

THE LIGHT *of* DAY

Brand Equity.

What can you say about it, over and above the fact that you'd rather it bore a close resemblance to a blue chip stock than an entrepreneurial toss of the dice?

Well, I suppose you can try and define it, a phrase that's tossed lightly from mouth to mouth in any self-respecting marketing discussion, never pausing long enough in flight to be

definitively pinned down.

Finite, it's not. The brief flurry of activity a few years ago, when a few manufacturers tried to put a price to it, so that they could add it to their balance sheets, has long faded. One of them was snapped up the other day by a piranha-like predator. He sold his life for a goodly price, so perhaps something was achieved



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An M.A. from Balliol College, Oxford, Barry Day began his career with Lintas London as a trainee. Among the highlights of his career are two advertising 'firsts' - chairing the Programme Committee for the first worldwide advertising congress ever held in China in The Great Hall of the People (1987) and making the first presentation on advertising to an audience of Russian manufacturers in Moscow (1988).

He has also been Communications Advisor to leading British political figures, Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher.

I'd define Brand Equity as something like - "A unique and fluid mix of fact and emotion... ranging from its past to its present... the behaviour of its neighbours... the context of its times... filtered through the sieve of the Consumer's perception". And, of course, that's always been the case. We've only just got around to attaching terminology to it. The trouble with this business is that, once

you've done that, you're inclined to file it away under 'Finished Business'.

Whereas the one thing we can be reasonably sure of is that a Brand - any Brand - is a living entity, in constant need of refreshment and renewal. Which it doesn't always get. All too often we don't know what a Brand is.

We may know what it does- or, at least,

Everything we learn every day, every new trick the media dream up points to the same conclusion. It's time to demythify the 'Myth of the Mass'.

There never was a 'mass audience' out there and there certainly isn't now. All there's ever been is a lot of individuals waiting to be talked to individually.

Once upon a time we had to address them *en masse*. Now we don't.

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We have the possibility - and some of the reality - of more personal, precisely-targeted media that bring us close to the point we've always argued to be the

ideal! We can almost talk to our Consumers one-on-one. If we have the sensitivity and wit to be able to do so.

To do that, to variously interpret your core concept, you'd better understand your Brand Equity completely or you'll find yourself striking any number of false notes.

In any case, you no longer have the option, once the 'new' medium exists. A TV channel devoted to kids and their music will not take kindly to the same 'old' commercial you run on the 'traditional' channels.

They'll take your money, all right, but their audience will resent your intrusion into 'their' medium. Once again, you risk un-advertising yourself.

But, if the Brand's core values are clear, it shouldn't be too difficult. It could be the ideal

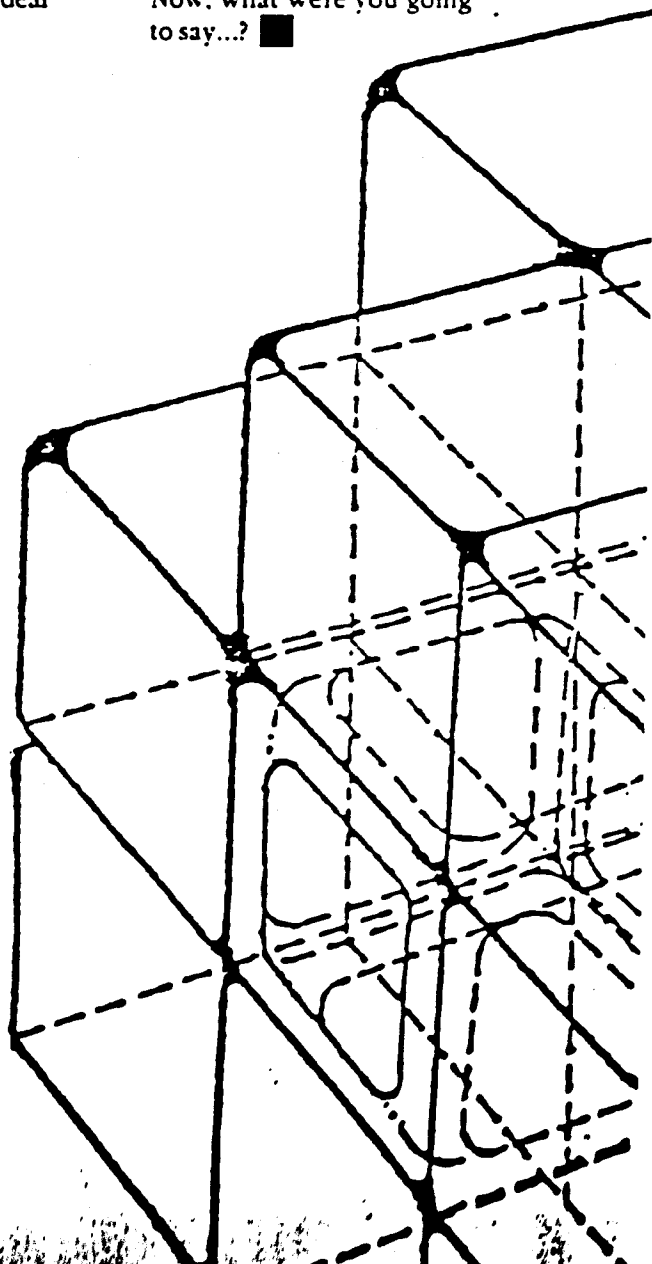
opportunity to launch a specific variant because the previous investment is anything but wasted - unless you choose to fritter it away. The Brand's values are still valid.

