in driving business outcomes in both luxury and non-luxury brands. This is the result of the intersection of two macro-social events; the first is the dominance of the Internet in commerce and communications and how brands are subject to an ever increasing scrutiny and the second is the advent and ascendancy of Millennials as the largest and most aggressively engaged cohort. With them comes a preference for acting over speaking and for the authentic over the contrived.¹⁶

The exception to the challenge that non-luxury brands face regarding character is found in those companies which are socially responsible and whose cultures of social concern are intensely authentic. These companies are able to operate in a different way. They don't pander to public opinion and they tend to behave in ways that are counter-intuitive to conventional business wisdom. Later in this chapter we'll look at socially responsible companies that have seamlessly woven authenticity into their business cultures and business objectives, creating a new source of brand character. As they do so, they begin to mimic luxury brands.

Mission Statements

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, mission statements are often the ultimate source of a brand promise and the consumer-centric tag-line. In addition, well-crafted and consistently communicated mission statements are the first steps toward internal brand awareness, which is a pre-condition for successfully building external brand awareness.

Luxury brands tend to show a greater consistency in aligning missions with internal operations and building internal brand awareness. Once again, this is the result of a clearer connection between the heritage, the mission and its brand promise, which we've labeled "character".

But to be effective, the mission has to be part of a brand management strategy which integrates the mission into everyday operations; it must be something more than just a poster of promises pinned up in the stock room or posted in an employee's locker. What follows are several examples of luxury brands that consistently execute their missions and operationalize the brand promise.

Brandstorming Success: Ritz Carlton, BMW and Polo Ralph Lauren

As an example of how a brand promise can be successfully managed and put into daily operations to accomplish this, we return to the Ritz Carlton brand and one of

its IP assets, called “The Credo ®”, whose general message is reproduced below reflecting some of its brand values:

[Figure 6.7]

Ritz Carlton’s “Credo” (Beliefs) Which Reflect the Brand’s Values



Measuring and Managing Corporate Culture: The Invisible Key to Organizational Success

UNIVERSITY OF LUGANO – MS COM EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS LECTURE SERIES

Ritz-Carlton Values

- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission.
- We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed yet refined ambience.
- The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instills well-being, and fulfills even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.

24

The Credo is read with the entire staff present at the start of every shift in every Ritz Carlton hotel around the world. As you examine it, it becomes evident that it is a brand promise which condenses the various sources of brand values, discussed earlier, that constitute the “Ritz-Carlton Experience”. It promises service and facilities to “enliven the senses”, “instill well-being” and anticipate

the “unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests”. These are highly relevant.

The pledge that the execution will be “relaxed yet refined” is, given the seeming tension between those values, a differentiator from its competitors.

The key to a successful implementation, is to pronounce the purpose for which the company is in business. It should be inspiring and uplifting but without the standard platitudes as to how “concerned” with their employees the company is or how focused on “quality” or “shareholder value” etc. In essence, it should avoid the type of statements that might be found in the Antes quadrant of the Brand Loyalty Matrix in Chapter two. It should take its cue from the values found in the Driver quadrant, where the high degrees of consumer relevancy and competitive differentiation reside.

The importance of engaging company personnel should not be underestimated. Successful brand marketing begins from inside the company first and foremost. The employees, being the best potential brand advocates, can only begin to be so when they are clear as to what the company stands for; that is, what is its unique purpose as formulated in the brand promise and captured in its mission statement. This employee engagement is essential to the internal integration of all into a team and to the realization of the everyday objective of motivating each and every employee.

BMW (aka Bavarian Motor Works) is another example of a highly successful luxury brand that has integrated its mission with its tag-line and brand

promise. The clarity and character of the content is confirmed by the fact that BMW's mission statement and tagline have never been changed in over 30 years!

Below is the logo and the accompanying four word tagline. Besides the fact that a concise tagline is easier to remember, as a practical matter it should not be too long as it often needs to fit under the logo in advertising layouts.

