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# Building brand identity in competitive markets: a conceptual model

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this conceptual paper is to identify important elements of brand building based on a literature review and case studies of successful brands in India.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper is based on a review of the literature and takes a case study approach. The paper suggests the framework for building brand identity in sequential order, namely, positioning the brand, communicating the brand message, delivering the brand performance, and leveraging the brand equity.

**Findings** – Brand-building effort has to be aligned with organizational processes that help deliver the promises to customers through all company departments, intermediaries, suppliers, etc., as all these play an important role in the experience customers have with the brand.

**Originality/value** – The paper uses case studies of leading Indian brands to illustrate the importance of action elements in building brands in competitive markets.

**Keywords** Brand identity, Brand loyalty, India

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

**An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.**

## I. Introduction

Building a brand driven culture is a lifelong commitment to a mindset and a way of life that takes time, planning and perseverance that produces intangible outputs which include greater customer satisfaction, reduced price sensitivity, fewer customer defections, a greater share of customers' wallets, more referrals, and a higher percentage of repeat business (Knapp, 2000). Customers value their relationships with their branded possessions and with marketing agents and institutions that own and manage the brand (Alexander *et al.*, 2002). The brand identity needs to focus on points of differentiation that offer sustainable competitive advantage to the firm.

Brand identity is based on a thorough understanding of the firm's customers, competitors, and business environment. The brand identity needs to reflect the business strategy and the firm's willingness to invest in the programs needed for the brand to live up to its promise to customers (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Strong brands enjoy customer loyalty, the potential to charge premium prices, and considerable brand power to support new product and service launches. Companies need to have thorough understanding of customer beliefs, behaviors, product or service attributes, and competitors.

This paper presents a conceptual framework in the form of PCDL model for building brands that is based on literature review and case studies of very prominent brands in India. The managerial implications of the concepts emphasized are explained in the discussion section in the paper.

## Brands – meaning and definition

A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical (Aaker, 1991). Brands provide the basis upon which consumers can identify and bond with a product or service or a group of products or services (Weilbacher, 1995). From the customer's point of view, a brand can be defined as the total accumulation of all his/her experiences, and is built at all points of contact with the customer (Kapferer, 2004). A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely (Chernatony and McDonald, 1998).

According to Keller (2003a), consumer brand-knowledge can be defined in terms of the personal meaning about a brand stored in consumer memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information. Different sources and levels of knowledge such as awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences get linked to a brand and its understanding by the consumer. The brand, in a sense, acts as a credible guarantee for that product

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The author is thankful to the Superbrands India and Indian Consumer Superbrands Council for permitting him to adapt the stories of the three brands.

or service, allowing the consumer clearly to identify and specify products which genuinely offer added value (Murphy, 1998). Powerful brands provide long-term security and growth, higher sustainable profits, and increased asset value because they achieve competitive differentiation, premium prices, higher sales volumes, economies of scale and reduced costs, and greater security of demand (Temporal, 2000). The Brand “promise” is the essence of the benefits (both functional and emotional) that customers can expect to receive from experiencing a brand’s products/services, which reflects the heart, soul, and spirit of the brand (Knapp, 2000). Successful brands are those brands which adapt well to the environment and thus survive and flourish in the long term in spite of competition they face.

An important factor influencing the selection of a brand concept is consumer needs. According to Park *et al.* (1986), many brands offer a mixture of symbolic, functional, and experiential benefits. Functional needs are defined as those that motivate the search for products that solve consumption-related problems (e.g. solve a current problem, resolve conflict, restructure a frustrating situation). A brand with a functional concept is defined as one designed to solve externally generated consumption needs. Symbolic needs are defined as desires for products that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego identification. A brand with a symbolic concept is one designed to associate the individual with a desired group, role, or self-image. Experiential needs are defined as desires for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation. A brand with an experiential concept is designed to fulfill these internally generated needs for stimulation and/or variety.

