Creating desirable brands

Successful brands from Google and Apple to Innocent and Adidas are meaningful and desirable. **Steven Melford** of Clear outlines six principles in creating a desirable brand

When two of the world's fiercest marketing rivals and biggest advertising spenders, Procter & Gamble and Unilever, agree on something we'd all better take notice. Led by their respective Marcs, Pritchard and Mathieu, both businesses are embarking on programmes to create brands that make more of a meaningful difference to people's lives. They are moving away from a selling mindset towards a philosophy based around brands with bigger ideas about making the world a better place. Out goes the focus on shifting 'products' from the shelf to be consumed, replaced with 'brands' determined to make every day a little easier, a little happier and a little more enjoyable for people all over the globe. Brands we desire to have around us because they make our lives better. Some may say this is not radically new thinking, but it is radically right thinking.

Brands that succeed in creating a desirable role in people's everyday lives deliver greater commercial return for their owners. An ambition to improve lives is not based on some new altruistic ideal, it always has, and always will, sit at the heart of great and profitable brands.

How do we know? Because in the last two years, we have spoken to nearly 40,000 people around the world to identify the world's most desirable brands – those that really deliver against this ambition – and more importantly, to understand what they do differently to create that desire.

Our studies have shown that the businesses that own the world's most desirable brands outperformed the Standard & Poor's 500 index over the last five years, delivering higher share value growth and greater share price stability.

We have also determined six behaviours common to desirable brands; guiding principles that remain true irrespective of category or country. The more brands adopt them, the more desirable they will become. They represent a simple, but powerful, framework for assessing how to create greater desire for any brand. They are:

- Think bigger than your category
- Focus on the future
- Have clarity of purpose
- Inspire connections
- Create experiences
- Constantly innovate

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1 Think bigger than your category

Three-quarters of us have a preference for a certain 'type' of brand, irrespective of the category to which it belongs. We are hardwired to desire brands that help us be ourselves or become the person we aspire to be. If that type of brand is available to us in a category, we will choose it. If it isn't available, we will compromise grudgingly.

So, desirable brands do not adhere to the rules of their 'category'. They actively look for a bigger role; a role in the lives of people, not just a role for a category consumer. This enables them to challenge the status quo, to pioneer new ideas, develop a range of propositions that transcends their origin.

Many of the most desirable brands we uncovered have done precisely this.

Google is so much more than a search engine. 201 1 saw the launch of Google Wallet – a foray into contactless payment. Using near field communication (NFC), it allows people to pay for items through an app on their smartphone. It will be capable of storing thousands of payment cards, loyalty cards, gift cards, receipts, boarding passes, tickets and, in time, even your keys may be synced to your Google wallet. Google profits were $9.7 billion in 2011, up from $8.3 billion in 2010.

Amazon is so much more than a retailer. Amazon broke the mould by producing the Kindle. Amazon as a brand is also changing the book market. It is doing away with printed books through ebooks and the Kindle, as well as cutting out publishing companies as middle men by having its own in-house publishing unit and gaining the right to publish some big titles directly. Net sales increased 41% to $488 billion in 201 1.

Marketers and brand owners tend to set themselves boundaries; brand users do not. We all have the opportunity to challenge these boundaries to create more desirable brands.

2 Focus on the future

While it's important that brands transcend their category, this should be done with direction. Desirable brands understand where the opportunity is in the near future, but also anticipate where the long-term opportunities for growth exist. This isn't just about commercial or technological opportunities, but the opportunity to create a future that people truly want. Brands that invest in shaping and improving the world around us reap the reward. This means having vision, but also giving the organisation the space, resource and licence to make it happen.

Microsoft recognised that the future is 'you as the controller'. The Xbox Kinect has become the fastest-selling consumer electronics device of all-time. The release of software development kits is opening further uses beyond pure gaming.

Kodak did not recognise the future as being digital. Although one of its engineers invented the first digital camera in 1975, it was too slow to exploit the technology, instead it invested in film. We all know the end of the story.

LoveFilm recognised that the future was in the entertainment coming to you. It also had the vision to make the service available through PlayStation and Xbox. Acquired fully by Amazon in 201 1 for a rumoured £200 million, it now has over two million subscribers. Blockbuster sadly did not have this foresight; for too long it thought people would go out in search of entertainment. At its peak in 2009, Blockbuster had 60,000 employees, but by the end of 2010, it was filing for bankruptcy.

So, being continually desirable means always looking beyond the present and being clear on your role in crafting a better future.

3 Have clarity of purpose

Desirable brands have a clear ambition that goes beyond delivering commercial targets. They have a clearly articulated purpose that inspires internally and externally; a bigger thought at their heart that people truly buy into, and that shapes and guides all brand-building activity. And they have a distinct and compelling personality that builds and supports that purpose. The whole story is brought to life in what the brand does as much as what it says.