Here is the BMW's mission statement: *"The BMW Group is the world's leading provider of premium products and premium services for individual mobility"*.

[Figure 6.8]

The BMW logo



Here is the tag-line: *The Ultimate Driving Machine*”

What is so powerful about the value propositions in these two sources of the brand promise, is that there is no mention of any products but only the brand experience. Had the copy referenced motorcars, it would have kept BMW from readily marketing motorcycles, snowmobiles, and the like, thereby falling into the trap of marketing myopia . The brand promise clearly aligns with the relevancy of a target segment that longs for the exhilaration of driving a premium motorcar but speaks to the psychological dynamic of an individual’s experiencing a certain “mobility” that the brand promises to deliver. This mobility conjures up the idea of “freedom” and, as such, it resonates on several levels. On the one hand, it corresponds to the open road and the exhilaration of the “ultimate” driving experience. On the other hand, it hints at a confirmation of social mobility, for which the reference to “premium” serves as a code word, in this context, for luxury, promising the consumer will experience that as well.

The takeaway here is that the messaging is truly an example of “**relevant differentiation**” or the successful integration and optimization of the two variables which frame the brand loyalty matrix.

Not every brand has a tag-line that accompanies their logo in ads and on home pages. Some such as Polo Ralph Lauren (PRL) express their brand promise through advertising copy and expressions of values which accompany fashion shows and on-line postings. The opening quote for this chapter, for example,

comes from Ralph Lauren's 2008 brand **look book** which is a compilation of images and pictures of that season's collection.

The test of a mission and a promise, therefore is not necessarily in the creation of a formal vision communications. As an example, here is copy of the **voice-over**—the verbal message played while the visual message is displayed—from a series of sumptuous television ads run by PRL that ran as an introduction to *Downton Abbey* which has aired from time to time on PBS's Masterpiece Theatre.

"I create a world beyond fashion. I want to conjure a feeling of romance and vintage glamour. This is how fashion becomes timeless and tradition becomes forever." This voice over copy produced in 2014, is remarkably consistent with the quote referenced at the headline of this chapter and composed some six years prior. The same brand promise, as literally expressed by the "brand voice" Ralph Lauren in 2014 is exactly as it was in 2008.

"I'm not in the business of fashion, I'm in the business of dreams" The above quotations are expressions of character born of a clear brand heritage and identity.

Delivering Brand Promises in Social Media

"The promise of content marketing is that we can directly connect with our customers" (but) ...customers want to hear about what you can do for them. The

*smartest brands are aligning their content to something greater than themselves.*¹⁷

With this vision of **content marketing**, and its focus on relevant communications for and alignment with core consumers, we return again to the notion of experiential brand management. The brand promise can be as key a strategic element on-line as it is off-line and deliver brand values providing a seamless consumer experience between the two. The most successful brands on-line understand that the business they are really in is not about the product or about self-promotion, but about the consumer and emotional needs and they follow this vision accordingly.

Non-Luxury Mass Brands

Let's begin with the Subway food and sandwich brand. A visit to Subway's website shows strong health-focused content with suggestions from experts such as nutritionists and trainers on how to live healthily. There is no suggestion that Subway sandwiches can help in this endeavor. In fact, recipes for cooking at home are featured! They also sponsor Heart Association walks and contests for weight loss. The business they are really in is "...*helping you live a healthier life.*"¹⁸

A stop on the LinkedIn site proves as insightful as Subway's. Beginning as a platform for job-seekers, LinkedIn has evolved into something more

comprehensive. Its "Influencers" programs, for example, has inspirational commentary and informational anecdotes from high achievers like Bill Gates as well as everyday people regarding their own experiences. It positions the brand as a place for people who are ambitious and want to get ahead. Very often, the tactics used to build careers are innovative and are posted as learning opportunities. *"LinkedIn is now for anyone who has ambition"*¹⁹. This is the business they are really in, the business of encouraging ambition.