Which ever way you turn, you end up facing the same direction - eyeball to eyeball with the Consumer. And wondering why it took you so long to realise the obvious.

Every manufacturer lives in a permanent *menage a trois* with the Consumer and the Brand - except the other two can choose to walk out tomorrow.

If you understand each other properly, you can talk about just about anything. Segmentation. Social Change. Globalism. The Meaning of Life... As long as it's the truth.

Now, what were you going to say...? ■



it deals in preventive healthcare, too. It's often worth the investment to confirm that what you're doing is right!

But quite often you'll find you're not in the business you thought you were.

Your 'caring' image only goes so far and your latest proposed Brand extension is a variant too far, which will not only not work but actually undermine what you've already built with much time and investment. On the other hand, says the Consumer, if you were to... Or you may find that a particular variant is perfectly acceptable, as long as it's presented in another medium, specifically targeted to a sub-group, as part of the mega-Brand's total communications' package... and so on.

One thing Brand:
Scan indicates -
in common with
many other forms
of Consumer
investigation - is
that the walls
are crumbling.

Political, economic
and - quid pro quo?

- media boundaries, as we've traditionally known them. For a long time now they've mattered more to the academic than to the Consumer. The Consumer doesn't even think of herself as a 'Consumer'. She's just - herself. And she certainly doesn't define the parameters of individual media. She simply knows if someone is saying something interesting to her.

All of which argues for an integrated, holistic approach to addressing her and for setting a lot of the old 'rules' aside. Category rules like The Gospel According to Detroit, when it comes to selling automobiles. Commandments like 'This and only this is the way you advertise in this category', when it comes to almost anything...

This applies particularly to

Brands that are second or third entrants in a particular market. A competitor (or even a sister Brand) has made the classic move and occupied the category Middle Ground. Where is your Brand to stand?

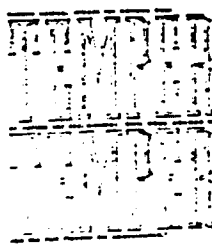
If you truly understand your Brand, it may be possible to move laterally and thus break out of the box.

Perhaps you can sell the car as an up market fashion accessory? Perhaps a cosmetic approach to food will work?

word
mouth



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Haagen-Dazs ice cream in the UK made their Brand look as though it had been designed by Calvin Klein. The effect was shocking at first glance but the rationalisation behind it was impeccable.

CLOSE
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The satisfaction ice cream provides is indulgent and sensual. From there it's a small step to a sexual analogy.

Unilever, meanwhile, in the same category is selling its Magnum line as obsession-on-a-stick...

Different - but merely not for the sake of being different. And only different because knowledge of your Brand and your Consumer has given you permission to be different. The 'category' is being redefined, the mould stretched - not broken. The innovation is relevant to the category. All else is marketing folly.

But once the mind is opened, the possibilities are endless.

Duracell once dominated the US battery market with its non-stop Bunny providing the definitive demonstration. Competitor Ever

Ready (with its Energiser battery) could easily see the category claim of longevity was the only one worth having, so

they found an unusual way to make Me Too look like No. 1.