A brand essence that is based on emotional and self-expressive benefits provides a higher-order basis for relationships which can be less vulnerable to product-related changes or easily applied to new contexts (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). A brand’s value proposition is a statement of the functional benefits, emotional benefits, and self expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customers. Functional benefits are the most common basis for a value proposition, based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the customer and relate directly to the functions performed by the product for the customers. Emotional benefits are positive feelings the customer has about the brand and is related to the experience of owning and using the brand. Most functional benefits have a corresponding feeling or a set of feelings. Self-Expressive benefits focus on person’s self- concept, aspirations, and provide a way for a person to communicate his or her self-image.

Brands evolve over time. The first level pertains to express the identity of the producer (i.e. label). The second level is known as functional superiority (perceived by customer as differentiation). While the third level is referred to as emotional touch, fourth level pertains to the Power of self-expression. At the top of the pyramid, the highest level (i.e. fifth level) is known as cult.

## II. Establishing brand identity

Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers and includes a core and extended identity. Core identity is the central, timeless essence of the

brand that remains constant as the brand moves to new markets and new products. Core identity broadly focuses on product attributes, service, user profile, store ambience and product performance. Extended identity is woven around brand identity elements organized into cohesive and meaningful groups that provide brand texture and completeness, and focuses on brand personality, relationship, and strong symbol association.

To be effective, a brand identity needs to resonate with customers, differentiate the brand from competitors, and represent what the organization can and will do over time (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). To excel, a brand image must be well planned, nurtured, supported, and vigilantly guarded (Knapp, 2000). One key to successful brand-building is to understand how to develop a brand identity – to know what the brand stands for and to effectively express that identity (Aaker, 1996). A brand is a distinctive identity that differentiates a relevant, enduring, and credible promise of value associated with a product, service, or organization and indicates the source of that promise (Ward *et al.*, 1999). Companies that present a cohesive, distinctive, and relevant brand identity can create a preference in the marketplace, add value to their products and services, and may command a price premium (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997).

When brand faces aggressive competition in marketplace, brand personality and reputation of the brand help it distinguish from competing offerings. This can result in gaining customer loyalty and achieve growth. A strong brand identity that is well understood and experienced by the customers helps in developing trust which, in turn, results in differentiating the brand from competition. A company needs to establish a clear and consistent brand identity by linking brand attributes with the way they are communicated which can be easily understood by the customers.

### Brand association

A set of brand associations enable a brand to develop a rich and clear brand identity. While some customers may attach greater importance to functional benefits, emotional value helps the brand stand above others. Building brand associations requires a company to understand its brand as well as competitors’ brands through customer research. Customer research should study existing and prospective customers, former customers, industry experts, and intermediaries. Brand strengths associated with beliefs and values are the most powerful and most difficult to imitate. Brand image is the perception in the mind of the customers about the brand and its associations.

In contrast to brand image (the brand’s current associations), a brand identity is inspirational and may imply that the image needs to be changed or augmented. In a fundamental sense, the brand identity represents what the organization wants the brand to stand for (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). The “brand as personality” stage marks an important transition phase since not all brands evolve into consumer icons, especially if the consumers do not relate to, or believe in, the communications of the brand, or they sense some inconsistencies with the brand’s communications (Wee and Ming, 2003). A brand’s personality provides a richer source of competitive advantage than any functional feature can (Sherrington, 2003). Personality attributes help the brand to achieve sustainable differentiation as they are more difficult to copy

than functional features of the product and service by the competition. Another advantage of the personality association is that it establishes direct relationship with the customers.

### III. PCDL Model: a conceptual model for building brands

Based on the literature review and three case studies of Indian brands, the conceptual model for brand building in competitive markets, known as PCDL Model, has been proposed. The four elements of this model, namely, positioning the brand, communicating the brand message, delivering the brand performance, and leveraging the brand equity are discussed below.

#### Positioning the brand

Positioning is related with creating the perception of a brand in the customer's mind and of achieving differentiation that it stands apart from competitors' brands/offerings and that it meets the consumer's needs/expectations. Brand marketer's major objective should be to create the desired perception in the target consumer's mind.

A brand position is part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrates and advantage over competing brands (Aaker, 1996). A well positioned brand has a competitively attractive position supported by strong associations, such as high rating on a desirable attribute like friendly service, or store's offering of home delivery (Aaker, 1991). In an increasingly networked economy, understanding the consumer behavior effects of linking a brand to other entities such as another person, place, thing, or brand is crucial (Keller, 2003a). Marketers must be able to understand how various entities should best be combined, from a consumer brand-knowledge perspective, to create the optimal positioning in the minds of consumers (see Figure 1).

