



CUSTOMER MANUFACTURING GROUP

What if you thought about brands as having a distinct personality?

Many companies use projective techniques informally to discuss or describe brand personality.

You can move beyond the limitations of projective techniques, which are vague, to a technique which is measurable and repeatable.

CUSTOMER-FOCUSED BRAND POSITIONING

A BREAKTHROUGH METHODOLOGY

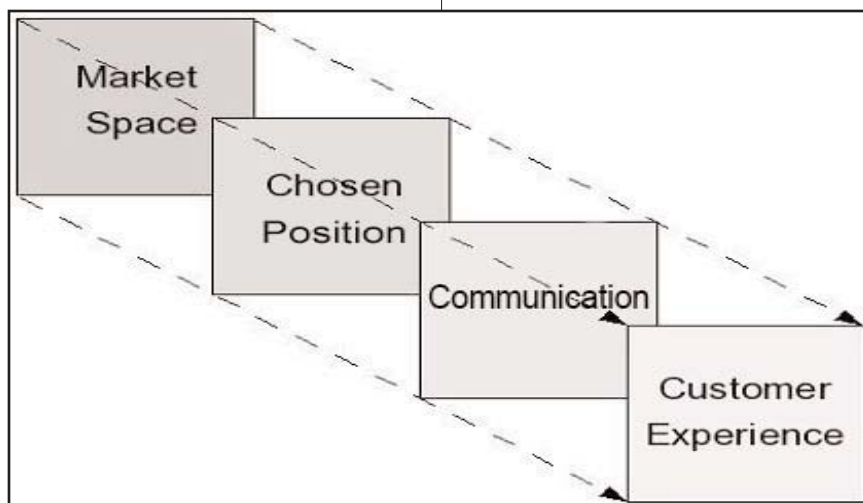
Brand positioning and brand communication are important and difficult topics for most marketers. How to position your brand and how to communicate that position are critical to success. The art of personality projection has been used by many brand managers to attempt to solve this problem. Projecting a personality onto a brand for positioning and communication can be a good idea. However, the methods previously used have been inadequate.

Much has been and continues to be written about the power of brands, and the importance of brand positioning. Al Ries and Jack Trout coined the term positioning over 30 years ago to describe the process of obtaining customer mind-space. Existing brands have mind-space, new brands want mind-space. Knowing what your mind-space actually is and how that compares to your competitor's mind-space is critical to brand success.

Assuming you know what your brand's position is in customers' minds, how do you communicate that position? What language do you use to reinforce the position with existing customers and prospects, and how do you let new prospects know where to place your brand in their mind?

And again, assuming you know, how do you make sure that everyone who "touches" your brand uses the same language? Your advertising agency, your product marketing and product management teams, your sales people, your customer service people, the rest of your employees, all touch your brand and communicate the brand to your "market." Do they do it with a common language? And if they do, is that language reinforcing the position your brand holds with your customers?

And this all presupposes that you not only understand your position in the customer's mind, but you have a language that can articulate that position.



If that position is strong (such as with established brands like Coca Cola, Nike, McDonald's, Intel, HP, GE, etc.) then why do these companies continually change their tag lines and basic advertising language? How many "tag lines" or messages has Coca Cola had since "The Real Thing?" And what about McDonald's where you are now "Lovin' It?"

What's the difference in position between McDonald's and Burger King? You may know that Burger King will do it "Your Way" (well they used to), and therefore you can assume McDonald's does it "their way," but you'll love it anyway. What's the position difference between Nike and Reebok? Could you articulate it? In a common language?

What's the Solution?

What if you thought about brands as having a distinct personality? In fact, you probably do think about them in that way to some degree, as do the brand stewards within the company and its agencies. The problem is that brands are not usually discussed in specific terms of their personality. Even when they are the language or terms can be arbitrary or vague.

Many companies use personality projective techniques informally to discuss or describe brand personality. Projective techniques have been used for many years to help people describe a brand in terms other than just hard attributes/benefits. For example, respondents might be asked if Budweiser were a person what would they be like? Or if Corona were a car

what kind of car would it be? These techniques have proved helpful in creating a better understanding of brand personality.

However, they have limitations in that they are not quantitative or measurable, and may not be repeatable. This can keep even those companies that use personality projection techniques from fully discussing brands in specific personality terms.

The deficiencies of projective techniques can be eliminated by assigning personality traits that can be quantitative and measurable; and thus of more powerful and repeatable use in brand communication than the projective techniques have allowed.

There is a substantial science in the use of measurable and quantifiable personality traits of actual people. Personality traits are something that most people can agree upon when discussing another human being.

