

MANAGING BRANDS IN 4D

Understanding Perceptual, Emotional, Social and
Cultural Branding

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Understanding Perceptual, Emotional, Social and
Cultural Branding

BY

JACEK POGORZELSKI



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About the Author

Jacek Pogorzelski, has a PhD in Management. He has been lecturing at Kozminski University, Warsaw School of Economics and University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. He is an experienced brand strategist and customer experience management consultant. He has been involved in brand management in theory and in practice for over 12 years now. He reads, investigates, designs strategies and helps market brands as well as developing his own brand analysis methods and strategic models. He has an in-depth knowledge of consumer insight, brand positioning, designing brand personality, brand planning in theory and in practice, brand culture modelling and brand archetype management. He himself used to manage FMCG and OTC brands, as well as help clients from many lines of business, from construction and IT services to fashion and cosmetics. He has worked with Polish, US, UK, German and Spanish companies.

He used to teach postgraduate and MBA students in Poland and in the USA. He trains corporate and public administration executives. He is a long-standing partner of programmes of The Chartered Institute of Marketing in London.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

We all like unambiguousness. One solution, one method, one explanation. Unfortunately, reality is complex. And so is the brand idea. We can often hear the opinion that brand is one effect: an image, an idea that brings people together, a strong emotion, an experience. However, brand is not an effect that belongs to one category but to many of them. Brand is associations or memory, feelings or emotions, attitudes, beliefs and values. But brand is also about experiences, lifestyle, the way we interact with others and identity. Most often, when we talk about brands, I feel like saying: brand is more than you think.

When looking at the existing brand models, I always used to feel at least one of the two doubts:

1. Something is missing here.
2. The model includes a random set of variables. Why are they those specific ones rather than others?

A lot of papers have been published on what is the most important thing about brand. Some researchers list some aspects, some others, while the correct answer is: it depends. It depends mainly on what type of brand we wish to create. The thing is brand may take different forms; in my opinion, four main ones.

Most of those hired to manage brands are never explained ‘what’ they manage but immediately ‘how’. They are not told what brand they will be managing, nor is any audit of brand equity elements performed with them. And they are certainly not informed what kind of brand it is. Often all they get is a binder and a login to an intranet platform where they can find an overview of the brand based on a model applicable in a given organisation. Much more emphasis is placed on understanding tactical brand management tools used by that organisation.

This book combines ‘what’ and ‘how’. The ‘what’ is four brand levels and the ‘how’ – processes and tools. This is not a strictly theoretical book, with meditations on what brand is. Neither is it a set of

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tools isolated from the brand concept. This is a book that provides hints on how to create a brand and which tools to use. It orders and organises the world of brand management both at the conceptual and practical level.

The first impulse for writing it was Holt's publication (2004), dealing with so-called cultural branding. The author presents four branding types there which he calls: mind-share (appealing to the brand's share of consumer's awareness), emotional, viral and cultural. Inspired by his approach, I decided to develop my own brand typology (or, to be more exact, branding typology as the word 'branding' refers to the very process of brand creation). It half corresponds to Holt's typology, while its other half presents a different approach. After all, Holt only dealt with cultural branding, while I have attempted to describe all four branding types.

What I come across most often is the approach to branding as to a binary process, where zero stands for no brand and one for brand's existence. When a company decides to create a brand, it most often perceives this decision as a transition from zero state to one state. This simplistic approach is underpinned by two dangerous assumptions:

1. Each brand may be created in a standardised manner.
2. Each created brand should be supported by more or less the same repertoire of measures to build its equity, which is made of similar elements.

My intention is to share knowledge that will help include a new variable in that decision: brand type a company wishes to create and then manage. In my opinion, the reality of brands, contrary to the binary vision, looks like that:

1. A brand may be managed on different levels.
2. While being successful on one level, it may underperform on others.
3. Brand managers may never learn what it's missing ...
4. ... as their brand mentality is confined to one level and is often limited by a specific brand model.

This is no dogma, it's the single greatest limitation in brand management. What you don't know that you don't know will never let you cross the invisible barrier.

Throughout this book, I use the terms 'branding method' and 'brand level' interchangeably, as both can be referred to the typology presented here. Branding method refers to goals and tools and these are different

in respective types of branding. A brand based on consumer perception is created differently to one based on social relationship. The outcome of both efforts is also different. Brands resulting from them will have a different equity structure. A brand may function on more than one level. There is no shortage of examples of brands that have a well-developed image, engage consumers emotionally, rally them around certain values and promote certain cultural ideas.

There are four branding methods or brand levels:

1. brand based on consumer's perception: *perceptual branding*;
2. brand based on emotional response: *emotional branding*;
3. brand based on social bond: *social branding*; and
4. brand based on cultural idea: *cultural branding*.