Where LinkedIn has succeeded, Facebook has not. Facebook's content strategy began on a solid footing but soon found itself on a slippery slope. Its "Facebook Stories" was devised to be a content platform of how people used Facebook in imaginative ways with extraordinary results. The problem that emerged was two-fold: firstly, there was no thematic structure as to what might be posted so the site suffered from a lack of congruity and secondly, the Facebook posting policy required that the stories had to be how Facebook helped, something that is not required on LinkedIn. This invariably leads to a kind of censorship in the interest of brand promotion. It is the very opposite of what the **connective on-line community**, those who participate in and identify with social media groups, seek from on-line content - objectivity and authenticity.

In a similar scenario, where Subway succeeded, *McDonald's* has not. Its content platform is labeled "Mom's Quality Correspondents" and raises concern as it implies that real moms are writing real stories, which they apparently are not.

The stories are crafted by McDonald's PR people and seem unable to tell a tale that is relevant to its customer base and one that isn't a promotion of the brand and its products. For instance, articles on McCafe coffee suggest that the company holds coffee growers to a higher standard. Why this would be something of such high relevancy to a Mom that she would comment on, is unclear. Another article talks about how a Happy Meal toy is part of the brand experience and, by implication, is what concerned Moms think about when they plan a trip to McDonald's. How this is factored in to Mom's plan is never explained.²⁰

We come back to our standard of relevancy which, given the transparency of all content on the web and its wide availability (including re-postings of all stories), imposes an even greater responsibility on brand managers to abide by objectivity and authenticity and to align content with real needs of actual consumers. In this instance, finding out what the real concerns of real parents who come to McDonald's for a family meal and clean restrooms would have been a proper start towards aligning content with community.

Luxury Brands

The Louis Vuitton (LV) blog entitled Nowness has been heralded as a model for a luxury brand's on-line content creation.²¹ The story content was about those who created the on-line story, a kind of story within a story, and as such it became experiential without promoting the brand itself.

Thematically, the storylines continued to play off of the Louis Vuitton “Art of Travel” video with whimsical tours of Paris, New York, and other cities. It had broad viewership on YouTube and on its Art of Travel Page on Facebook, where it had over 1,750,000 “Likes”. This content reflects LV’s identity with the **Explorer** archetype and continues a seamless transition from the brand’s first content offering in “City Guides” with its insiders travel tips, to its travel journals; these journals are written by actual LV travelers as reflections of their feelings and their actual travel adventures which LV makes available for sale. There are no pictures of “best” vacation destinations or a travelogue of recommended hotels and restaurants. These are actual journals created by the experiential journaling of actual LV consumers and travelers. They are living examples of the archetype and anchor the brand solidly in authenticity and relevancy. Since there are no LV travel accessories featured, the brand is in the experience.

The LV heritage of indestructible steamer trunks and elegant travel accessories supports and guides the brand’s character which becomes apparent from the internal consistency of the content. The LV brand promise is that with LV, your travel experience will be like none other; even if that experience is virtual. Now anyone can experience the LV lifestyle.

“The beauty of Nowness is that it doesn’t feel like branded content...it’s a distinct, independent point of view that you can’t get anywhere else - and that’s what consumers are craving. A good example of how luxury brands can

participate in the social digital space and keep their brand cachet intact.”²²

Another example of how branded content can be successfully packaged and presented is Burberry’s “The Art of The Trench”. Again, anchored in the heritage of the brand and its iconic trench coat (and the Haymarket Plaid that came with it), the very name continues the tradition while the new media brings it into today’s modern brand experience. The plaid is nowhere to be seen but trench coats show up everywhere! Shorter for rain or shine wear they are fashion accessories worn by attendees at the various events (usually store openings and the parties that come with those openings) The videos are shot in Seoul, Tokyo, New York, Shanghai, and other cool fashion markets. The consumer is decidedly young thirty something men and women, the mood is fun and the wearing is easy.

