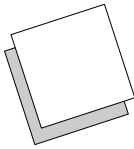


An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article



Comprehensive brand presentation: ensuring consistent brand image

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Abstract *Introduces the concept of comprehensive brand presentation (CBP), a formalized approach to align manufacturing and communications functions in the business firm. The linchpins of CBP are total quality management (TQM) principles and integrated marketing communications. The CBP enhances success through synergistic execution of the manufacturing and marketing processes via increased focus on measuring customer response to both manufactured product and promotional efforts supporting that product. CBP defines the TQM principle of “out of control” as the variance between actual brand image and customer specifications as rated by the target customers. CBP’s operational objective is to minimize that variance and, thereby, maximize the expected probability of product acceptance and subsequent target market brand loyalty.*

Introduction

With an increasingly competitive marketplace, more and more companies have learned the importance of ensuring the quality of their products (“walking the walk”). They have implemented manufacturing systems designed to make products which enhance their brand image by providing satisfying customer experiences. (For this paper, the term “product” will be used to represent both products and services and “customers” will refer to both actual and potential customers.) These companies have developed total quality management (TQM) programs to ensure that they deliver the best quality products to their customers. The companies recognize the need to manufacture a product which will deliver on its intended performance. Companies also have recognized the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of their marketing programs (“talking the talk”). They have established a marketing planning system to develop messages which communicate a strong brand image. The application of a recently developed brand management model has extended to international markets and the development of advertising is discussed (Byfield and Caller, 1997). General Motors decided to adopt brand management to address continuing loss of market by applying the model transnationally (Stevens, 1997). These companies create integrated marketing communications (IMC) campaigns to align a variety of media, both broadcast and targeted, in order to deliver their marketing message. This shift takes on more importance in light of the shift of brand management from short-term marketing activities to a broader, more central, and long-term role which has huge implications for brand

Providing satisfying customer experiences

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managers, advertising agencies, and companies (Bergstrom, 1997). These companies understand that the environment of a message (which includes the form which the message takes as well as the surrounding messages and programming) has as much effect on customers' impressions as does the message itself. Some companies even have both manufacturing and communications programs in place ("walk the walk and talk the talk"). Companies involved in this implementation had doubts about the using of the classical model and a revised model was proposed. This new model puts greater emphasis on active, rather than passive added values and CEOs taking a greater responsibility for integrating company wide activities (de Chernatony, 1996).

Awareness, trial and usage study

Specific TQM methods are available to measure the product sales cycle, such as research studies that monitor the product's performance relative to established promotional goals. The most notable research is the awareness, trial and usage (ATU) study. Its goal is to measure the effectiveness of advertising in improving customer awareness of the product, of promotional offers in order to increase trial, and of manufacturing in improving customer recognition of product quality, with the desired result of maintaining continuous customer usage. The collection of information in an ATU study implies that there is a relationship among these three measures not only in the customer's mind, but in the company's operating culture as well.

However, it is only a select few companies, such as Wal-Mart, which have recognized and acted upon the need to establish a comprehensive communications program which establishes messages directed at both its customers and employees (Thomas, 1997). Such a program will clearly establish consistent expectations for its brand image across both groups, ensuring that its brand image fits with its customers' specifications.

Comprehensive brand presentation

This paper will introduce a formalized approach to this philosophy of aligned manufacturing and marketing communications, called comprehensive brand presentation (CBP). This task challenges skeptics who contend that total quality management (TQM) has been remarkably successful in manufacturing, but not in the marketing function, particularly advertising (Blair, 1996). Blair contends that the problem is a missing rigorous, well-validated measurement or tool for evaluating advertising. Using such a tool, a television commercial can be tested for its effectiveness in influencing preference for one consumer brand over another. It is also possible to relate persuasion test scores to in-market sales results by using persuasion system as a sales-related measurement. By using these tools, marketers have a solid foundation for TQM. Because this paper's TQM model is based on a similar foundation, it is expected to overcome many of the concerns about the applicability of TQM to advertising. CBP encompasses both these processes of product brand image management. Companies that practice CBP have a very clear vision of the product brand image attributes that they wish their manufacturing and marketing to achieve. This vision is established through research to identify what the customer expects from the company's product. With CBP, every exposure the customer has with that product, through either actual experience or messages received, reinforces the brand image that the company intends to achieve. The benefits of the product are constantly reinforced to promote awareness, trial and repeated use.

