

## Chapter 17

### Consumer Relationships with Brands: Loyalty, Romance, and Brand Tribes Brand Personality—The Source of Consumers' Identification with the Brand

Beyond performance, what is needed for brand loyalty is the brand's ability to connect with consumers. So that consumers may identify themselves with the brand. This happens when consumers feel that the brand has the same or similar personality as they themselves do.

People have personalities, of course, as we saw in an earlier chapter; but do brands have personalities, too? To answer this question, let us begin with a quiz. Below is a list of qualities, or personality traits, we associate with *people*. Following this list is a set of brands in a few product categories (cars, soft drinks, clothing, etc.); can you match individual brands in each product category with the following qualities?

- A. Sincere
- B. Exciting
- C. Competent
- D. Sophisticated
- E. Rugged

<u>Cars</u>	<u>Drinks</u>	<u>Clothes</u>	<u>Misc.</u>
Mercedes	Root Beer	Gap	WSJ
Honda	Coke	Nike	Kodak
Saturn	Gatorade	Club Crown	Wall Street Journal
Rav4	Snapple	Banana Republic	Apple Computer
Blazer	Perrier	Lands' End	Campbell Soup

How did you do? Most people would assign various cars to the qualities list (in the order of 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', and 'E') as Saturn, Rav4, Honda, Mercedes, and Blazer. Likewise, soft drinks as: Coke (A), Snapple (B), Gatorade (C), Perrier (D), and Root Beer (E). We'll leave clothing and other items for you to explore. As this trivia should convince you, products and brands do have personalities—that is, as consumers, we do see brands and products as possessing personalities.

If we describe ourselves and other people by certain qualities, known as personality traits, and as consumers if we use products and brands to convey the type of person we are, it makes sense that we would begin to also describe products and brands by the same human traits. Thus, just like people are cool, urbane, macho, aggressive, fun, and contemporary, so too are brands.

**Brand personality** refers to the set of human qualities by which consumers describe a brand. Obviously, different consumers may see the brand differently, and thus, brand personality, as seen by consumers, may vary from consumer to consumer. The question is, just what are the dimensions of brand personality.

A brand can be described by numerous qualities (good or bad), amounting to hundreds if not thousands. Many of these brand personality descriptors may be mere synonyms (e.g., cool and trendy) and many others closely related (e.g., prestigious and classy). Stanford University marketing professor Jennifer Aaker analyzed a battery of such descriptors consumers use for brands and came up with a manageable set of overarching dimensions—Five Brand Personality Dimensions. You can remember these by the acronym SECTS if you paraphrase “rugged” as “tough.” That these dimensions are also five in number, just like the Big Five of human personality (see Chapter 5, where they were nick-named OCEAN), is a happy coincidence. And

an intuitive reading also shows a broad correspondence of individual dimensions within OCEAN and SECTS:

Conscientiousness is Competence; Agreeableness is Sincerity; Openness and Extraversion crisscross over Excitement (Excitement is more Openness but also a little Extraversion) and Sophisticated (Sophisticated is more extraverted but also a little over Openness); finally, neuroticism's opposite, stability, is like ruggedness (a rugged object is stable). Remember, rather than being exact, the correspondence is intuitive, broad, and suggestive.

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Sincere—down-to-earth, family oriented, genuine, old-fashioned.  
Exciting—spirited, young, up-to-date, outgoing.  
Competent—accomplished, influential, high-performing.  
Rugged—athletic and outdoorsy.  
Sophisticated—pretentious, wealthy, condescending

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SECTS: The Five Dimensions of Brand Personality.  
Source: Adapted from Building Strong Brands, David Aaker, Free Press, 1995

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### Measuring Brand Personality

Measuring brand personality using SECTS is easy. Each dimension of SECTS is scored by a set of six adjectives as shown in the Table 18.4. The scores can then be profiled for any brand or a set of brands for comparison.

### Table 17.4 Measuring Brand Personality (Table Omitted)

#### CB Tutor 17.1. Brand Personality = Brand Image (NOT!)

A clarification is in order. Brand personality is not the same as brand image. What is the difference? **Brand image** consists of all the associations or qualities associated with a brand, which includes physical qualities (e.g., cold, runny, porous, dark, transparent, etc.) and functional qualities (e.g., sucks more dirt, zaps zits, blocks spam, autodial missed caller, etc.), in addition to human qualities; however, only human qualities count as brand personality. Thus, brand personality is a subset of brand image.

