

What's in it for me?

Consumers are spoiled for choice, and for brands to cut through they must show how they can enrich people's lives. **John Crowther** of Creston Unlimited identifies eight drivers of brand enrichment

If the idea of the consumer - a person passively consuming media, messages and brands - was ever true, then the sheer volume of choices available now must surely have put that to bed.

Instead, whether consciously or unconsciously, the only way to navigate round the paradox of overwhelming choice is to aggressively edit the communications and brands that individuals choose to interact with.

But what is the basis of that editing? What's the transaction that people make with brands to justify their engagement? And how can brands enrich that offer to maximise their chances of making the editorial cut?

The question of how brands can enrich their offer effectively is the biggest single marketing challenge of all. Indeed, in a world of too much choice, everything else has to be derived from answering that fundamental

question: what's in it for me? It's worth pausing a second to appreciate the scale of choice from which 'consumers' are expected to consume.

In a typical large supermarket, there are 20-30,000 Skus. Every year around 30,000 new consumer products are launched. In the typical day, the average person sees 1,009 ads. The sheer volume of choice means that, inevitably, there is a massive failure rate at every step in the marketing process, from existing brands that fail to sustain their engagement, to the 75-90% of new product launches that fail to survive their first year, to the choice that 88% of people make to fast-forward through the ads on their PVR.

In some cases, this failure is a 'fair' consequence of technological evolution, or changed tastes, or poor performance. But, in far too many cases, that commercial failure is a consequence of an earlier failure to

establish what that particular brand could do to reward consumers' engagement by some form of enriching exchange.

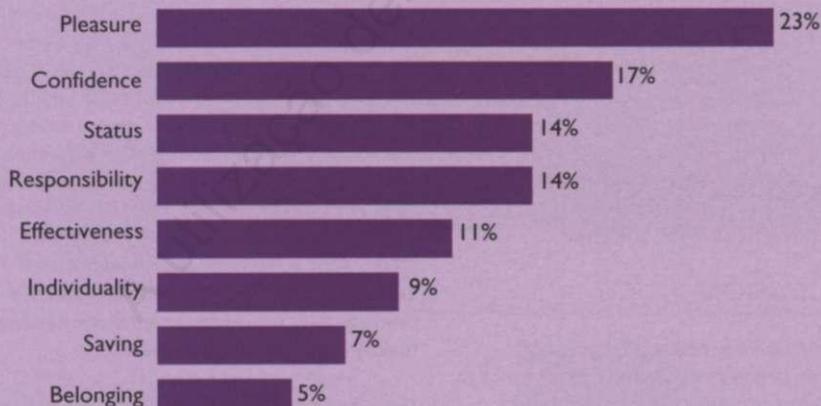
The world isn't short of models seeking to explain how brands can engage with consumers (Disruption, Lovemarks, Meaningful brands, Desire, Family brands... the list goes on). However, when evaluated against their ability to work for all brands in all categories (because the struggle for engagement is usually against all brands in all categories), over time (because that struggle is unceasing), and in a way that doesn't presuppose a channel or media solution (because the struggle take place across multiple channels and environments), there was a clear gap in current brand understanding.

So, the challenge we at Creston faced was to build a fresh model that reflected this reality, which could analyse and diagnose how a brand could most effectively enrich consumers' lives in a way that was universal, long-term, and genuinely holistic - and which would therefore provide a long-term platform for brands to overcome the consumer's aggressive editing of choice.

We had two initial hypotheses. First, that there are a finite but potentially large number of ways in which brands can enrich people's lives - from rational ones such as effectiveness or cost-saving, to more emotional ones such as providing entertainment or self-reward. Second, that most successful brands are unlikely to be enriching lives in just one way. Despite the tidy world of brand pyramids, onions and diamonds, we suspected that the real strength of successful brands was their ability to simultaneously enrich people's lives in multiple ways.

With our sister company ICM Research,

FIGURE 1: THE EIGHT KEY DIMENSIONS THAT DRIVE BRAND ENRICHMENT
% importance



we set out to test these hypotheses, and see if we could build a robust, and, more importantly, actionable model of brand enrichment. Our starting point was to collect all the possible ways in which a brand might be enriching consumers' lives. We conducted qualitative research across the UK with a very broad selection of adults, exploring just what it was that brands were doing for them. We explored both their overall sense of what made brands relevant and engaging, and then focussed on specific categories, and specific brands. We deliberately chose a very broad spread of categories to examine in depth - from retail, to digital brands, to personal care, to food, to finance - to ensure that we had a global view of interactions, rather than one that was tied to one specific category or type of brand.