If you know another human being, you can usually describe their personality to someone else. And if that other person asked several other people about the same person, they would likely get a similar personality viewpoint. With the exception of certain Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde situations, but then again all people who see one or the other will describe each personality similarly. Only those who see "both" are confused. (As would someone seeing that dichotomy in a brand personality as well.)

Since personalities are something we can articulate, what if you could give those personality traits specific, agreed upon names, and then determine to what degree a given brand possessed those traits (in the mind of the customer)?

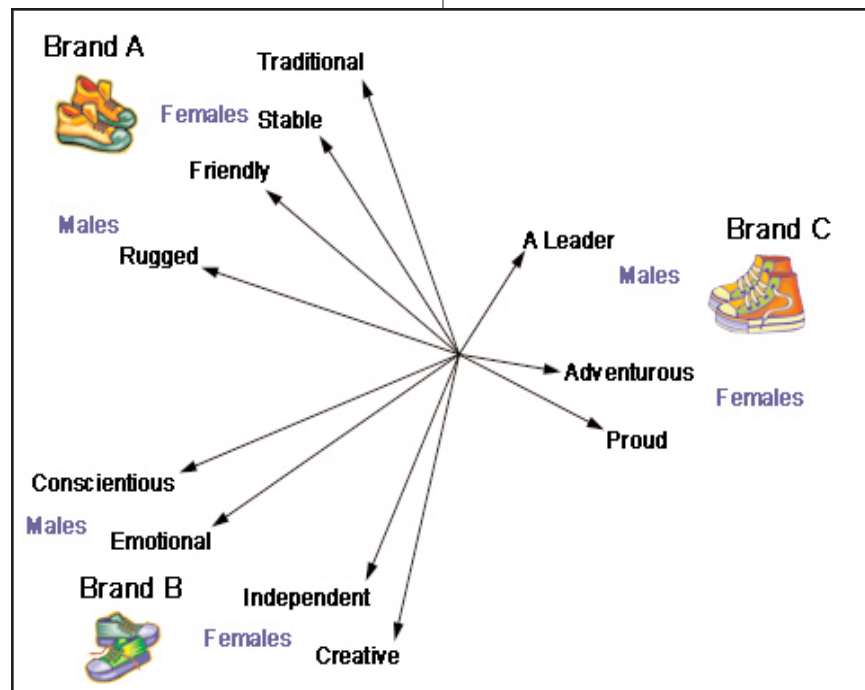
We suggest that this would be a powerful way to position (or reposition) a brand and assure common language is used by all to reinforce the brand's personality, which is then its position. By using an agreed upon, common set of personality trait names to describe a brand's personality, a common language evolves that is also perceived by the customer to be valid.

You can move beyond the limitations of projective techniques, which are vague, to a technique which is measurable and repeatable.

It turns out that you can do this now with a technique called, Brand Personification. Using research done by several people over the last 10 years on personification measurement and the application of "human" personality characteristics to brands, it has been shown that you can accurately and consistently describe a brand based on specific human personality characteristics. Further, these characteristics can be compared to the personality position of so-called competing brands to determine what the relative brand position is for a given brand within a competitive frame.

An Example

Using brands that most people are familiar with, and a measurement technique known as discriminate analysis, we can create a perceptual map of three well known “athletic” shoe brands¹. That graphic is shown below.



It is quite clear that the three brands are personified very differently from each other and fairly consistently by gender. This perceptual map makes it very clear where these brands stand. Leveraging that position is marketing's job. The discriminate analysis method not only allows you to determine which of the pre-defined personality traits best describes your brand, it also show how strongly that position is held by your brand. Looking at the perceptual map you'll notice that Brand C's

¹ For reasons of confidentiality, the brands are not identified by name. However, you might ask yourself and a few colleagues which of the major shoe brands you feel might be represented here. We believe you will find common positioning agreement among the brands selected.

descriptor projections (the vectors) are not as far out from the center as are Brand A's or Brand B's. While Brand C holds a distinctly different position from Brands A and B, that position is not held as strongly as Brand A and B hold their respective positions.

As Ries and Trout said many years ago, it is far easier to take advantage of what people already believe than to try and change their minds. Since each of these three brands hold a unique position, mind changing is unnecessary anyway.²

The value of this personality map is that precise terms have been used (as opposed to “what car is the shoe most like”) and the positioning difference is very clear.

² We acknowledge that there are far more than three “athletic” shoe brands on the market, and to actually use the results the brand owner would need to understand the Brand Personification of those other relevant brands before making marketing decisions. These three are used for illustration of the technique only.

