

a model of brand

Overview

This diagram is a model of brand, a term often used in business, marketing, and design. The diagram defines brand by mapping related concepts and examples.

Concept maps

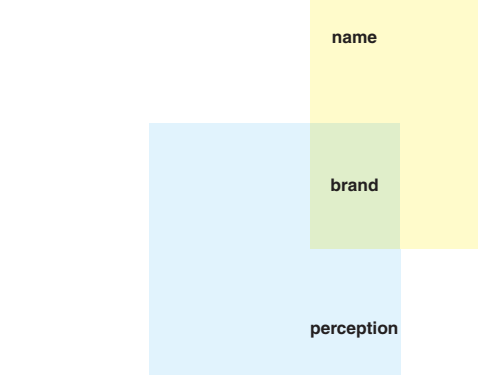
Concept maps are webs of linked terms that help us visualize our mental models and clarify our thinking. In concept maps, verbs connect nouns to form propositions. Examples and details also accompany the terms. More important terms receive typographic emphasis; less important ones and examples are grayed back and pushed to the periphery.

Organization

The diagram attempts to present a comprehensive model of brand. It is framed around four main ideas:
1) a brand is more than a name or symbol
2) creating a great customer experience is the essence of good branding
3) perceptions of a brand can be measured
4) brands are a form of sign

More than a name or symbol

People speaking informally about brand often use the term to mean the name or symbol of a company. While this shorthand is convenient, it misses an important truth. A brand is at least two things: a name and a perception of what the name means.

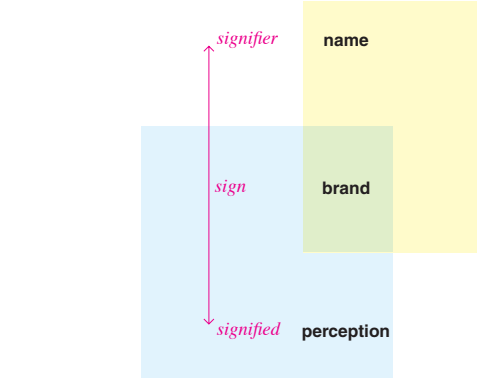


Measuring brand

An important aspect of managing a brand is measuring it. The diagram contains a section on measuring brands. People who understand brand development often disagree on how to describe and measure it, and experts often use different terms. I propose three terms: position, reach, and reputation. These three dimensions seem to cover the subject as simply as possible.

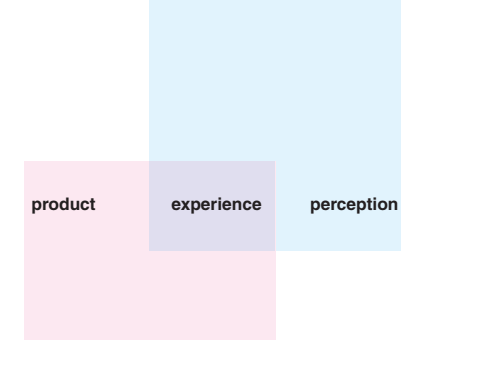
Brands as signs

The idea that a brand is both a name and a perception parallels Saussure's model of a sign. Saussure describes signs as having two aspects: signifier and signified. A brand name is a signifier and the perception of what it means is the signified.



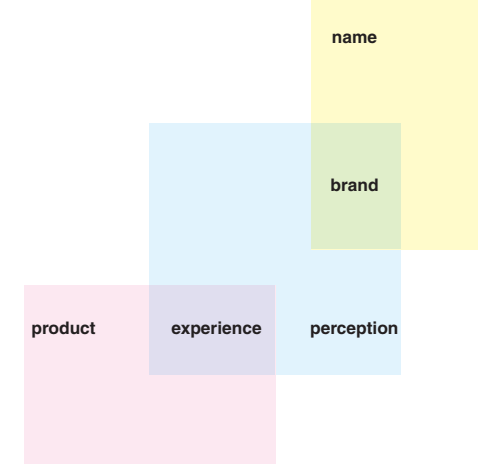
Creating a great customer experience

Of course, perception of a brand does not arise on its own. Rather, it grows out of experience with a product. Here, product is used in a broad sense incorporating the results of many activities commonly associated with marketing. Likewise, experience means here any point at which contact is made with a potential customer.