The second section of this paper provides a background on the development of TQM in the manufacturing sector including its basic postulates, e.g. benchmarking, and how they apply to the process of brand management. The third section explores the concept of integrated marketing communications

(IMC) in brand management, and how TQM can be integrated into IMC to form a more cohesive communications network. The fourth section explains the details of the comprehensive brand presentation model, including execution and measurement of standards and performance. The final section presents conclusions about CBP.

The manufacturing process and total quality management

Historical background

Three basic rules

Main (1994) of the Juran Institute states that for a company to protect and increase its share of the market, it must follow three basic rules. First, it must produce a product which customers will buy. Second, that product must be able to be manufactured and distributed in a fashion that makes it affordable for the company to produce it and for customers to buy it. Third, the company must be willing and able to meet changing customer needs and marketplace conditions.

After the Second World War ended, American companies became complacent about the quality of products which they produced, as there was enough business to keep companies operating at capacity without having to focus on maximizing quality. But Japan began to overtake the USA by providing products designed to better meet customer needs, and then producing those products with fewer defects. This philosophy was translated from studies by Bell Laboratories to improve productivity and then carried to Japan by W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran (Heizer and Render, 1995).

Principles of TQM

Many of the principles of TQM were shared by its founders (Bennett, 1997), the most important being:

- a focus toward customer needs;
- a clear vision outlined by top management and communicated to employees;
- the active involvement of top management as well as line workers;
- a long-term partnership approach with suppliers to ensure quality inputs;
- the creation of an environment which encourages constant improvement; and
- the motivation of employees to do their best work.

Primary model

Opportunity for improvement

Deming (1986) developed the model of a system, shown in Figure 1, which is the basis of any process, although it primarily focuses on a manufacturing process. The TQM process depicted in Figure 1 begins with the generation of product ideas (Stage 0), which lays the foundation for product design (Stage 1). Consumer research follows, which legitimizes the design and provides the basis for redesign in accordance with consumer needs (Stage 2). At this point, benchmarking occurs to establish product design specifications consistent with consumer needs. Suppliers and customers participate in this process. Suppliers then provide test materials and equipment resources consistent with the benchmarking (Stage 3). Manufacturing then incorporates these resources into the production process (Stage 4). Throughout this process, products are checked for conformance to benchmarks. Conforming products are shipped to distributors (Stage 5) and, in turn, to consumers (Stage 6). Deming wanted management to focus on the process as an opportunity for improvement, where management had typically viewed workers as the only opportunity for (or obstacle to, as believed by some companies) improvement.

production results will be compared. Therefore, a company must survey its customers to establish their desired brand image (specification expectations) and compare it to the actual brand image (product performance). Simply stated, the company's goal is that $t = a = e$ and $a > c$. By measuring actual brand image, as shown by a snake plot of consumer ratings (a_p) in Figure 2, the company can determine how customers rate the product relative to competition (c_p) as well as to their own expectations (e_{min} and e_{max}).

One could even assess a multiplier, d , to the effect which the distributor will have on the final product which reaches the customer, with the ideal of $d = 1$ where product quality is maintained throughout the distribution process. Theoretically, one might believe that the actual brand image could exceed customer expectations, either through unanticipated benefits ($a > e$) or enhanced through delivery attributes, such as technological enhancements to high-tech products ($d > 1$). An example of this would be Dell Corporation's personal computer line, which has effectively leveraged efficient distribution and direct marketing to exceed its customers' expectations. But over time, consumer expectations will rise to meet the level of quality which is consistently delivered in the market, and once again the natural state will be $a = e$ and $d = 1$.

