

BRAND | BLUEPRINT

RETHINKING GLOBAL BRAND STRATEGY

By:

Joseph Benson

Rob Levinson

Drew Allison



Rethinking Global Brand Strategy

Executives are under ever increasing pressure to build global brands. More brands in more categories are achieving this goal.

However, for most brands, this is not only an elusive objective; it is also a destructive one.

To begin with, the customers for most consumer brands simply do not reside in many countries of the world. The customer-benefits these brands provide are not meaningful or relevant or even affordable. It is one thing for a brand to create choice for an existing consumer, it is quite another for a brand to create a consumer that does not exist.

Brand building requires extensive human and capital resources. When companies extend these resources across global markets, the health of the brand itself is at risk. Simply put, a brand grows when its resources are focused; it is diluted when they are not.

Expanding a brand globally forces that brand to stand for too much. The broader the reach of the brand the more difficult it becomes to manage the meaning of that brand. As the saying goes, brands that stand for everything stand for nothing.

Brands require competition. Competing brands reside in a category. It is one thing for a brand to compete in an existing category; it is quite another for that brand to create the category itself. Category creation is a capital and time intensive endeavor. And success is far from guaranteed.

For a brand strategy to be successful, it must follow a business strategy. When the strategy for growing the brand is leading the strategy for growing the business, the brand will fail.

When brands enter new markets, they benefit greatly from a strong heritage. Heritage speaks of status, character, social class, and a history. It speaks of a traditional way of life that is of value to present and future generations. Heritage speaks of inheritance, of shared experiences, and of a common history. If the heritage of the brand has little or no meaning or relevance in a new market, choose another market.

Cultural preferences are critical to the success of a brand in a new market because they influence purchasing behaviors. If the cultural distinctions of a brand do not align with the preferences of the consumers in a new market, choose another market.

Finally, consumers are not homogenous. When a brand expands into new markets because it sees shared customer-benefits between current customers and future customers they are focusing on the wrong part of the customer profile. It is not what makes the future consumer similar to your current consumer that ensures the success of the brand; it is what sets them apart.

About the Authors

Messrs. Levinson, Benson, and Allison are principals of Brand Blueprint, a Brand Consultancy located in Boston, MA. Their key areas of expertise include, respectively, brand positioning, brand strategy and visual expression.

CEOs, CMOs and other marketing leaders turn to Brand Blueprint when they seek to reposition, fortify or simply update their brand.

Collectively, Brand Blueprint principals have over sixty years of experience advising category-leading brands such as Allstate, Bose, DeBeers, Disney, General Electric, Gillette, JP Morgan/Chase, Pitney Bowes, Rolls Royce, Seagram and Staples.

For more information, please visit: www.brandblueprint.com



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