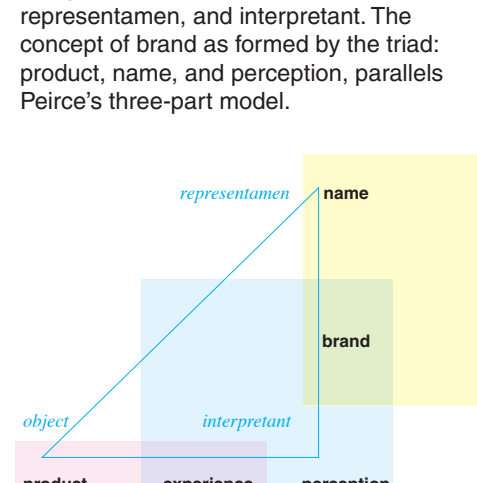


In this model, a brand manager (or steward) is responsible for any item which comes into contact with customers. By controlling all the touch points, the manager tries to ensure that customers have a great experience.

To complete the framework of the model, the set of terms related to brand must be linked to the set of terms related to experience. Perception, common to both sets, is the link.



Pierce suggests a more complex model of signs. His model has three parts: object, representamen, and interpretant. The concept of brand as formed by the triad: product, name, and perception, parallels Pierce's three-part model.



through observation and analysis, user experiences can form the basis for improving products and may even shape the steward's goals and values

stewards

imagine → promise

brand stewards hold the brand in trust, both for the financial owners and also for the emotional owners – those people who experience the brand

brand stewards shape products by managing marketing and development which may include these steps:

- a brand steward is anyone associated with the development or sale of a product, including:
 - senior management
 - brand managers
 - product managers
 - marketing managers
 - engineers
 - designers
 - factory workers
 - salespeople
 - customer support people
 - sales partners

- perceive audience understand needs
- analyze options
- what's delightful
- what's viable
- what's buildable
- choose direction
- define big idea or concept
- design prototype
- test
- iterate
- build
- release

brand promise is the audience expectation of a brand that is desired by the brand's stewards; sometimes thought of as brand identity

goals for brands may be expressed in

- business plans estimating sales, market share, profitability, return on investment
- positioning statements which describe product benefits, unique selling propositions, desired brand attributes, desired brand personality
- purchase adoption
- brand building begins at any point of contact with a potential customer

product

product is used here in a broad sense and incorporates the traditional four Ps of marketing: product, price, placement, and promotion

- creation of the product: designing the product, function and behavior, skin and form, interface, documentation, packaging, manufacturing, the product assembly process, quality control, providing customer service, guarantees and return policies, phone centers, web sites
- price of the product: setting the suggested retail price (SRP), creating volume discounts, creating special offers
- placement of the product (controlling the distribution process): opening direct showrooms, Sony, Nike, opening a web site, opening a store-within-a-store, Ralph Lauren
- promotion of the product through public relations activities: press releases, analyst briefings, launch events, by creating and running paid advertising: TV, radio, print, outdoor, online, by developing word-of-mouth through other viral activities

experience

the experience people have with a product shapes their perception of a brand

- direct experience: considering a purchase, visiting a point of sale, purchasing a product, setting up the product, using the product, maintaining the product, displaying the product
- indirect experience: what friends say, what experts say, what competitors say, what the stewards say, e.g., ads, PR, how others use the product, e.g., buy, display, etc., how others react to display of the product
- under a homogeneous master brand: employed where products change frequently and must work together, IBM, Microsoft, Sony
- in a mixed brand family: which may indicate confusion about strategy, for example, General Motors' brand family: Buick, Chevrolet, GM Truck, Saturn
- in a heterogeneous brand system: employed for commodities to increase shelf space and sales, for example, Proctor & Gamble makes both Tide and Cheer but does not identify them as coming from P&G
- as a co-brand: simple co-brand: American Airlines, MasterCard; ingredient brand: Intel Inside on a Compaq Computer; a provenance brand: Appellation Margaux Controlée Made in Japan; an endorsement brand: Underwings Laboratories; a compatibility brand: MacOS

brand

brands can grow out of: products, services, organizations, real people, celebrities, fictional characters, events, Rose Bowl

brand perception is the audience expectation achieved by the brand's stewards; sometimes thought of as brand image

perception

the experience may frustrate, satisfy, or delight

- while experience shapes perception, perception also shapes experience; likewise an individual's values, goals, needs, and expectations also shape perception of experience; for example, in a blind taste test Pepsi beat Coke in a labeled test Coke beat Pepsi
- brand perception is the audience expectation achieved by the brand's stewards; sometimes thought of as brand image

measured

perceptions of a brand can be measured and aggregated to give an overall view; perceptions can also be correlated to various audiences