Four branding types correspond to different categories of factors driving consumer behaviour (I mean psychological, social and cultural factors). What is of key importance is the understanding that a brand is not only a useful management tool, but also rather a subtle process of dialogue between its owner and the consumer, which changes them both. Brands have a much greater significance than is commonly believed. Not only do they entice a purchase, but they also create ideologies, support a specific lifestyle and change culture.

To avoid using the hackneyed though true slogans like 'brand is more than logo, packaging and advertising' or 'brand is more than image', I will use a quote from an article by Greenwood and Kahle (2007), which demonstrates the complexity of the brand phenomenon:

The universal anthropomorphism of brands has been documented: we attribute human characteristics to brands in the process of developing relationships with them (Aaker, 1997; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). At least five aspects of brands identified in Keller and Lehmann (2006) have a direct tie to relationships. Brand positioning is tied to "corporate images and reputation," which share characteristics with human image and reputation; brand personality references five human characteristics; brand relations share characteristics with human relationships, are susceptible to deceit, and have personalities; brand experience is engineered to engage human preferences; and brand values are a potentially heuristic concept worthy of exploration. (Kim, Boush, Marquardt, & Kahle, 2006)

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Maurya and Mishra (2012) tried to create a full typology of meanings assigned to brands and defined 12 areas of such meanings:

1. brand as a logo;
2. brand as a legal instrument;
3. brand as a company;
4. brand as a mental and decision-making shortcut;
5. brand as a risk reducer;
6. brand as an identification system;
7. brand as an image in the consumer's mind;
8. brand as a system of values;
9. brand as a personality;
10. brand as a relationship;
11. brand as added value; and
12. brand as evolving entity.

Kudos to whoever finds an organisation that understands the meaning of its brand on all those levels. What is worse is that we use those meanings randomly and without warning those we are talking to, which sometimes makes it hard to communicate.

The consequence of the approach adopted is not one but four brand definitions, each arising out of different premises and a different way to create a brand. This is only ostensibly a complication of the reality of brands, which has been, for a long time now, becoming very complex, with newer and newer brand definitions cropping up, quite unrelated to those before them. Hence, this is not a paper that proposes four brand definitions instead of one but four instead of several dozens or even several hundreds. Indeed, there is no single brand definition that takes account of all of its aspects. Reducing them to four is still a better solution than to further use any of the tens or hundreds, depending on which brand aspect we wish to emphasise.

We are finally arriving at the main motivation that made me write this book. It's my disagreement with the terminological and conceptual chaos in the brand and branding environment. This chaos can be seen not only among the so-called practitioners, but also in the Academia where a researcher and author of a paper may adopt any given initial brand definition, choosing it among the many proposed earlier by other researchers. I have felt, for a long time now, that brand is a victim of ambiguousness favoured by its simple name that can be easily used as a buzzword, and by the lack of common understanding of what it is. It is easy to drop the word 'brand' in a conversation, but it's highly doubtful whether

the speaker and the recipient will mean the same. And yet we are talking of bilateral communication. So what should brand understanding be on the level of full-scale discourse about it? How many intuitive, untrue, exaggerated, inappropriate and utterly false definitions are still in circulation?

Does it mean my motivation was to standardise how the term brand is construed? Yes, but being aware that my proposal would be one of the steps in the process rather than full solution to the problem. It's an intention rather than a plan.

Is this a guidebook? It certainly is. The typology proposed is a sort of a map to branding types. Is this a book that provides tools? Even though I stand for the primacy of strategic thinking over using tools as the starting point of brand management, I do not shy away from providing tools for managing each type of brand. Is this a book that puts different, sometimes conflicting, brand concepts in order and will finally help us feel we're talking about the same thing? It certainly provides full grounds for that. All it takes in a discussion is asking: Excuse me, what type of brand are we talking about? This should explain a lot and help continue the conversation, workshop or interview.

The description of each branding method is composed of the following parts:

- *Area.* What area of human life does a given branding type relate to? What phenomena are related to it? What are its main concepts and the current knowledge?
- *Goal.* What is the goal of a given branding type?
- *Tools.* What are the main tools useful for building a brand in line with a given branding type?
- *Levels.* How is a given branding type performed from the least to the most advanced level?
- *Outcomes.* What outcomes are involved in a given branding type? How do brands that are built following its principles work?

When working on this book, I read more than 250 scientific articles, books and reports. I went over a number of case studies and studied my personal library of brand analysis tools, where I had collected over 100 different models, concepts, analytical and planning instruments. When you combine science, and its amazing power of enquiry, precision and review, with the pragmatic nature of tools and practitioners' experience, you achieve much more than when relying on only one of those pillars. As a person who is familiar with both these areas, I see it as my duty to create as many connections between them as possible. This book is one of such connections.