According to Temporal (2000), the branding focus should be on adding psychological value to products, services, and companies in the form of intangible benefits – the emotional associations, beliefs, values, and feelings that people relate to the brand. By strategically positioning it in the minds of the target audience, the company can build a strong identity or personality for the brand. Ability to endow a product, service or corporation with an emotional significance over and above its functional value is a substantial source of value creation (Sherrington, 2003). The promise of value must be relevant to the people or businesses a company wants to have as its

customers (Ward *et al.*, 1999). A successful brand aims to develop a high-quality relationship, in which customers feel a sense of commitment and belonging, even to the point almost of passion (Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). The brand preference is the outcome of the emotional needs the customers have. Emotional associations can strongly distinguish the brand in customer's mind in comparison to competitors' offerings. Branding enables the process of transforming functional assets into relationship assets.

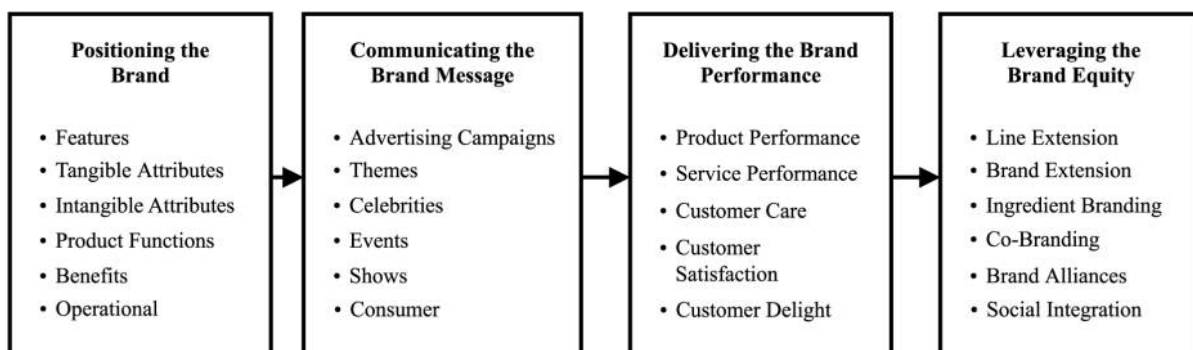
In strong brands, brand equity is tied both to the actual quality of the product or service and to various intangible factors. Those intangibles include "user imagery" (the type of person who uses the brand); "usage imagery" (the type of situations in which the brand is used); the type of personality the brand portrays (sincere, exciting, competent, rugged); the feeling that the brand tries to elicit in customers (purposeful, warm); and the type of relationship it seeks to build with its customers (committed, casual, seasonal). The strongest brands stay on the leading edge in the product arena and tweak their intangibles to fit the times (Keller, 2000). Upshaw (1995) identified eight alternative positioning tools used by companies as: feature-driven prompts; problem/solution prompts; target-driven positioning; competition-driven positioning; emotional/psychological positioning; benefit-driven positioning; aspirational positioning; and value positioning. Brands that are well positioned occupy particular niches in consumers' minds.

#### Communicating the brand message

A brand needs to carve a vision of how that brand should be perceived by its target audience. The brand positioning helps in prioritizing the focus of the brand identity and resultant communication themes which enable the company to set forth the communication objectives such as the type of message, brand differentiation to be achieved, and themes that appeal to the target customers. Advertising that is creatively executed helps the brand to break the clutter and build strong impact in the target market.

The challenges faced by companies in building brands are: to be noticed, to be remembered, to change perceptions, to reinforce attitudes, and to create deep customer relationships (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). A differentiated, "ownable" brand image can build an emotional and rational bridge from customers to a company, a product, or a service (Knapp, 2000). The intangible factors used in building brand equity include "user imagery", "usage imagery", the type of personality the brand portrays, the feeling that the brand tries

Figure 1 PCDL Model



to elicit in customers, and the type of relationship it seeks to build with its customers (Keller, 2000). The major channels of communications used widely to position the brands in the minds of consumers are advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, sponsorships, endorsements, public relations, the Internet, and integrated brand communications. Successful brands are built through creative repetition of themes in various types of media. Use of emotions in advertising that appeals to the hearts and minds of the people results in an emotional relationship with customers.