Nivea is a brand increasing its desirability. Its purpose is to help people feel closer. Through all its products and recent innovations, Nivea is true to its higher purpose of nurturing the emotional bond between people that comes through physical contact.

Innocent continues to strengthen its desirability. Its purpose is to make natural, delicious food and drink that help people live well and die old. It is open about being a Trojan horse for getting more fruit and vegetables into people. Its honest, fun,

enjoyable personality makes that purpose easier to say 'yes' to.

Google's purpose of 'organising the world's information to make it universally accessible and useful' is not only compelling, but clearly guides where the brand goes and where it does not.

All of these brand purposes work at a deeply human level. They are simple, recognisable and appealing. We can all see how they make our lives better.

4 Inspire connections

Desirable brands inspire people to think, feel and act differently. The most desirable brands can make us love them, respect them, talk about them and use them. Each one of these can provide an area of brand- building focus to strengthen overall desirability.

Probably the most desirable brand in the world, Apple, does a great job on all these measures. There is much we can learn from how it connects with our hearts and heads, but mostly about how it always seems top-of-mind and part of our conversations.

Adidas is a strengthening brand. Recently, it has built on its strong emotional and functional heritage but, compared with last year, it has significantly improved how people act in relation to it. Compared with last year, more people want to hear about Adidas, more people want to talk about Adidas, and more people want to use Adidas in the future. Oh and its sales are up 14%.

Dove is a brand that has always had a strong functional story about moisturising and care, but, in recent years, it has impacted how people feel more strongly. It has significantly increased its emotional connection with consumers in the areas of pride, attraction and really mattering. This has been done while maintaining its strong rational appeal. To be a brand that makes a truly meaningful difference in people's lives, you have to have an idea to feel connected to, a product to believe in, and a story to talk about.

5 Create experiences

Desirable brands are so much more than a product or service. They create an experience co-ordinated across every touchpoint to bring themselves to life in the most engaging and effective way. An experience that influences the head, the heart and the hand.

Audi's growth in desirability continues. It offers its customers emotional, technologically advanced products that are particularly noted for their sophistication and reliability. But beyond that, Audi strives to delight its customers with the best brand experience available - consistently delivering 'sophisticated,' 'progressive' and 'sporty' at every point of contact; the communication, the car, the showroom, the sponsorship, the service bays and even the new UK headquarters on the A4 highway.

Nike is so much more than sports equipment. It uses a range of touchpoints to create an experience true to its purpose of helping bring out the athlete in all of us. It is pioneering the digital experience through Nike Plus, with a range of propositions to help coach, motivate and share fitness experiences.

Disney has always believed in magical childhood entertainment. It embraces and uses new touchpoints to ensure that its purpose is delivered at every encounter with the brand. It created a Cars 2 app that allows kids to interact with the iPad as if it were a play mat. Kids hold a toy car on the screen and complete races and missions.

It doesn't matter where your brand was born - in a factory or in the digital world, all brands now need to consider themselves as a series of evolving touchpoints to genuinely connect with people.

6 Constantly innovate

Desirable brands are constantly engaging us in an evolving story. They innovate, not just in the area of product, but across everything they do: service, people and process. They provide an ongoing supply of new things we can watch, read about, talk about, play with, buy and enjoy. In this way, their role in our lives is ongoing.

Consider Apple and Samsung, two brands increasing their desirability. The former launched one new mobile handset in 201 1, while Samsung launched 212. Two very different models of innovation, both with the same outcome of building brand desire.

Google never rests in improving its whole experience. Whether this be search enhancements, like Google instant, playful logo innovation, or bigger innovations, like contactless payment, everything is always getting better.

H&M uses collaboration as a source of ongoing innovation through limited editions with the likes of Jimmy Choo, Sonia Rykiel, Roberto Cavalli and Vivienne Westwood.

Walkers have been very successful in engaging its audience in competitions to innovate. Its 'Do Us A Flavour' campaign saw over one million votes cast through email, Twitter and Facebook and Builders' Breakfast flavour emerge as champion.

The common theme across all these desirable brands is that they innovate to make our lives better. Whether it is helping find things quicker online or making gaming more fun, they challenge the limits of their business, brand and category to get there.

So, there we are, six simple principles that offer a route to creating desirable brands that genuinely make a difference to people's lives. Truly desirable brands deliver on all six. As brand owners or brand advisors, we should be asking whether our brands are behaving in this way. If not, we have something to work at.

more on desirable brands at www.warc.com

Fonte: Admap, Washington, v. 47, n. 6, p. 44-46, Jun. 2012.