### How Brands Acquire Personality

How do brands acquire their personality? There are at least three sources:

**1. Marketer Communications.** Intentionally, marketers convey to consumers certain symbolic brand images: they depict their brands in association with certain people (e.g., celebrities like Tiger Woods), person-images (e.g., cowboy for Marlboro cigarettes), or human-like animated characters (e.g., Pillsbury Doughboy). One recent trend in brand personality advertising is to display a brand and human model side by side with striking visual similarity—as done by recent print ads for Tag Heuer. For want of a term, we would call it **homophily**, which the dictionary defines as “resemblance arising out of common ancestry,” but which we will here define as “resemblance arising out of love and identification.”

—————Ad for Tag Heuer Watch here —————

Other marketer-managed signals also promote the intended brand personality. Indeed, all other elements of the marketing mix build a brand's personality. The brand's name, logo, price,

packaging, and even the store where the brand is sold contribute to the brand's personality. Brand name Obsession gives the cologne *ruggedness*, while Eternity makes it *sincere* even though both colognes are from the same maker, Calvin Klein. Indeed, some of these elements of marketing mix are a way of giving tangible form to the intended brand personality. Visit, for example, a M.A.C Cosmetics store, and see how young store associates are "decorated" M.A.C style; more than anything else, these visual ambassadors personify the trendy, edgy, *exciting* personality of the brand.

**2. Consumers' Social Observations.** In their everyday life, consumers observe who is using what products, and then assign the qualities of the brand's users to the brand. Thus, if consumers see a lot of urban youth wearing Diesel brand jeans and clothing, then Diesel will acquire, in the consumer eye, the personality of being urban and youthful. If consumers also see these same youth (donning Diesel outfits) with conservatively well kempt hair, driving nice cars and patronizing upscale restaurants and clubs, then they would attribute to Diesel the personality of rich, yuppie, fashionable, sophisticated, urbane, and youthful (sort of like Banana Republic or Kenneth Cole brands). On the other hand, if they were to see the Diesel youth donning punk rock hairdos and tattoos, then the personality attributed to Diesel would be rebellious, unorthodox, on-the-edge and youthful (sort of like the brand personality of Hot Topic and Torrid clothing lines).

**3. Cultural Gatekeepers.** In every culture, there are a number of public figures that influence the image of activities, ideas, and products. By adopting a product (without commercial gains from the marketer), by displaying it through personal use, by taking a position on it, by praising it or critiquing it, these cultural gatekeepers inevitably define and influence the brand image for the rest of us.

Two examples will illustrate this: Nike's Air Force One and Manolo Blahnik.

**Air Force One.** No, we are not talking about the presidential plane. We are talking about Nike's basketball shoe designed in 1981. By itself it is so plain (a thick sole, some vent air holes on the top, and a Velcro ankle strap) that unless you knew of it already, you won't give it a second look. And while it endured for two decades—thanks to an occasional lift from hip-hop celebrities—it achieved a cult status in November 2001 when rapper Nelly made it the theme of his single, appropriately titled "Air Force One," which became an instant hit. Some lyrics in it include: "You couldn't get this color if you had a personal genie. I am a sneaker pro, I love Pumas and shelltoes. But can't nothin' compare to a fresh crispy white pair..." While the company (Nike) has occasionally brought out limited editions of other colors, the white-on-white, the subject of Nelly's paean, is now the most coveted shoe among hip-hop fans and pretenders alike.

(Adapted from Maureen Tracik, "Why This Season's Hot Sneaker Is Nowhere to Be Found," *Wall Street J.*, December 10, 2002, B1.)

**Manolo Blahnik.** The designer of this high fashion shoe is one of the most revered shoe designers of the century, but that doesn't put it on the consumer's wish list. Rather it is the roaster of its famous fans—Madonna, Patti Labelle, and Winona Ryder. Of course, what really expanded its circle of admirers is its frequent appearance on the fashionable TV show *Sex and the City*.

## Consumer Relationships with Brands

So, by now, you have gained an intense knowledge of consumer loyalty toward brands. You can separate consumers who would stick with your brand no matter what, from those who would

ditch you in a heartbeat just to get a 25-cent promotional deal. As a brand marketer, you also know what factors enhance brand loyalty and what factors diminish it.

(Rest omitted...)

(From *MYCBtextbook*, Chapter 17)

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This has been a MYCBTextbook Presentation. Thank you for reading.