This content honors the brand’s heritage while bringing it into a modern sensibility. There is no posing and the product is not the centerpiece of the photography, but the lifestyle is and that’s the message and the brand promise.

Brand Promises in Socially Responsible Company Cultures

Cone Communications, a think tank and research organization that tracks charitable giving by corporations and consumer response, has concluded that brand loyalty is increased by corporate charitable giving.²³

In a 2013 consumer opinion survey, Cone Communications found that:

1. 93% of U.S. consumers say that they have a more positive image of a company that supports a cause.
2. 90 % of Americans say they are more likely to trust companies that support a cause.
3. 92% of Americans if given the opportunity would buy a product with social and/or environmental benefits.
4. 90% of Americans said they would be more loyal to companies that back a cause.

Authenticity in Brand Promises and Charitable Giving

The above data is further confirmation that consumers embrace brands that display character and authenticity. These brand promises, in turn, become part of consumer expectations of the brand experience as brand managers seek ways to embed these emotional drivers into the brand promise without compromising brand integrity.

In light of these findings, the brand promise has taken on new ways to express itself and new platforms upon which to do so. Corporate charitable giving, often to non-profit organizations, has emerged as an essential expression of the brand promise. This giving back takes several institutional and organizational forms which have different impacts on consumer perceptions of the

brand promise.

Cause Marketing, Philanthropic Giving, and Social Consciousness

Of these three approaches to charitable giving, Cause Marketing has the widest corporate involvement and the greatest exposure to consumer criticism.

It might take the form of annual contributions or an event such as Yoplait Yogurts, “Save Lids to Save Lives” campaign. In this campaign, for each yogurt lid sent in to the company, Yoplait contributes a fixed amount to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation to fight breast cancer. Another example is P&G’s support for the Special Olympics through its brand Saver coupon, a special discount for certain product purchases. P&G then contributes a percentage of those sales made within a specific time frame. In each of these promotions, the programs are win-wins for both the charity and the corporation. The former enjoy the revenue from the corporate contribution, while the latter experience sales plus the strong possibility of building consumer loyalty to the brand driving the promotion.

The challenge is to remain socially responsible and create **social value** that is a measureable increase in realizing the objectives of the charity without exploiting the opportunity to turn the giving into a public relations coup by trumpeting the donations. In a study in the Harvard Business review, Michael Porter and Arnold Kramer concluded:

“...as long as companies remain focused on the public relations benefit of their contributions instead of impact achieved, they will sacrifice opportunities to create social value.”²⁴

However, there is risk in this type of giving. Yoplait as a brand has no intrinsic or organic relationship between eliminating breast cancer and its brand identity. There is no necessary connection other than that women may be the core consumer of the brand; the question can arise as to whether the charitable giving is an expediency. The promise of the brand, as presented in its ads, is that Yoplait is a low calorie, delicious snack. The promise is not primarily tied to better health.

This is not to say that the corporate objective is not a noble one; certainly eliminating breast cancer is a goal we all would welcome. But what is the consumer perception of the giving? If the charity is not aligned with the brand promise and its identity, does it not run the risk of being questioned by the consumer as to its motives? Is it charity or commerce that is driving the giving?

A similar and perhaps more disparate connection exists between P&G and the Special Olympics. Apart from general usage, how do Crest, Tide, and other brands in the P&G portfolio align with the Special Olympics? Again, the further the distance between the brand identity and the charitable cause, the greater the possibility of consumer disengagement. In the words of one observer of charitable giving and its impact on brand loyalty:

“While consumers seem likely to support causes with their purchases, Cone Communications also found that they are willing to boycott companies that behave irresponsibly”.²⁵

This is not to say that these charitable givings should end because they jeopardize the brand promise. It is that the greater the distance between the brand promise and the charitable solution, the more cautious brand managers must be. When posting web content, for example, they need to be cautious and to avoid fostering the perception that they are promoting the charitable giving. In the words of another observer who follows corporate giving as Cause Marketing:

“Cause Marketing can be a tricky business...consumer perception can quickly lead to success or failure—to a positive brand association or a negative one that impacts your organization long-term”.²⁶

Corporate philanthropic giving is also a widely used method that major brands have as their method of giving back to their communities. These are less subject to the consumer scrutiny found in Cause Marketing. Again, the charities involved are most often not directly aligned with the brand promise but philanthropic giving is almost always non-promotional and without ties to an immediate sales and revenue benefit. This insulates the brand from some of the possible criticism that the giving is self-serving.