What we found was rich - ICM identified over 70 different answers to the 'what's in it for me?' question. But it was clear that these clustered around a much smaller set of common themes, such as conferring status, or providing emotional security. From this, it seemed that the task of creating a single map that defined, in a reasonably comprehensive way, how most brands in most categories could build relationships with people was achievable.

The next step was to turn these qualitative insights into a robust, quantitative model. In particular, we were keen that we built a clear connection between

different kinds of brand enrichment and tangible business metrics, like Net Promoter Score and Loyalty - we wanted to build a decision-making, and validating, tool, not simply a descriptive framework.

Initially, ICM interviewed 3,500 UK adults, to identify which of the potential directions were the real drivers of brand enrichment, and to road-test the model against a variety of different categories. From this, we have built CUBE - Creston Unlimited Brand Enrichment.

Our first hypothesis had been that there was a finite number of ways in which brands could potentially enrich people's lives and so build business success. From the research, we were able to identify just eight enrichment dimensions, which between them captured more than 80% of the information contained in the various different possible areas of enrichment that we'd identified. Crucially, there was a clear link between these eight dimensions and changes in harder business metrics, such as loyalty, recommendation and repurchase intention.

Figure 1 shows the eight key dimensions that drive Brand Enrichment and how relatively important they are in driving brand behaviour. Interestingly, we found that just one enrichment dimension, Pleasure, drives almost a quarter of brand choices. In other words, the single most effective thing that brands can do to enrich peoples' lives in a way that builds choice is to offer some

aspect of fun, joy and indulgence in exchange for their commitment. Whereas, even in the tough economic climate of late 201 1, which was when this research was completed, the ability of brands to enrich by offering Saving was much weaker.

Of course, this reflects the importance of the different dimensions in influencing choice across the population as a whole. What we found was that within sub-groups, there are very big differences in how brands can successfully enrich peoples' lives. One perhaps predictable difference is between men and women (Figure 2). Indexing both genders against the total sample shows that on every single dimension, brands are much more successful at enriching women's lives than men.

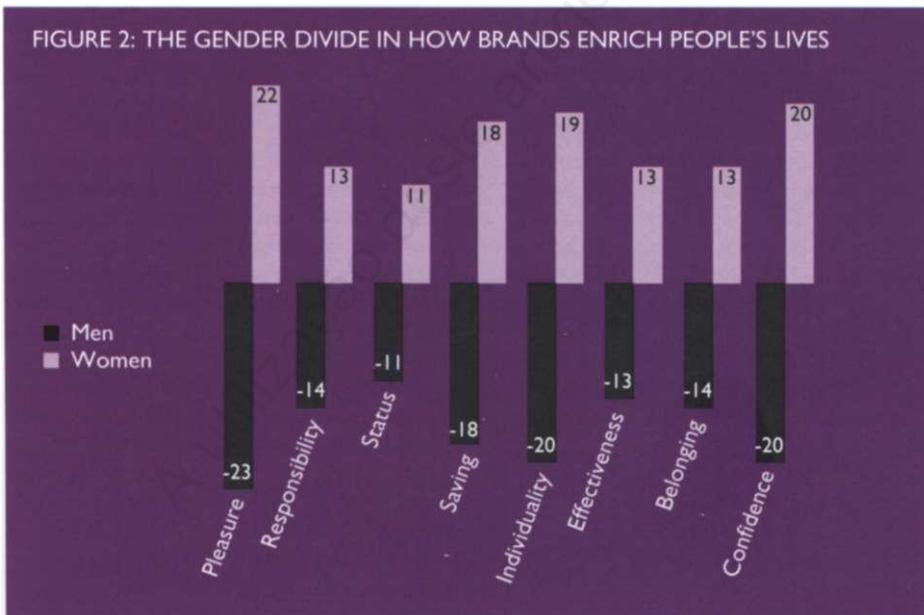
This suggests that a male-targeted brand has to work much harder to enrich men's lives successfully, and that the key dimensions for success (e.g. Status, Effectiveness and Belonging) are quite different from those central to success with women.

One of the less expected insights from the research was the impact that children and relationships have on how brands enrich lives (Figure 3).

People in partnerships with no children are one of the least brand-enriched groups. Maybe this is because too many brands either talk to their single state, or assume that they've started on the school-run. Either way, they're now a sizeable demographic, and an audience which seems to offer untapped chances for enrichment.

However, for single parents, brands suddenly become much more important. The degree to which brands enrich their lives is dramatically greater, particularly on dimensions like Pleasure, or Status or Belonging, which seems to indicate a need for escapism, or reconnection with a wider world. These are deep emotions, but ones that seem untapped. Single mums (or dads) are rarely the heroes of ads, for example. This suggests that there is a missed opportunity here.

