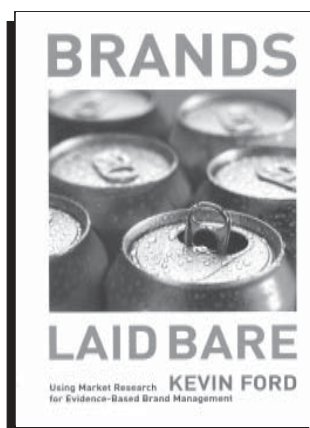


Brands Laid Bare

Using Market Research for Evidence-based Brand Management

To serve diversified consumers is always a challenge for an organization and, market research companies always seek new ways to serve the consumers. The book is a guide to find the universal needs, the relationship between consumers and brands, brand equity of brand as a whole, touchpoints, brand physique, segmentation, targeting, brand loyalty and the driving forces that increase sales for brands.



Author: Kevin Ford
Pages: 168; Price: \$45.00
Publisher: John Wiley & Sons

The book starts with the concept of needs. Needs, in the author's opinion, vary from consumer to consumer, based on the place, price, mood, urgency, etc. Thus, the need to find out how a consumer behaves created a separate organization called "Marketing Research". Market research digs out hidden motives of the consumers and helps the marketer position his products and services. It has been noticed that consumers may know different brands, but they buy only those that suit them based on their habits, tastes, environment, esteem, status, etc. Greater brand equity of a particular brand alone may not give the desired rate of returns. In the author's opinion, "Even when associations are common to many people, reactions to those associations will vary." Thus, the key skill of the researcher is to suitably guide the organization by identifying the proper associations and perceptions of consumers. While doing this, consumers may be asked indirect questions to which the answers could be objective or to the point, thus avoiding any judgmental or "beating around the bush" type of answers.

The book talks in detail about the following concepts:

- What do people want from a brand, what are consumer needs?
- What is the relationship between consumers and brands and psychological systems?
- How do people assess the overall brand equity?

- What are touchpoints and brand physique?
- How to segment and target the consumers?
- How to turn brand equity into sales?
- What are the forces that drive brands up or down?

The author points out 12 types of needs in the society. These are called “Universal Needs Map”. They are:

- Structure
- Practicality
- Challenge
- Self-expression
- Excitement
- Curiosity
- Liberty
- Ideals
- Harmony
- Love
- Closeness
- Stability.

Among these, structure, challenge, excitement, liberty, harmony and closeness are the “big six needs”. The author has compared these big six needs with those mentioned in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is divided into two types, i.e., “Deficiency Needs” (physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem) and “Growth Needs” (cognition, aesthetics and self-actualization). He has divided these six big needs into two parts based on Maslow’s hierarchy and elaborates how these needs are related to Maslow’s. The book shows Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and clearly elaborates the information that the author wants to convey.

The author has also correlated these 12 needs with Jung’s personality typology. Jung’s personality has been divided into four functions—Thinking, Feeling, Sensation and Intuition. The author has correlated these 12 needs with the four functions. In his opinion,

- Thinking function is related to curiosity, liberty and ideals.

About the Author

Kevin Ford is a leading voice on understanding brands at Ipsos, one of the world’s top survey research organizations. For the last five years, he has been involved with international studies and the development of research tools. As a practitioner with more than 20 years experience, Ford has worked on a host of studies looking at brands and consumers across the globe for a wide variety of markets. These have helped him understand how consumers really respond to brands, and to both their successes and failures. These insights form the basis for this book.

- Feeling function is related to harmony, love and closeness.
- Sensation function is related to stability, structure and practicality.
- Intuition function is related to challenge, self-expression and excitement.

There are three main close and personal relationships of the organization with consumers—“Transaction”, “Business Principles” and “Connections”. The market research company needs to find out how these three relationships are related to the 12 needs.

- In transaction, there is minimum and impersonal closeness as consumers expect their basic needs to be fulfilled in an efficient manner.
- The next level is business principles, whereby the organization wants to empower itself vis-à-vis taking care of the ethics.
- The last level is connections, where there is a high involvement between the consumers and the organization; the consumers relate to the brand with curiosity and the organization feeds these consumers with new ideas and creates more excitement to buy.

These levels of interaction must be taken into consideration by market research companies.

The next important thing discussed in the book is “Brand Equity”. Though it is discussed a lot in the marketing field, the term is still confusing. Brand equity means how well the brand has done its job. In other words, brand equity is the sum total of the desire for a brand based on all attitudes and summarized by a small number of building blocks or summary evaluations. Marketing agencies should, therefore, find out attitudes of people and not their behavior and list out the building blocks of brand equity. Subjective judgments about a brand may or may not work in most of the cases. The author has, therefore, listed out the main attitudinal building blocks, called as Equity Building Blocks (EBB). This EBB is a hexagon with six components in the middle and other six themes at the edge. These six components are familiarity, differentiation, relevance, performance, empathy and popularity.