A good example of this is found in Brooks Brothers and their Golden Fleece foundation. Here, the philanthropic giving is viewed as an extension of the

Brook's Brothers brand value of relationship building. The giving is usually back to communities that are close to the business locations but the public pronouncements of the donations, apart from a section on their web-site, is almost non-existent.

The Golden Fleece is however, well understood inside the corporate culture. In terms of heritage, you'll recall in our discussion in Chapter1, Golden Fleece was a symbol of quality and integrity, something the Brooks Brothers brand strenuously adheres to. In its mission statement this connection is clearly referenced: Here is their mission statement:

"to make and deal only in merchandise of the best quality, to sell it at a fair profit only, and to deal only with people who seek and are capable of appreciating such merchandise" – Henry Sands Brooks 1818

This implies a culture of privilege and with it often comes the inferred responsibility to give back to the less fortunate. This mission helps to integrate the various functional teams inside of the company as an internal brand promise of which they are justly proud and which has the effect of uniting and motivating the employees to be brand advocates.

Aligning Internal Company Values with Social Causes

The most successful cause marketing undertakings are those that integrate the cause with the brand's heritage and everyday operations. In these cases, social

causes become company policy rather than afterthoughts.

Levi's commitment to saving water in the production of denim products is a case in point. The amount of water used in producing a single pair could serve as drinking water in a village for days. In fact, Levi's has joined with villages and NGO's (non-government organizations) in India to bring better irrigation methods to a sweeping number of villages in India. They have tied this back to intensive research on developing denim without heavy usage of water in the process.²⁷ From this social cause commitment they created a Levi's jean that does not need washing and resists dirt, odors, and stains. The one of many testimonials from satisfied users claims that he has not cleaned his Levi jeans made with this process in almost a year!²⁸ Levi's has created a separate merchandise presentation for this collection in idea of water conservation and garment durability including special hangtags on each garment which explains the process and the social benefits. This commitment to sustainability was extended to their Dockers division with their Well thread initiative where the integration of saving water, education workers, and creating more durable/less disposable products was continued.

This brings Levi's back to its **Explorer heritage** and the archetypal values and behavior of risk taking and innovation that accompany it. For some time it had oscillated from Rebel to Lover to Innocent archetypes in different marketing campaigns in search of its brand identity. The brand promise became muddled.

With this new social cause, Levi's returns to its roots in the innovation space from which it originated. This anchoring in the Explorer archetype lends character and authenticity to this undertaking and has helped catapult Levi's back into market prominence. Having literally invented the category (denim jeans), they have now returned and re-claim their heritage. Their brand promise that they will be the Explorer is back. Here is the brand promise re-stated by Michael Koberi, VP of Social and environmental sustainability at Levi Strauss:

*"Our company has been guided by the same principles since its founding 160 years ago... We believe that we can use our iconic brands to drive positive sustainable change and profitable results. Progress is in our DNA. We invented a category and with that comes the responsibility to continually innovate for each new generation of consumers."*²⁹

The movement toward sustainability finds some companies that were launched not from an original product or service perspective, but from a social responsibility consciousness. Two such companies are TOMS shoes and Warby Parker eyeglasses.

The impetus for the TOMS shoes began in 2006, when its founder, traveling in South America, became aware of how essential basic footwear was and how often it was beyond affordability for many children. TOMS donates a pair of shoes to needy children around the world with each pair that is sold. To date (2015) that comes to over 35 million pairs of shoes in over 70 countries!

