

1.1. Brand Associations Exercise (Avery)

TAGS: brand meaning, brand positioning

Goal:

To have students elicit and analyze brand associations for leading global brands.

Materials needed:

- White posterboard sheets with sticky stuff on the back (one for each student)
- Markers (one for each student)
- Brand logo printouts

How to run it:

Print out logos from the Interbrands Top Brand survey. Paste each logo to a whiteboard sheet and hang all of the sheets around the classroom. Be sure to have enough brands to work on so that each student can be standing at a sheet. Hand each student a marker and have him/her go to a sheet.

(20 minutes) Students should start with one sheet and then work their way around the room trying to hit as many brands as possible. While at a sheet, they should quickly write down anything that pops into their head about that brand – thoughts, feelings, people, words, phrases, etc. in bullet form. If students get to a sheet that is already filled in, they should place check-marks next to things already on the page that represent their thoughts about the brand, i.e. things that they agree with. If they disagree with something that is already up on the sheet, they should put an X next to it. Then, they should add anything new that occurs to them about the brand. Let students get to at least 10 different brands in the exercise.

(20 minutes) Come back together as a class and discuss what is up on the sheets.

Start with general questions:

- Was this hard or easy for you to do? Why?
- What patterns do you see across brands?
- What differences do you see across brands?

Then, get more specific:

- What kinds of brand associations are there? Probing for functional, emotional, attitudes, identity-related, user-imagery, etc. Also probing for positive vs. negative. Can reference Aaker's brand association article here entitled "Beyond functional benefits".

- Where do brand associations come from? Probing for marketer-authored vs. consumer authored, culturally shared vs. idiosyncratic, heard vs. experienced, inherent to the product/service or created through storytelling (advertising and other marketing communications).
- Which brands have few brand associations? Why? What does this say about these brands? Differentiate between low brand awareness (i.e. brands like Cisco, HSBC which are unfamiliar to most students) and weak brand meaning. Point out that certain brands (i.e. Cisco, SAP) are leading global brands, but they have very low awareness and meaning for a student target market, but great strength in their own B2B target market.
- Which brands have many brand associations? Why? What does this say about these brands?