- The brand manager must not be confused between awareness and familiarity as “familiarity” stands for the ability of the consumers to recall the brand without being shown a list. However, it is somewhat difficult to remember the brand all the time, even though the consumer uses the brand regularly. Therefore, familiarity stands for the clarity of what a brand stands for and the strength of communication of what it calls for.
- “Differentiation” stands for the offering of the organization that is different from their competitors’. The author says that the brand may be overloaded with differentiation, but too many claims to differentiate it may be bad if the organization fails to fulfill its claims.
- “Relevance” in brand equity stands for how rational or emotional needs are fulfilled at acceptable prices and the opportunities to consider buying the product or service. It is found that high relevance brands often have less differentiation and vice versa.
- “Performance” in brand equity stands for how the brand is fulfilling the function of

satisfying the consumers. This factor is prevalent especially in case of manufacturing brands.

- “Empathy” stands for the emotional side of the quality. The brand is known not only because people love it, but also because of the better relationship with the levels of value chains differ. A brand may lose its brand equity if it does not fulfill its claim. Thus, empathy is a feeling of closeness and liking the brand over the years.
- “Popularity” means that the brand is used because there are too many people who use the same brand and the user feels secure by using it.

The other six themes of brand equity are the result of the combination of two close main building blocks. They are —

- Standout: The combination of familiarity and differentiation.
- Power: The combination of relevance and performance.

Other important aspects discussed in the book are “Touchpoints” and “Brand Physique”. The brand physique is a combination of several attributes, such as colors, shapes, logos, slogans, etc. This is factual information which can’t be neglected. It is more visible and relatively objective. On the other hand, touchpoints are all the contexts in which we come into contact with the brand, which is divided into two groups, i.e., first-hand experience through using the brand and communication about the brand. However, the brand manager has limited or sometimes no control over the touchpoints. To understand the consumer better, it is essential to understand how he is satisfied. The consumer may give the description and his opinions of the brand he has used or is using, which may be used for rating the brand. This is the most commonly used method in market research. This helps in communicating the brand message.

To serve diversified consumers is a challenge to any organization and market

research companies always look for new ways to segment consumers. In the author's opinion, there are products which have multi-purpose uses and sometimes have special uses. These things draw the special attention of market research companies and accordingly consult the client. The author has segmented the market into "single choice" vs. "occasion-driven" markets. A single choice market serves only one need while an occasion-driven market serves multi-purpose needs. To simplify this concept, the author has given a general framework of segmentation and views three interlocking issues—why, how and who. This general framework of segmentation defines three factors—the needs, market relationship and person type.

- Why stands for the brands fulfilling the listed needs and tapping the desired needs. This identifies why the product is being used.
- How states the differentiation, ability and the relationship of the individual to the market, i.e., the consumers' involvement and price sensitive issues.
- Who illustrates the type of people using the brand. Brand use differs on the basis of style, personal values, etc. People type segmentation is based on demographics, lifestyle, personality and social values.

"Brand loyalty" is defined as how often the same brand is bought over a period of time. It is the result of the current strength of the organization and its future outlook. Greater equity may or may not lead to increase in sales, as is the case of many products. Duracell, for example, has higher brand equity, but when it comes to sales figures, it has been seen that other substitute brands take its market share. Greater brand loyalty is the combination of "brand pull" and "brand push".

- Brand pull covers factors such as price and value, involvement and mobility. Consumers want the maximum value of the brand for the given price. However, value is very subjective in nature and

varies from person to person. Greater involvement on the part of the consumer translates into more sales, and this is truer in case of "bargain hunters". In case of high involvement products, people buy them very carefully as they want value for the amount spent. Mobility and inertia are important factors in brand pull. These two factors are opposite to each other. If the consumer switches from one product to another, the sale of the brand will definitely decrease even if the brand has more brand equity. As an example, the author has mentioned consumers in the UK, who switch their current accounts and mortgages from one financial company to another.

- Brand push is the combination of opportunity, visual prominence, promotional activity, price discounts, advertising and sponsorship. Brand push is a short-term incentive to increase sales.

The author also discusses current trends in the market and future factors that may affect the purchasing behavior of customers. Among these, the most important factors are social trends such as spirituality, harmony, love, closeness, stability, physical world, speed, efficiency, challenge, self-expression, excitement, curiosity, liberty, and they will always be the important sets which marketers will try to influence.

The book is a well-researched informative capsule for marketers who want to know the way in which consumers go about making their purchasing decisions and how to influence them by using different methods such as universal needs mapping, brand equity, touchpoints, brand physique, segmentation and related concepts. **B**

— Deepak Kumar
Associate Consultant,
The ICFAI University Press,
Hyderabad.

Reference # 13M-2005-09-07-03