A brand is the amalgam of the physical product and the notional images that go with the brand (Parameswaran, 2001). Brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. A link between product class and brand is involved (Aaker, 1991). Image is a product of people's perceptions, that is, the way in which people think about or even imagine something to be (Temporal, 2000). Old brands serve to bind consumers to their pasts and to the communities that shared those brands (Brown *et al.*, 2003). Personal and communal nostalgia are closely intertwined, which evoke not only former epochs but also former selves.

Better advertising is born out of a total understanding of all the variables impacting the brand such as new consumer trends, new competition, or new technological breakthroughs (Parameswaran, 2001). According to Upshaw (1995), brand identity hinges on who consumers are as individuals, the environment in which they live, and the signals sent from the brand itself. A brand's messages are received through a series of filters that exist within each consumer's life.

The most successful brands keep up with competitors by creating points of parity in those areas where competitors are trying to find an advantage while at the same time creating points of difference to achieve advantages over competitors in some other areas (Keller, 2000). It is necessary to develop and implement long-term integrated communication strategies demonstrating the brand's value to the target customers. The message should be consistent with the brand value, brand personality and other brand identity dimensions. Strong brand helps the company in positioning and extending its brand and have a greater influence on the customer purchase processes.

### Delivering the brand performance

Companies need to continuously track their brands against the effect of competition, especially in the face of aggressive competition. They should track their the progress as to how their brands are doing in the marketplace, and what impact certain market interventions will have on the brand equity. Progress can be monitored in terms of the level of purchasing, consumption, brand recognition, brand recall, advertising awareness, etc. This approach will enable brand marketers to assess the effect of marketing campaign in influencing the target consumers, which in turn leads to measure the brand strength.

The transaction analysis enables the company to assign brand team members the task of experiencing all the steps a customer might go through to see how the system makes the customer feel (Knapp, 2000). There's nothing that brings people together like stories about the bad service; whether it's a mobile phone that's cut off, a television that's on the blink or a washing machine that's collapsed, getting the situation rectified is every consumer's nightmare (Balakrishnan and

Mahanta, 2004). In product-driven companies, service is playing an important role in the brand experience as they view the brand in terms of its entire relationship with their customers. Progressive company cultivates its brand philosophy across functional lines throughout the organization, evaluates all contact points with customers, and streamlines organizational processes to meet customer needs and deliver a consistent brand experience.

A manufacturer's existing brands are potentially vulnerable to successful new brands from competitors. It is, therefore, in the manufacturer's interest to maintain the relative functional excellence of its existing brands. This means continuously upgrading their performance. The best discipline to focus attention on this upgrading is to carry out Regular blind product tests of the manufacturer's brand against its competitors (Jones, 2000) helps the firm to maintain the relative functional excellence of its existing brands. This approach enables the firm to protect its brands from the impact of the successful new brands of the competitors and gain brand loyalty. Brand loyalty may be viewed as a link in the chain of effects that indirectly connects brand trust and brand affect with the market performance aspects of brand equity (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Brand loyalty is a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand and it reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product features (Aaker, 1991). Brand loyalty represents a favorable attitude toward a brand resulting in consistent purchase of the brand over time and it is the result of consumers' learning that one brand can satisfy their needs (Assael, 2001). Brand loyalty reflects the commitment of a customer to rebuy the company's products consistently in future. Customer retention can be achieved only through fostering premium loyalty by establishing an emotional as well as a normative attachment between the brand and the consumer (Gauranis and Stathakopoulos, 2004). Such loyal buyers can contribute to the positive word-of-mouth communication for the brand.

The companies need to set "operational standards" in all areas affecting day-to-day brand-related activities which can be applied to behaviors, management practices, service provision, customer relationship management, performance achievement, and so on (Klaus and Ludlow, 2002). The specific marketing effects that accrue to a product with its brand name can be either consumer-level constructs such as attitudes, awareness, image, and knowledge, or firm-level outcomes such as price, market share, revenue, and cash flow (Ailawadi *et al.*, 2003). The operational standards reinforce the assurance to target customers that the brand promise will be delivered to them.