A simplified manufacturing process chain

Model adaptation

In Figure 3, CBP adapts Deming's system model into a simplified manufacturing process chain, following the key figures involved in assuring a quality product (a_p) reaches the customer. It begins and ends with the customer defining the expected specifications (e) for the product which will satisfy his/her needs. From this information, the company management develops the targeted brand image (t), the design of the product, and the engineering process which ensures that the target product is produced ($a_p = t_p$) and delivered as closely as possible to the target specification. Once the strategic plans are completed, the company's employees implement the manufacturing process with the intent to produce the product to customer specifications. In some cases, input materials are required from outside

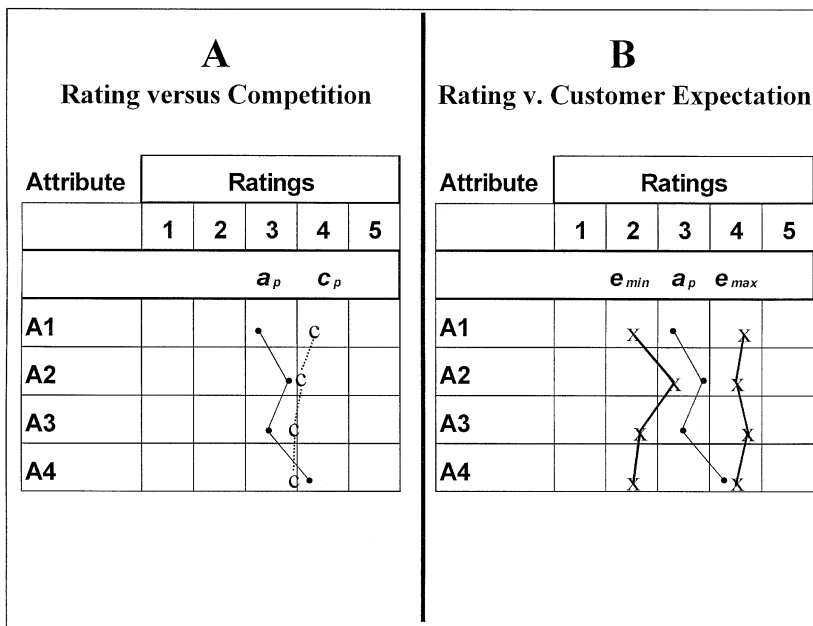


Figure 2. Product attribute measures

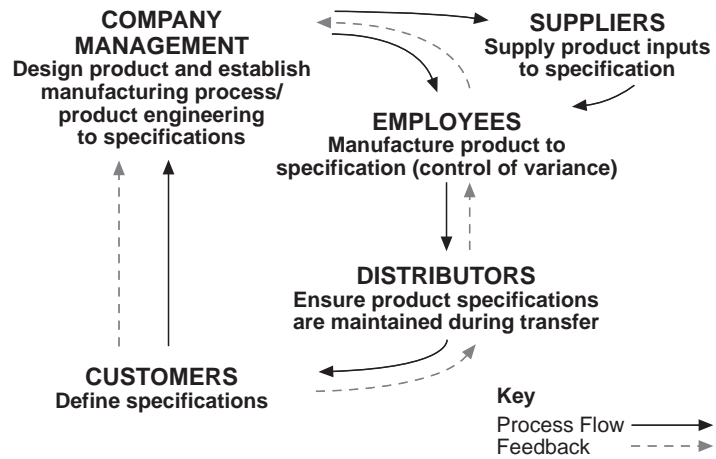


Figure 3. CBP manufacturing process chain

suppliers, who must ensure that their materials support the product specifications. The variance between the actual finished product and customer expectations is represented by σ_p . Once the product is manufactured, a distributor (either internal to the company or external through distribution companies or transportation companies) must ensure the safe delivery (d_p) to customers, so that the product's final quality ($d_p^*a_p$) meets customer expectations on receipt. The model also notes feedback, which the company's management can receive from its customers, both directly and indirectly through the distributors and employees.