Other product categories have been added to this charitable giving.

The degree to which this brand promise of giving is imbedded in the culture is reflected in their web-site which has updated versions of “Their Giving Story” and in their creation of a “C” level position within the company, a Chief Giving Officer! Here is how this is described on the web-site:

“At TOMS, giving is our DNA and had been from the start! As perhaps the only company with a Chief Giving Officer, giving will always be core to our work as a responsible company.”³⁰

Warby Parker (WP) does with eyeglasses what TOMS does with footwear, making them affordable and accessible to a broader population. As with TOMS, the impetus for the business was to be as socially conscious as the brand promise. For WP, this included becoming a **B corporation**, which are for profit companies that pledge to achieve social goals as well as business ones.³¹ A B corporation commits the business to pursue its self-imposed social responsibilities and requires compliance with this commitment or be subject to shareholder reaction and possible legal proceedings. This is the ultimate confirmation of their commitment to the brand promise.

Their social responsibility actions are seen as authentic by the core consumer because they have become the reason for the companies’ being. The brand promise is the social cause.

Of all these examples, the one brand that leads the way in the total

seamless integration of social responsibility with its brand identity and “brand promise is Patagonia.

Case Study: Patagonia

Patagonia was founded by Yvon Chouinard, an avid rock climber, hiker and outdoorsman. When he could not find high quality steel climbing pins used for ascending a rock climb that were reasonably priced and did not damage the rock formations, he developed his own, and Patagonia was created.

This respect for the environment and quest for the innovative high quality solution became the brand mission of Patagonia. Here is their mission statement from their web-site:

“Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crises”³²

The company gradually added apparel and other equipment (e.g. fly rod fishing). It also made the commitment early on to give back to environmental causes. The give-back formula was and, 30 years later, still is 1% of sales or 10% of profits, whichever is greater. Today, the company generates over \$650 million in sales and is a B corporation.³³

The company culture expresses the company brand promise. Leaving work early to surf or hike or rock climb is encouraged without any reduction in pay. There is no punching-in or signing-out and the company supports charitable

work by offering flex-time for it as well.

The company does little advertising. When it does, it is thematically consistent with its brand promise of safeguarding the environment. Several promotional movies have been made (and more are on the drawing board) which provide hard facts on environmental challenges.

When traditional ads are run they are environmentally charged. In an unparalleled ad in the New York Times just before Christmas 2011, a Patagonia jacket was shown with the headline “Don’t Buy This Jacket”, admonishing consumers to make purchases of only what they really needed. This was reinforced on the web-site with their “Common Threads” and “The Footprint Chronicles” pages. The former advocates sustainability by asking consumers not to buy what they can’t use or need. The latter presents, in sobering details, the amounts of water, toxic waste and carbon dioxide expended to make and distribute a Patagonia jacket.³⁴

The theme that “disposable” apparel was a threat to the environment was reinforced by a three part company policy still in effect today:

1. Developing products from recycled plastic bottles
2. Allowing consumers to return Patagonia product worn to the company for re-sale.
3. Opening “WornWear” facilities for receiving, refurbishing, and re-selling apparel.

In fiscal year 2012, when apparel companies were struggling with sales and bottom line results, Patagonia experienced a 30% increase in revenues!³⁵ *“The company is making money by living its brand promise.”*³⁶

As a further commitment to abiding by its brand promise”...*to inspire and implement solutions to our environmental crises*”, Patagonia’s CEO Rose Marcario announced in early March of 2016 its role in creating a \$ 27 million fund with three other B corporations including two banks and a solar panel energy company to install solar panels in 1000 homes in Hawaii free of charge with more plans for other states as well; This outreach to private homes is a first for them and extends their brand promise beyond sustainable practices which are in effect within Patagonia’s organization.³⁷ This is another example of how, in authentic ways, Patagonia continues to express their brand identity and increase their engagement with brand loyalists.