If you learned that your shoe was most like a Corvette and your competitor's was most like a Lexus, what could you do with that information? While the positions are clearly different, you now must interpret what you think the respondents meant by Lexus or Corvette. Instead, using terms that have been proven over the years in the field of human personality description, you can gain a better and actionable understanding of brand positions.

So What?

Armed with a precise brand personality, brand identity and execution becomes much easier. Keeping the message consistent across media is now practical. In truth, the personification allows for a common language around the specific personality to be identified and consistently used.

Unless there is a need to reposition the brand (a very expensive proposition), all messaging, and so-called branding activities can be compared against the brand personality to ensure that the personality is being reinforced and not degraded. This single-focused, powerful guidepost can keep the brand message and position on target. It keeps the brand stewards on track and assures that the message and position resonates with the customer and prospect.

Granted it does keep brand stewards from going wherever they might feel is interesting, and some might suggest it limits creativity. But then, there is plenty of creative opportunity in leveraging

the brand's existing position and the personification of the brand creates a useful, consistent, and understandable method for achieving that goal.

Repositioning

Another obvious use for this technique is to find repositioning opportunities. Using this personification technique a brand steward might learn that their brand's current position is not distinguishable from other brands' positions, and is also not competitively considered. This also-ran, redundant position leads to lower brand value and the dilemma of repositioning.

Where to reposition to is always a key question. As strategists have suggested for years, "hit them where they ain't." (Well they probably used more sophisticated language, but you get the point.) The Brand Personification map (like the one shown previously) can show the brand stewards exactly where the opportunities might lie. It is up to them to determine if such "open positions" are valuable, but it takes the guess-work out of where to consider moving.

The projective techniques described earlier and in more common use do not allow this precise retargeting because they do not require a well defined position. Even those projective techniques that ask the respondent to describe the brand as if it were a person allow so much latitude in terms of description that it is difficult, if not impossible to take consistent action based on the results.

Brand Personification moves this "describe the brand as a person" approach to an actionable and repeatable level by restricting the descriptors to a limited number of human personality terms that have been proven over time.

Once a new position is selected, it also provides a concise, precise framework to use to reposition the brand. While brand repositioning is always difficult, this methodology can dramatically accelerate the process.

New Brands

What about launching a new brand? The use of Brand Personification for the launch of a new brand is similar to its use in repositioning. That is, by personifying the existing brands in the market space, the marketer looking to launch a new brand can quickly see where existing brands sit. They can look for weakly positioned brands or for open positions that may be of value.

The personification approach provides a measurable, repeatable framework to describe brand position and the relative strength of that position among customers and potential customers. With this clear knowledge in hand, the brand marketer can focus the new brand where it is most likely to succeed, and can assure that all messaging and positioning reinforce that brand position.

How Does This Work?

Brand Personification can be done using techniques that are similar to proven personality profiles used on people. The science behind many of

the existing profiles is well established, repeatable, and reliable. Creating a personality profile for a brand can be done in a similar fashion using a related methodology. Unlike personality profile reports for humans that describe attributes and effective methods for managing and communicating, the personality profile for a brand is designed to provide insight and guidance as to how to leverage that position.

Also, unlike with humans, a brand's personality is best understood in relation to other brands and their respective personalities. Knowing your brand's personality is valuable and allows focused communication and positioning. Knowing that personality and how it is mapped versus other relevant brands is an even more powerful positioning tool.³

Final Thoughts

Brand Personification offers the brand marketer, whether dealing with an existing brand, a brand repositioning, or a new brand, a proven, repeatable, useful approach to brand positioning that goes well beyond projective method. Using precise actionable insights from existing customers and potential customers, the marketer can learn where their brand is positioned in the customer's mind and how to leverage that position for best value.

Brand Personification provides brand stewards the ability to take the guess work and debate out of brand positioning, and allows all efforts across the enterprise to be aligned for the success of the brand.

³ Customer Manufacturing Group offers a Brand Personification service. To learn more about it Give us a call, or email personifier@customermanufacturing.com

More Information About CMG

If you would like more information about how to apply a process to improve your marketing/sales function, simply contact us and we'd be happy to help you get started. From sweeping marketing/sales management process strategies to specific branding or product launch services, Customer Manufacturing Group can help.

Detailed information on our services and a number of Special Reports and cassette tapes and CDs are also available.

If you'd like to learn more about Customer Manufacturing Group, or for a complimentary subscription to *Customer Manufacturing Updates*, give us a call at (800) 947-0140, fax us at (408) 727-3949, visit our website at www.customermanufacturing.com, or e-mail us at info@customermfg.com.

We have offices in major cities in the United States, and our experts travel extensively throughout the world. If you'd like to schedule a meeting when we're in your area, just let us know.