
In the Realm of Brand Personality

Professor B Ray

Faculty, New Delhi Institute of Management

Personality of a brand can be defined through the human elements that are associated with it. Or simply it is the personification of the brand. These personalities can be defined through demographic variables, lifestyle variables, and individual variables.

Couple of years back I saw a TV ad where one 22-year old sleek-looking lady, regular in the 5-star hotel, talking to her boyfriend and probably asking for a dinner. Opposite there was an old man, who was also a regular in the 5-star, thought that the lady was inviting him for a dinner, came over and said, "me?" the lady said, "get me a black coffee." It was an advertisement of "Erricksson" mobile phone.

The personality of the brand was simple. It was a 22-year old sleek looking beautiful girl. In the personality paradigm, when a CEO holds that phone, he is not holding a mobile phone, he is actually holding a 22-year old sleek looking beautiful girl and getting psychological satisfaction.. And that was brand personality of the then Erricksson mobile phone. The essence is simple - people sometimes don't buy the tangibles, they more often buy the intangibles which go with the brand. In this case it is not the mobile set but the feeling people would derive through its personality, is important.

Similarly Lifebuoy portrays the image of a masculine, hard working laborer. Exide battery emphasizes the personality of a dependable lackey.

When the personality of a brand is clearly defined, it becomes easier for the target customers

to identify the brand whom they can trust upon and live with. And companies look for a lifetime relationship between the brand and the customers. This can happen only when the profile of the customers matches with the personality of the brand.

Brand personality in the new paradigm

You can't avoid it. Whether or not you want it, your brand will project its own image, personality, and lifestyle. Instead of its natural manifestation, you can give, design, portray or personify in such a fashion that it puts you miles ahead of your competitors. You should talk emphatically about your liking and disliking, your feelings, your value system, your background et al in order to entice people from the same lineage and cultural background. People should embrace your brand because they think you are the ultimate. They yearn for you because you two come from the same ethnic background. If that happens, you get a life-term partner.

And the customer transforms from an ordinary customer to a partner of the company.

A brand can take different shapes

It can be a kid, a young man, an old man, It can even be a girl/lady/housewife, a millionaire, a poet, a cricketer, a film artist and so on. You can even portray the image of a farmer to identify yourself with the mass farming class. Recent advertisement of Pepsi portrays the image of an old rustic man in the form of Amitabh Bachchan and the character was so lively that it can attract millions of village folks.

Personality is a great differentiator:

Personality is often used by the companies to differentiate from other brands. Through personality it can get into different target class, it can create its own niche markets, its own image and identity. Brand personality is a great communicator. It talks about its past, present, and future, background, profile and so on.

Does brand personality add value?

Aaker's model will help us understand this. The 3 models of value delivery in Aaker's framework are Self Expression Model, Relationship Basis Model and Functional Benefit Representation Model.

Self Expression Model

In this model, the brand is either seen by the consumer as the kind of person the user is or wishes to be. In the former case the brand becomes a statement while in the latter case the brand is a self image enhancer. The self expression also works in more ways than one. Apart from an identity statement which works for some categories it can appeal through feelings engendered by the brand - when using it creates warmth, nostalgia, a family feeling with or without a social context.

Relationship basis Model

This model takes into account that people may not want to become like the person they feel the brand is, but they may develop a liking or admiration with a person like that, and may desire association with such a person.

Boroline antiseptic cream is the example of being seen as a family friend. Boroline depicts the image of a family friend. Nobody wants to become "BOROLINE" but everybody likes to have boroline's association and admires his personality.

Functional Benefit Representation Model

The personality can be a vehicle for representing the functional benefits and brand attributes. Again brand should reinforce the faith and belief that the person carries with the brand. If done well, it can capture the

core value proposition of the brand.

Brand Personality is not a myth, it's a reality

Brand Personality develops with every act that it does play with. Personality should get fused with ethos and culture, background, functional and non functional attributes, image etc. Personality can even be developed through appearance, drapes and attires, articulation, flamboyance et al. It even can be known for its slogan, logo, sign, symbol, brand name etc.