Summary

Brand Promises are key aspects of consumer information that brand managers need to develop and manage. . A brand promise or mantra is usually an internal company message (not to be confused with an advertising tagline) and is related to a positioning statement in that it says why the brand differs from competitors

and suggests its unique reason for being, or unique value proposition. It is a guideline that all internal members who interface with the brand should use as a guidepost in their everyday decision-making. Brand Promises differentiate a brand from its competitors and generate consumer expectations as to what experience the brand will deliver. Brand Promises need to identify their archetype. These create the foundation for the brand identity. Brand Personas complete the communication strategy by delivering the message in the form of a brand personality.

Taglines are the major means of communicating these promises. To be effective, they need to be concise, clear and compelling' and aligned with what the core consumer values and why they purchase the brand. When there are constant changes in the tag-line message and a change in the consistency of the content, an opportunity to engage the consumer is reduced or lost.

The Brand Promise has to execute its purpose with integrity. That is, what is promised is delivered. For luxury brands steeped in heritage, it is often much easier to locate the brand's DNA or its character and identity which creates a clearer idea of what the timeless promise is. For non-luxury brands, they need to be more diligent in determining their identity and maintaining their character.

Mission Statements are a good starting point for finding the principles and values of a brand's promise. They should guide the creation of the tag-line which should capture the spirit of the mission in condensed content. However, especially with

luxury brands, often the brand narrative and the heritage contain the promise.

The very same principles discussed above should guide luxury and non-luxury brands on line. Finally, as consumers seek more and more authenticity in Brand Promises, socially responsible charitable giving becomes an important part of brand management. Those companies that have aligned their everyday operations and cultural values with the social cause are most likely to be seen as authentic. This is especially so when companies such as Patagonia engage problems and implement solutions to sustainability issues that are aligned with their core business competencies and brand identity.

Key Terms

Brand Promise – A promise to a customer to deliver a set of relevant, functional and/or emotional transactional experiences

Transactional refers to purchases and the interaction with the brands sales people and selling platforms

Existential, those emotional takeaways that result from the general interaction with brand touchpoints

Symbiotic – Two parties serving and being mutually dependent upon each other for certain benefits and rewards

Authenticity – a genuine concern for consumers' well-being

In voice - the brand narrative which expresses the brand personality, who it is for and why it matters

Ruler archetype – an archetype that is in control, follows the rules, and must run the show

Creator archetype – an archetype that is innovative in finding solutions

Rebel archetype – an archetype that disrupts the status quo and breaks the rules of the game

Tag-lines - condensed brand promises designed to inform the target consumer

Core competencies – what a corporation excels at

.Ruler/Creator - one who has the power to create an experience of lasting consequence

Character - invariable identity over time

Personality - variable identity over time

Relevant differentiation - the successful integration and optimization of the two

variables which frame the brand loyalty matrix

Look book - a compilation of images and pictures of that season's collection

Voice-over – In advertising, a verbal message played while a visual message is displayed

Content marketing – a focus on relevant communications for and alignment with core consumers

Connective on-line community - those who participate in and identify with social media groups

Explorer archetype – the archetypal values and behavior of risk taking and innovation that accompany it

Social value - a measureable increase in realizing the objectives of the charity without exploiting the opportunity to turn the giving into a public relations coup by trumpeting the donations

B corporation - for profit companies that pledge to achieve social goals as well as business ones

Chapter Conversations

- How do Brand Promises align with personas and archetypes
- In what ways do Luxury brands have a stronger foundation for their brand promise than non-luxury brands
- Why is authenticity an important value for brand managers in B corporations?

Chapter Challenges

- You're the brand manager. Your Chief Marketing Officer has been approached by a marketing agency to change your tag-line. She's asked for your opinion and guidance. How would you answer her?
- *'Social Media and Traditional media are two separate worlds and therefore need two brand promises'* How would you respond to this assertion?
- Your CEO is thinking of changing the company's legal status to a B corporation. What would be the key questions that the CEO should be thinking about?

End Notes

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