The Energiser Bunny not only keeps on going - he goes into commercials that look like other people's commercials for snacks or soap, even into what appears to be programmes. He literally demolishes the formal media boundaries between commerce and entertainment, never mind the privacy of the patron. And the TV audience enjoys it thoroughly. Brave but dangerous. Too much of it or badly done and the risk is that the Consumer says - 'I knew it. These advertisers don't take their own business seriously. Why should I?'

Treading the cutting edge has its dangers... You could be un-advertising your Brand, blurring your Brand Equity and other people's along with it.

what the manufacturer says it does - but we don't know what the Consumer thinks it does for him or her.

And without the consumer you don't have a brand. You just have a product.

I'm not saying that a clearer-thinking client would solve all the

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problems but he could certainly remove a few of them and let us get to grips with the real ones.

My advice to any client would be - before you ask your agency to take your brand and give you a great advertising idea, you owe that Agency a Brand with a Brand Idea.

And if that process gives you pause - good! (Maybe you should start with the Brand Idea before you create your brand?)

And while you're thinking, you might like to consider that the really successful Brands - local or multi-national - "own" the category. However they achieved it, they now define a key consumer concept in that category that can be summed up in one word.

So, let's play the word game. The category is automobiles. I say - Reliable... And you say - Volkswagen. I say - safety... And you say - Volvo. Kodak - Colour. Gillette - Shaving. Heineken - Refreshment. And so on...

It does not mean each and every

execution comes out of a cookie cutter. Many of these advertisers have executions that look very different one from the other and certainly culture to culture. But the thread remains visible and strong. That is what the Brand is. The word summarises its equity. And until such time as that is no longer true, everyone who works on the brand should expect to contribute relevantly to its greater good.

It's a simple rule of thumb to wrap all that up in one inoffensive little word but, when you can't think of a word for a brand, you're usually looking at a Brand about to be in trouble...

More and more the linkage is one of Brand attitude. Less and less is it to do with the traditional concept of an advertising campaign, where you create a model, turn a handle and - send in the clones.

And, if I'm even remotely right about that - it has a lot of implications for the way Clients brief their agencies and evaluate their submissions.

I know one thing I'd be looking for, if I were a client.

I'd want advertising that was the Brand - not advertising that was about the Brand. The gap is an ocean wide.

Too much of the advertising we all do is a commentary on the Brand. It talks about the Brand. But it doesn't necessarily express in a seamless, indissoluble, inimitable way the essence of the brand. When a brand does that, the consumer's ears prick up. An old friend is talking to them - which helps solve another problem that comes to even the most successful of brands.

How do you attract new users? The more consistently you've spoken, the more you've also confirmed your non-users in the things about you they're not buying in the first place.

Nor do these loyal users expect

to hear you say anything new. 'News' is for the new brands. In their legitimate desire to break out of this particular box, many a brand has found itself running full tilt into an invisible wall of consumer rejection.

By saying or doing something inappropriate the Brand causes the Consumer to feel - because they often don't say, except through the silence of not buying - the Brand is sending out confusing and concerning signals. You've just stepped on turf that doesn't belong to you. Back off.

Extending the Brand's reach - perhaps through proliferation of Brand variants - is a legitimate aim in today's marketing world.

It's cheaper by far to parlay the Brand franchise than to risk the long shot of a totally new Brand, where the actual odds are slender indeed. But in what direction and how far? Only the Consumer can tell you. The fact a manufacturer can make something and slap his Brand name on it is irrelevant - or may be.

You have to know precisely what your Brand's Brand Equity is before you take that first fateful step. Which means deconstructing the Brand first - something few manufacturers (or their agencies) have ever contemplated.

At Lintas - forgive the small commercial! - we've developed a technique, involving the Client, that does just that.

It's called Lintas Brand:Scan and, by the time the final Brand Plan is written, you know as much as anyone is likely to know about what makes the Brand tick, where it can go and - just as important - where it should not set foot.

Brand:Scan has helped us keep a number of significant Brands on track, when they had one foot over the abyss. It's also helped redirect several that were looking distinctly sickly. And, in case this is beginning to sound like a medical rehabilitation programme,