- position⁴: defines the set of competing brands; measures of a brand in relation to other brands; relevance of the category: whether it matters to me; ranking within the category: compared to other brands; differentiation: degree of similarity to other brands; for example, Apple, Dell, and Gateway are computer brands; Apple is less like Dell; Dell is more like Gateway
- reach: measures of a brand in terms of numbers of people affected; extent of recognition: percent of people in a given geography; name the brands you associate with rental cars; first and later mentions; aided recognition: "have you ever heard of Hertz?"; frequency of exposure: number of impressions per unit time; frequency of use: e.g., average visits per week; duration of use: e.g., average length of visit; market share: percent of use within a category
- reputation: measures of a brand in terms of attributes that people assign to it; emotional attributes: affinity, trust, respect; identify with: prefer, like / accept, ignore, reject; at the highest level, affinity results in a passion brand or lifestyle brand where the brand becomes a means of self-expression, e.g., Nike or Catholicism
- rational attributes: value of product, consistency of experience, clarity of the brand's purpose; described along dimensions such as young vs mature, feminine vs masculine, small vs large, quiet vs loud, playful vs serious

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symbols

can be
symbols do not represent brands directly; instead, symbols call to mind the name of a brand which in turn calls to mind an associated perception
most brand names and symbols can be converted to property by applying to a government to establish trademark ownership;
once the government approves a trademark application, a trademark owner may prevent other people from using the trademark without permission

represent

representamen
name
can be

name

existing words
things (or ideas): describing products, analogies for products, superlatives and qualities unrelated to the product
people (often founders): surnames, first names, groups
places (often of origin): specific spot, city or town, region, country, continent, larger still
coined words: analogous, arbitrary
abbreviations: contractions, acronyms, initials
hybrids: Dell, Ford, McDonald's, Adidas, Ben & Jerry's, Quaker Oats, Roman Meal
Parliament, Wall Street Journal, Calistoga, Corning, Eastern, Great Plains, British Airways, North American Van Lines, Global, World, Universal
Ampeg, Compaq, Navistar, Formica, Kodak, Xerox, Unix
Fiberglas, Intel, Mobil, Wal-Mart, Alcoa, Nabisco, NYNEX, Texaco, CSS, KFC, IBM
Bell Atlantic, Union Pacific

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individuals

individuals compare their needs with their expectation of one or more brands in a category; they decide which brand most closely matches their needs; if there is a match, they may purchase, join, adopt, use, display; if there's not a match, they may look for new options or modify their expectations

external systems

external systems play a role in shaping individuals' values, goals, needs, expectations

(external systems also affect brand stewards)

- physiological: safety and security, belongingness and love, esteem, cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualization
- metabolism — commissariat, reproduction — kinship, bodily comforts — shelter, safety — protection, movement — activities, growth — training, health — hygiene
- cultural systems such as language, political systems, economic structures, available technologies
- the physical environment: natural resources, weather, disasters

graphic devices	logos, typographic, geometric, representational	static identity systems with fixed rules: Target, United Airlines	kinetic identity systems with rules allowing variation: MTV, MIT Media Lab
trade dress	package graphics, package form, product form	Bill Cosby for Jello	Martha Stewart for herself, Dave Thomas for Wendy's, Bill Gates for Microsoft
spokesmen	celebrity endorsers	founders / managers	invented characters
founders / managers	celebrity endorsers	invented characters	human-like figures, which inhabit real or fantasy worlds
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I hope that you find the model useful. I invite feedback. You can reach me via email at info@dubberly.com.

- Hugh Dubberly

partial list of sources:

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