### Leveraging the brand equity

Keller (2003b) defined leveraging process as linking the brand to some other entity that creates a new set of associations from the brand to the entity as well as affect existing brand associations. Companies employ different strategies in leveraging their brands namely through line extensions, brand extensions, ingredient branding and co-branding, etc.

In ingredient branding, key attributes of one brand are incorporated into another brand as ingredient is gaining increasing popularity in markets. The ingredient branding enhances the differentiation of the host brand from competition by characterizing the ingredient attribute in the

host brand more specifically (Desai and Keller, 2002). This results in establishing brand alliances between number of firms as they link through their products/services or marketing activities.

In brand extensions, the parent brand experience appears to have little impact on long-term repeat purchasing of an extension across a range of cases in which perceived similarity between the parent and extension categories varied considerably (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2001). If the brand extension fails, it can harm brand equity of the parent brand by producing negative reciprocal effects. Further, they stated that parent brand experience has an impact on extension trial but not on repeat purchase. The advertising of brand extensions produces significant reciprocal spillover that favorably affects the choice of parent brand (Subramanian and Ghose, 2003). Advertising spillover effect becomes relevant when a brand name is used on two or more products that are separately advertised.

#### IV. Case studies

Case studies of three Indian brands were undertaken to delineate the approach for brand building adopted by them. The action points suggested through case studies reinforced the proposed PCDL model for brand building.

##### Archies

Archies was founded in 1979 as a mail order poster shop, and introduced its first line of greeting cards in 1980. The company procured its first ever foreign license from Walt Disney, USA in 1984 and offered its customers some of the best loved Disney characters on its greeting cards. As the Archies brand grew into a household name in India, the company diversified into gifting items. Strategic tie-ups with global players, including Portal Publications, Gibson Greetings and American Greetings Inc. (the world's largest publicly held greeting card company) of the US, enabled Archies to offer its customers a range of special-occasion cards. Archies' product portfolio contains all-occasion greeting cards, gift items such as curios, photo albums, photo frames, soft toys, mugs, quotations, key chains and a wide range of stationery (see Table I).

Archies has consistently focused on emotions and feelings, making evident in its advertising theme: "The most special way to say you care". Archies products are available at a variety of price points. Emotions are at the heart of the Archies collections and played a significant role in advancing the social expressions market by creating a special collection of greeting cards and gifts for different occasions such as Friendship Day, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day and everyday cards such as "Thinking of you", "Hello", "Miss you", "Get well soon", among others. Archies has promoted the cause of the elderly by entering into a tie-up with HelpAge India and with CRY (Child Relief and You) for the under-privileged children to produce and market these voluntary organizations' greeting cards and stationery items.

Archies has established the "Archies Gallery" chain through organized franchising. Archies kept pace by introducing e-cards and offering online gifting opportunities through its e-commerce portal, [www.archiesonline.com](http://www.archiesonline.com) as the market environment continued to evolve and internet became an important aspect of urban life. Promotion for Archies has been through different communication channels including

press, All India Radio, FM channels, TV commercials, cable & satellite channels. Archies' association with Hindi blockbuster movies and Hollywood productions like Speed and Mask has earned the brand tremendous mileage amongst the youth. Advertising highlights the brands' preoccupation with sentiments, feelings and emotions.

##### Boroline

Boroline is firmly entrenched as the undisputed brand leader in its category in India, as a value-for-money brand to guard and cure against dry skin problems during the winter months. The name Boroline is derived from its ingredients – "Boro" from boric powder, which has antiseptic properties and "oline" as a variant of the Latin word "oleum" meaning oil. Boroline is used to cure cuts and bruises, healing of stitches after operation, protects heels against cracks, lubricates rough or abraded skin, healing for sun burnt skin, etc. To its users, Boroline is a trusted friend – a friend in need. Boroline has recyclable packaging and contributes to ensure environmental protection as a part of the "Save Trees" campaign. From across India, numerous economically under-privileged, terminally ill patients and children requiring heart surgery have applied to Boroline and received financial assistance for treatment. In spite of suffering bad phase for two years during 1990s, Boroline proved its brand goodwill by doubling its sales after reintroduction.