The marketing process and integrated marketing communications

Historical background

Yarborough (1996) describes integrated marketing communications as "... an aggressive marketing plan that captures extensive information about customers through a database and other means, uses those data to target specific customers through marketing strategies – advertising, promotions, direct mail, etc. – and then completes the circle by evaluating the effectiveness of those strategies, so the next cycle is even more successful." Yarborough's model is not new, but reflects the promotion module of the strategic marketing planning model (Kotler, 1988).

Brand loyalty

The need for a more integrated model arose largely from the decline in customer brand loyalty. Historically, product advertising and promotion were very broad, as there was a great deal of brand recognition and loyalty among customers. However, market fragmentation and brand proliferation have eroded brand loyalty. Furthermore, broad marketing approaches in a maturing industry become less effective, and companies have to find more direct means of reaching their customers. Some companies may begin to develop databases on their customers, understanding who they are, where they live and the manner in which they used the company's product. Some companies even gather information related to the usage of other products that they manufacture as well as competitors' products. From these databases, the companies are able to mass merchandise as well as send information directly and specifically to the customer about the purchased product as well as related products which they also sell.

Yarborough presents the case of Del Monte, which launched a new line of canned fruits with a wide variety of marketing and media support. This campaign included print and radio advertising, coupons, newspaper food supplement inserts and a new database program which segmented its

Personalized marketing

customers by their buying habits. The company used research to identify the different buyers/customers of the different products and directed the appropriate message in the appropriate manner to them, such as producing fruit cups with extra cherries for young children.

While database management reflects the right philosophy of personalized marketing represented in IMC, many companies mistakenly believe that the mere presence of a database, or a direct mail program, by itself is the answer. However, the concept of IMC relates more to the understanding of one's customers and the development of a multi-relational database which can maximize the efficiency of creating and distributing a message to customers. Compare this to sending out Christmas cards. You have a list of people who receive a standard card, all the same message, with your name either printed or signed. Others, who are more important to you than the first group, will receive a personalized message to supplement that card because you want to maintain a closer relationship with them. Those who are closest to you will receive the same card, with the personal note, but also will receive a gift which represents how valuable they are to you. You do not ignore the basic card or the personal note just because you are giving them a gift, but the gifts are for a select few.

Why is it so important to have this series of messages work together? There is already so much advertising clutter surrounding the messages for a single product that a company compounds its difficulties when it creates internal clutter by having inconsistencies across its own messages. Also, consistency can help to ensure that the distributors (media) do not contradict the message should two messages get switched. Finally, consistency can assist in focusing the message to the appropriate audience without wasting money on sending the message to customers who are not going to respond.

The cycle of IMC

Primary model

The cycle of integrated marketing communications is an expansion of the basic communication model shown in Figure 4. The company (sender) is sending a message to the consumer (receiver) and looking for feedback in the form of a purchase. In reality though, the company is sending a series of messages, surrounded by many other messages from other senders. The company's goal is that its intended message is received clearly and motivates the receiver to respond in a favorable manner (i.e. buy the product).

Efficiency and effectiveness measures

Marketing must follow the same robust TQM design as manufacturing, to ensure that it also consistently produces favorable responses to the image it portrays of the product. The company's brand image which consumers draw from the actual message (a_m) are measured against competition with statistical measures to determine if the message conveys the brand image as advantaged, at parity or disadvantaged versus that of the competitive product

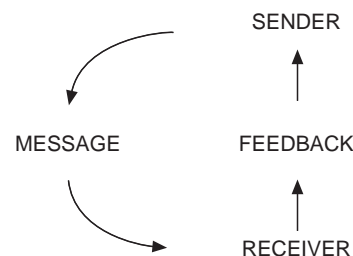


Figure 4. Communication model

Brand image attributes

(c_m). The snake plot of a_m (Figure 5A) is the brand image profile, across several product attributes, benchmarked to the competitive profile.

In addition to competitive measures, the brand image attributes must be measured to determine if the company's actual brand image through marketing (a_m) compares favorably or unfavorably against their specifications (e). In Figure 5B, the attribute ratings for the test message, a_m , are compared to the minimum and maximum expectations of customers (or lower and upper control limits in TQM terms), referred to as e_{min} and e_{max} . The goal is for a_m to be positioned in between e_{min} and e_{max} , so that the brand image fits within customer specifications (with a rating greater than e_{max} perceived as overpromising). The variance between a_m and e_{max} is identified by σ_m .