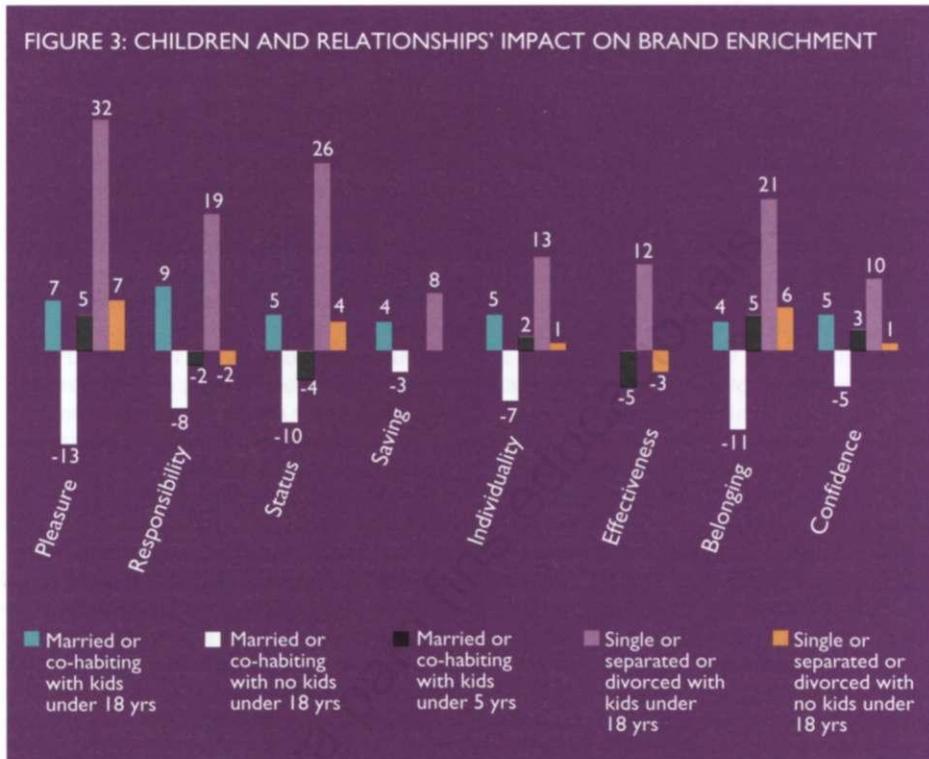
Of course, the primary aim in creating CUBE was not to analyse groups of consumers in isolation, but to analyse and diagnose how a specific brand enriches their lives. Here our hypothesis was that successful brands enrich their users' lives on multiple dimensions, with the specific profile defining how brands can focus and plan brand development and communication.



In the course of the research, we have profiled brands in categories as diverse as mobile phone networks and beer, but, as an illustration, Figure 4 shows the top-line profiles of two initially very different retailers - the pharmacy chain Boots and Amazon - which are increasingly developing into areas of product overlap. The data confirms that strong brands do indeed usually deliver enrichment on several dimensions at once.

Figure 4 shows Amazon either at parity to Boots, or outperforming it, on every dimension. That it outperforms Boots on Saving isn't too surprising, but Amazon is also much more successful at enriching consumers' lives on more unexpected dimensions, like Confidence and Effectiveness. Also, despite Boots' 100-year-plus presence on the British high street, it has been no more successful than Amazon in creating a sense of Belonging. On the face of it, in an Amazon versus Boots brand square-off (and discounting other non-brand factors, like location), Boots looks like the brand that comes off worst.

So, in that situation, how could Boots use Brand Enrichment to build competitive advantage versus Amazon? The value of CUBE is in defining and directing strategy. In this example, this might lead to Boots enhancing a dimension of current strength,



such as Pleasure or developing an 'essentials' type offer in product areas where Boots is strategically vulnerable to Amazon's strength on Savings.

CUBE is just one of the tools that we use to help create brand enriching marketing and communications solutions for clients. We've found that its ability to compare a given brand against the total world of brand choice, to reflect the reality of brands as having multi-dimensional relationships with consumers, to be independent of any media or channel bias, and to provide a benchmark for tracking brand evolution, makes it a powerful starting point for brand development.

It's one that we're currently using with a range of very different clients to drive their brand activity, and it's a framework that we're looking to expand outside the mainstream consumer market to understand, for example, how Brand Enrichment works in a business-to-business space, and with under-18s.

In a world where brands are constantly faced with the question 'what's in it for me?' we believe that CUBE provides a powerful insight into getting to the right, and enduring answer.

more on brand enrichment at www.warc.com

FIGURE 4: HOW BOOTS AND AMAZON DELIVER ENRICHMENT