New users, especially youngsters, discover the truth in their elders' belief in Boroline's quality and become new users. Boroline's strong distribution system ensures that loyal consumers get the tube of their favorite antiseptic skin cream no matter where they are. To establish the brand identity, the logo of Boroline is the Elephant known for its steadiness and synonymous with success. In rural India for the millions who cannot read, Boroline is still known as the "hathiwala cream" (cream with the elephant logo). Boroline explored all possible avenues of brand building including communications channels like newspaper, magazine, radio and outdoor promotions, festivals, and associating with cricket and football matches. In terms of image building Boroline has kept pace with the times and changing straplines reflect the course of promotional platforms of Boroline through the decades.

Boroline extended its brand to hair care products with Boroline's Eleen, a premium herbal light hair oil in the second half of the 1990s. Other products introduced under the brand name are a detangling shampoo with herbal benefits, a coconut oil based herbal hair tonic, and pain relieving formula branded as Boroline's Penorub, focused on the ultimate goal of combining modern chemistry with the science of ancient Indian Ayurveda.

##### Dabur Vatika

The Vatika brand was launched in 1995. Vatika in Hindi means "garden". In Indian society, beauty of a person is associated with beautiful fair skin and dark, long lustrous hair. Vatika is a comparatively young brand but is already acknowledged for the qualitatively influential and pioneering role that it has played in the evolution of the categories it has had a presence in. Vatika has a premium image in hair oil category, distributed through more than one million outlets across the country. By offering hair oil that combined the benefits of natural products in a single pack, Vatika created a niche for itself as the "total hair care" brand.

Table I Brand-building characteristics

Brand attributes	Archies	Boroline	Dabur Vatika
<i>Positioning the brand</i>			
Positioning	Feelings and emotions	Value for money	Premium quality, pure coconut oil
Brand associations	Greeting cards and soft toys Gift items for youth	Antiseptic skin cream "Haathiwala cream"	Coconut hair oil White and green bottle
<i>Communicating the message</i>			
Promotion	Radio, TV, FM channels, cable and satellite channels, Hollywood movies, Hindi movies (Bollywood)	Newspapers, magazines, radio, outdoor advertising, festivals, sponsorship of cricket and football matches	Sponsored events and shows, music awards, TV show
Campaign	"The most special way we care" Focused on sentiments, feelings, and emotions	"Combining modern chemistry and the science of ancient Indian Ayurveda" Trust of generations of consumers	"Values of youthfulness and natural beauty" Featuring modern, young, multi-faceted, confident, and achievement-driven women celebrities
Social cause	Tie-up with NGOs (Help Age India, Child Relief and You, etc.)	"Save Trees" campaign, financial assistance to patients requiring heart surgery	"Vatika Super Model India 2001" and "Vatika Zee Sangeet Awards" to recognize the talent in society
<i>Delivering the performance</i>			
Product focus	Advancing social expressions, and products at different price points	"Guard and cure against dry skin problems"	"Benefits of natural products in a single pack"
Distribution coverage	"Archies Gallery" stores, organized franchising	Availability at retailer level	Easy accessibility at retailer level
<i>Leveraging the brand equity</i>			
Brand extension	Key chains, wide range of stationery, gift items, etc.	Hair care products, detangling shampoo, and pain balm	Cream conditioning shampoo, anti-dandruff shampoo, fairness face pack

Vatika is a product of intense study of consumer needs and products available in the market to fulfill them resulting in the launch of Vatika Hair Oil in the traditional coconut hair oil category. Vatika Hair Oil with its value added proposition – henna, amla and lemon in a pure coconut oil – proven to be best option for price sensitive consumers. Also, in comparison to blue packs as analogous of pure coconut oils, Vatika broke the trend with its white and green bottle with a mushroom cap, reflecting the brands' premium look. Vatika launched Vatika Henna Cream Conditioning Shampoo in 1997 which had a premium natural offering that would condition the hair with the ingredients taken from home recipes – henna, green almonds and shikakai. This strengthened the trust that the product does not contain harmful chemicals. Later in 2000, it also introduced Vatika Anti-Dandruff Shampoo as the first natural anti-dandruff shampoo in the country. Vatika has made an entry into skin care products by introducing Vatika Fairness Face Pack, which like other Vatika products offers traditional Indian recipes in a modern format. The product offers the goodness of natural ingredients such as haldi (turmeric), kesar (saffron) and chandan (sandalwood) which have traditionally been used for skin care.

