Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism model

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Type of model: Brand model (structure model)
Author(s):   J.N. Kapferer
Domain: Identity and image

Constructed source

Pysique   Personality

Externalisation   Relation   Culture   Internalisation

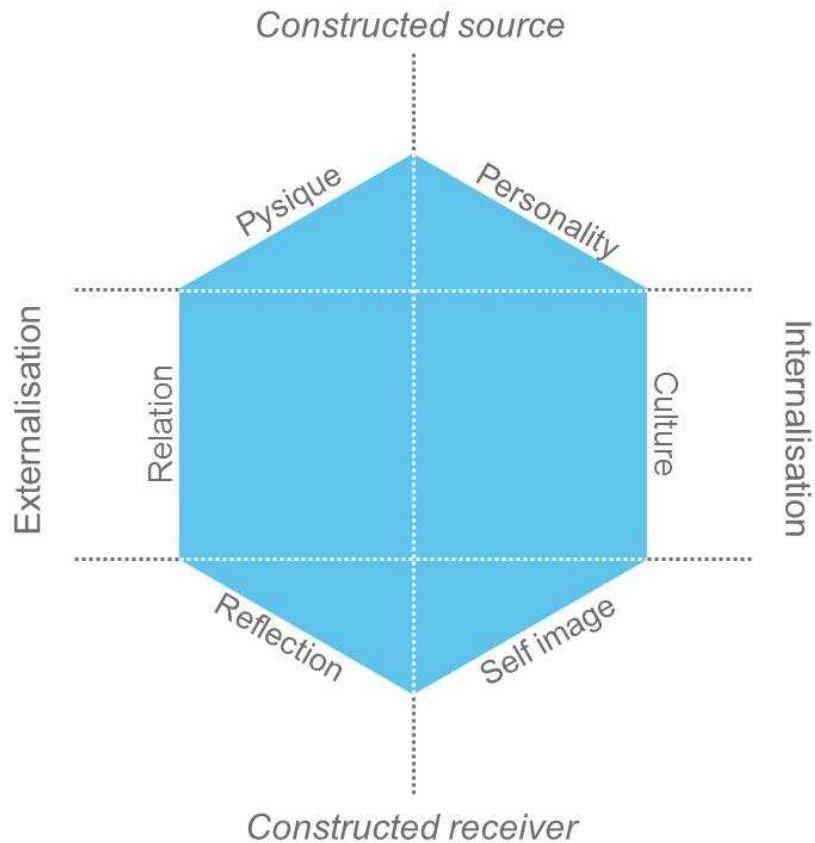Reflection   Self image

Constructed receiver

Figure 1: Six dimensions of brand identity

In his so-called Brand Identity Prism, Jean-Noël Kapferer identifies six aspects of brand identity: (1) physique, (2) personality, (3) culture, (4) relationship, (5) reflection and (6) self-image. These six aspects are divided over two dimensions:

a. *The constructed source vs. the constructed receiver*: a well-presented brand has to be able to be seen as a person (*constructed source*: physique and personality) and also as the stereotypical user (*constructed receiver*: reflection and self-image).

b. *Externalisation vs. internalisation:* a brand has social aspects that define its external expression (*externalisation*: physique, relationship and reflection)

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and aspects that are incorporated into the brand itself (*internalisation*: personality, culture and self-image).

Kapferer states that these aspects can only come to life when the brand communicates with the consumer. Strong brands are, according to Kapferer, capable of weaving all aspects into an effective whole, as a way of coming to a concise, clear and appealing brand identity. We will go into the six aspects in detail below.

1. Physique: this is the set of the brand's physical features, which are evoked in people's minds when the brand name is mentioned. Kapferer states that this aspect has to be considered the basis of the brand. Key questions regarding this aspect are: what does the brand look like? What can a consumer do with it in terms of functionality? And how can it be recognized? It is also important to have a clear flagship product representing the brand's overall qualities. A good example is – in Kapferer's opinion – the Orangina brand. Due to the consistent use of the round orange-textured bottle, Orangina has managed to create a differentiating and recognizable market position for the brand. Kapferer furthermore states that no brand will be able to do without drawing attention to its material benefits. Even strong image brands, such as Hugo Boss, Max Factor and D&G, have to express in their advertising that they are selling clothes and/or lipstick. The tricky part is to do so in a recognizable and differentiating fashion.

2. Personality: the brand's character. By communicating with consumers in a certain way, these can be given the feeling that all brand-related communication actually constitutes a person with specific character traits speaking to them. This can be realized by using a specific style of writing, using specific design features, and using specific colours schemes, for example. Endorsements in the shape of persons recommending a brand can literally give flesh to a brand's character. Well-known examples are George Clooney for Nespresso and Jamie Oliver for Sainsbury's.

3. Culture: the system of values and basic principles on which a brand has to base its behaviour (products and communication). Culture is the direct link between brand and organisation. Many associations in this area are linked to the country of origin; Coca-Cola appeals to American values, Mercedes-Benz to German ones, and Citroën to French ones. Sometimes, brands can also be fortified by the fact that they are associated with the consumer's home nation; Kapferer refers to the example of the (American) brand Mars (candy bars), which makes many Dutch people feel it is in fact a wholly

Dutch brand. Brand managers should have the brand's culture resonate in as many customer contacts as possible.

4. Relationship: a brand can symbolise a certain relationship between people (between mother and child, for example, in the case of Blue Band margarine). This aspect requires a brand manager to express the relationship his/her brand stands for. Lexus clearly differentiates itself from BMW, for example, by almost literally giving its customers the red carpet treatment. The relationship aspect is perhaps even more important for service brands than for product brands, as a service is, by definition, a relationship.

5. Reflection (of the consumer): this aspect makes reference to the stereotypical user of the brand, and is the source for identification (NB: this idea does not necessarily coincide with the characteristics of the target group). When thinking in terms of reflection, you could in the case of Coca-Cola describe the consumer base as 15-to-18-year-olds (with values such as fun, sporty and friendship), while the actual target group of this brand is far broader. Kapferer states that there is no need for brand managers to make a realistic reflection of the actual target group in their (image) campaigns, but rather present a group/person that will appeal to the members of the target group.

6. Self-image: the mirror the target group holds up to itself. A Porsche driver, for example, who thinks others will think he is rich because he can afford such a flash car. When developing a brand identity, brand managers should take this dimension into account. Insight into the underlying intrinsic drivers of consumers can give a brand a real boost. If these insights are present, advertising can draw on them. Another example is provided by the brand Lacoste. Research has shown that Lacoste users see themselves as members of a sporty club; even if they do not actively play any sports. Without this knowledge, Lacoste would never have been able to create its current image on the basis of its brand identity.

The Brand Identity Prism enables brand managers to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their brand using the six aspects of this prism.

Reference(s)

Kapferer, J.N. (1992), Strategic brand management: new approaches to creating and evaluating brand equity. Kogan Page, London, U.K. *

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* : Available in the EURIB library.