Advertising is clearly a major contributor

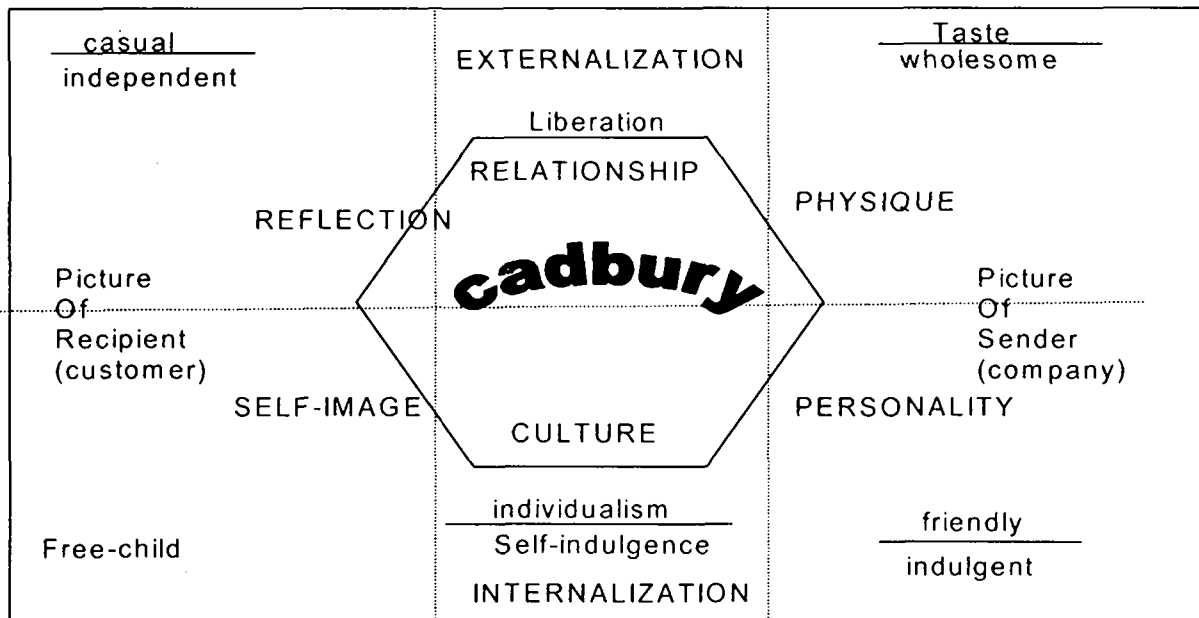
In developing a brand personality advertisement plays a major role. Advertisement can give the shape of the brand personality. Amir Khan's rustic image was helpful at the time of selling coke in the rural market. New Zen's sexy look enticed millions of Indians who crave for modern living. "Epang Opang Jhapang" the lyrical statement of horlicks has created awe-some impact among the Indian kids

Packaging - the leader

Packaging is the first communication between the brand and the buyers at the buying place. Attractive packaging can bring together millions of customers. Today some companies have shown tremendous creative mind and have developed innovative design in packaging. Even design is equally important to draw customers.

Other communication modes which matter:

- Sponsorships
- Brand ambassador
- Word of mouth
- Window display
- Exhibition
- Point of Purchase Communication
- Product Features, Performance & Price makes a difference:



The identity prism

(source: BRANDING by Debashis Pati)

The Kapferer Model of Brand Identity can also help build personality.

Evoke 'anytime is chocolate time' among adults, using psychological cues which are positive and based on 'child ego' state. Advertising was to have this tone and stimulate desire, spontaneity, and the craving for

immediate gratification (source: BRANDING by Debashis Pati). It does help us develop a relationship through love- a feeling on which it hinges, can be characterized as a person with whom you can go easy and fall in love.