In the initial phase of the communication, the marketing objective was to create conceptual awareness about the new product – the goodness of coconut oil enriched with natural herbs. In 1997, the company created a new promotion campaign which reinforced the idea of using extraordinary hair oil that offered extra nourishment. Communications through advertising campaigns featuring modern and young women celebrities enabled the brand to infuse the values of

youthfulness and natural beauty. In addition, the brand has undertaken promotional activities ranging from shows and sponsored events to music awards and a popular TV show.

## Discussion

The suggested PCDL model can serve as a guideline to managers and executives in building identity of their brands in their target markets. As competition gets more intense, managers face challenges to adjust their brands with changed expectations of their customers. Among different alternatives that are available to managers, positioning their brands on the attributes that happen to be the customer priorities can help in building superiority of their brands in the minds of their customers. Such attribute positioning or benefit positioning can enable companies to leverage current resources to the extent possible. If existing product configuration/proposition becomes obsolete, the brand has to move to higher or expected levels of performance/benefits to sustain itself in dynamic markets.

Companies need to position their brands in the minds of consumers. To achieve desired goals of their communication strategy, companies have to break the clutter by evolving innovative ways to attract the attention of the target audience. Alongside the traditional media channels like newspapers, magazines, television, hoardings, public relations, etc, new media vehicles such as Internet, outdoor communications, sponsoring events, etc. offer opportunities for consumer involvement. Such innovative approaches can enable managers to minimize the impact of competition on their

brands. Integrated brand communications and creative repetition through various types of media is a key to success in brand communications. Use of emotions in advertising appeals to the hearts and minds of the consumers. A brand image should be created to establish an emotional relationship with the target audience.

The brand managers need to continuously track their brands against the effect of competition and to track the progress as to how their brands are doing in the marketplace. Monitoring the progress of brands in terms of purchasing, consumption, brand recognition, brand recall, advertising awareness, etc. helps the managers to adjust their strategies of marketing to achieve the desired performance of their brands. This performance audit can also enable the company to measure its brand strength vis-à-vis competing brands. The brand loyalty can reduce the vulnerability of the customer base to competitive action and can directly translate into future sales and profits.

Brands that have established desired brand equity in the marketplace can have potential to leverage its equity through line extension, brand extension, ingredient branding, co-branding, brand Alliances, and/or social goodwill. These approaches enable the companies to leverage the parent brand associations to new categories of products and chart a new growth path for their brands.

## Conclusion

Paper discusses the PCDL model for building brands based on the literature review and case studies. Consistency of integrated communications and message along the brand identity dimensions targeted towards customers is critical to the success of brand-building efforts by delivering a consistent, self-reinforcing brand image. Companies need to ensure that the brand remains strong even during difficult times and offers value that is consistent with the brand promise. The four stages suggested in PCDL model namely, positioning the brand, communicating the brand message, delivering the brand performance, and leveraging the brand equity can enable companies to build strong brands.

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## Further reading

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## About the author

Bhimrao M. Ghodeswar is currently working as Visiting Professor of Marketing in School of Management, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, and holds the regular position of Professor of Marketing in the National Institute of Industrial Engineering, Mumbai, India. Dr Ghodeswar has an MBA and PhD in Marketing from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. He has been teaching courses in the area of marketing and has expertise in the areas of marketing strategy, business-to-business marketing, brand management, and international marketing. Dr Ghodeswar has published papers in reputed journals including paper presentations in prestigious international conferences. He is actively engaged in research in customer relationship management, strategic marketing, service quality, and brand management.

## Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

*This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of the article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefit of the material present.*

### Indian companies' brand-building model: a four-step approach with global application

#### Introduction

The benefits of brand building are manifold, but it is a long term commitment, some might say a lifetime commitment. It is complex, but not too complex to be understood, although this too can be a lifetime commitment.

Using a combination of a literature review and three case studies of Indian companies, Prof. Bhimrao M. Ghodeswar of the National Institute of Industrial Engineering in Mumbai, India has identified his PCDL model. It is one that would seem to have universal application.

So what is meant by the PCDL model, what benefits does it bring and how can it be applied?

#### The PCDL model

Models that help us understand our complex world are always to be welcomed. They provide a way of seeing things and gaining understanding. The better ones position decision-makers to take action, effective action, often in the face of competition. Developed in an Indian context, the PCDL model can be outlined as follows:

- 1 *Positioning the brand:*
  - features;
  - tangible attributes;
  - intangible attributes;
  - product functions;
  - benefits; and
  - operational aspects.
- 2 *Communicating the brand message:*
  - advertising campaigns;
  - themes;
  - celebrities;
  - events;
  - shows; and
  - consumer interaction.
- 3 *Delivering the brand performance:*
  - product performance;
  - service performance;
  - customer care;
  - customer satisfaction; and
  - customer delight.
- 4 *Leveraging the brand equity:*
  - line extension;
  - brand extension;
  - ingredient branding;
  - co-branding;
  - brand alliances; and
  - social integration.

Ghodeswar's model is a holistic one. Every line item sits above a wealth of experiences and debates. The inclusion of some items within the brand management mix may not suit everyone – celebrity endorsement may not suit all for example, whereas for others it is vital. It is also an evidence-based one and reflects, in part, the experiences of companies in India.

#### Application: Archies, Boroline and Dabur Vatika

The academic world abounds with pet models and theories but, to coin a phrase, the rubber tends to hit the road when their application can be seen in practice. Ghodeswar sought to apply his model to three Indian organizations:

- 1 *Archies* – a greetings cards and gifts company, something of a household name in its own right in India, and offering foreign brands such as Disney and Gibson Greetings;
- 2 *Boroline* – an established brand leading company with a niche providing cures for skin problems; and
- 3 *Dabur Vatika* – a relatively young brand focusing on hair oil and related products with youth appeal.

Each company is unique, and to be useful models need to be adapted to unique circumstances. It is illuminating to see how the PCDL model applies to these three different businesses:

- *Positioning the brand* – Archies majors on feelings and emotions and is associated with greetings cards and soft toys and gift items for youth; Boroline is seen as value for money in the area of antiseptic skin cream, particularly Haathiwala cream; Dabur Vatika is a premium quality product, pure coconut oil in a distinctive white and green bottle.
- *Communicating the message* – all three companies use different media – newspapers, TV, sponsorship, and so on

with distinctly different messages: Archies “The most special way we care”; “Combining modern chemistry and the science of ancient Indian Ayurveda”; and Dabur Vatika “Values of youthfulness and natural beauty”. All focus on social responsibility.

- *Delivering the performance* – all have product focuses appropriate to their products. When it comes to distribution, Archies has its own gallery stores and an organized franchising model, Boroline and Dabur Vatika focus on the position of the products within stores.
- *Leveraging the brand equity* – all three companies have gone in for brand extension, Archies in key chains, stationary and gift items, Boroline into hair care products and pain balm, Dabur Vatika into hair care and beauty products.

From the vantage point of the outside world looking in what can be gained? Well to begin with a little insight into the Indian retailing scene, a new frontier for international players. Many of the concerns Indian businesses face are the same as

others the world over, yet there is some vital differences in the detail. Context matters, the social concerns within India and the need to be aligned with good causes is something to consider carefully. Pepsico have been among those who have sleepwalked into a consumer backlash.

The detail of how the model has been applied is interesting, yet brand managers know that what is most interesting is application to their own business. There is a structure here and a set of headings that will usefully frame debates at the next brainstorming session and should help ensure that no key areas are missed.

Slavishly taking a model and introducing it would spell difficulty if not disaster. Having a window into the world of others, and a framework through which to examine ourselves can only be helpful.

*(A précis of the article “Building brand identity in competitive markets: a conceptual model”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)*

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