Model adaptation

In the case of marketing, the communication cycle is rarely as simple as the basic communication model. Experts, advertising agencies, are brought into the process to produce the message (in a similar role as the company employees who produce the actual product) in a manner that will capture the receiver's attention and motivate him/her to respond with a purchase. Furthermore, it is rare that either the company or the agency directly deliver the message to the receiver, the customer. Some form of media, typically either print or electronic, takes responsibility for the delivery (d_m). Because of that, the marketing process model, as shown in Figure 6, looks very much like the manufacturing model that was outlined earlier in Figure 2. In fact, the process of producing the appropriate messages for promoting a product and distributing it to customers ($a_m * d_m$) can be viewed in a manner which parallels the manufacturing process of the product itself ($a_p * d_p$).

Comprehensive brand presentation

Definition

Comprehensive brand presentation is defined as the management of both the manufacturing and marketing process chains to ensure that the customer perception of a company's product (actual brand image, a) is identical to the brand image which the company has chosen to portray (target brand image, t),

The brand image

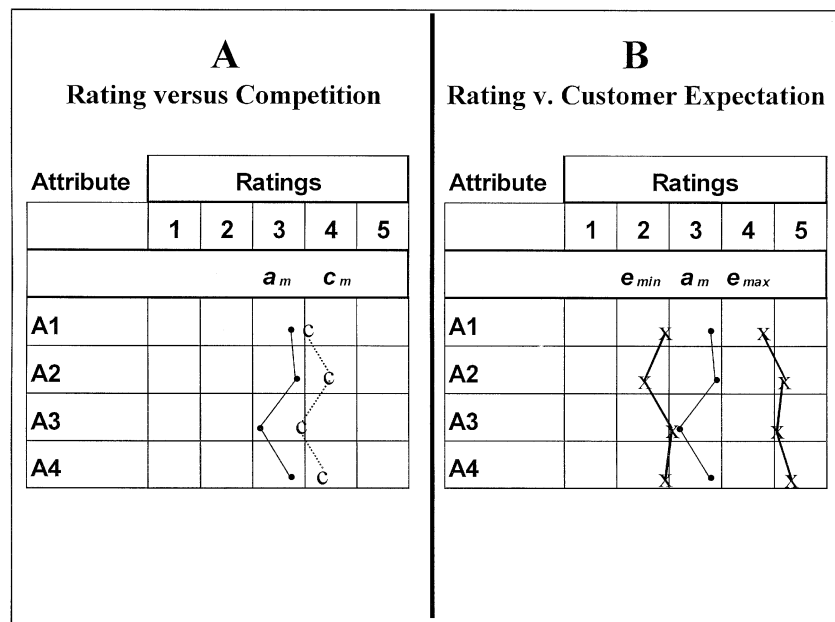


Figure 5. Message attribute measures

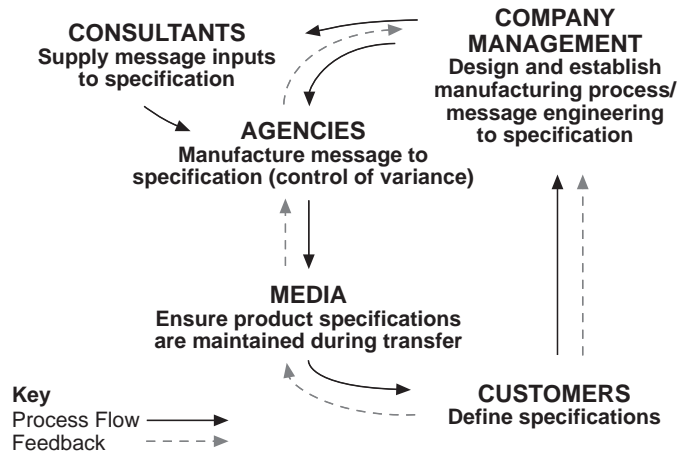


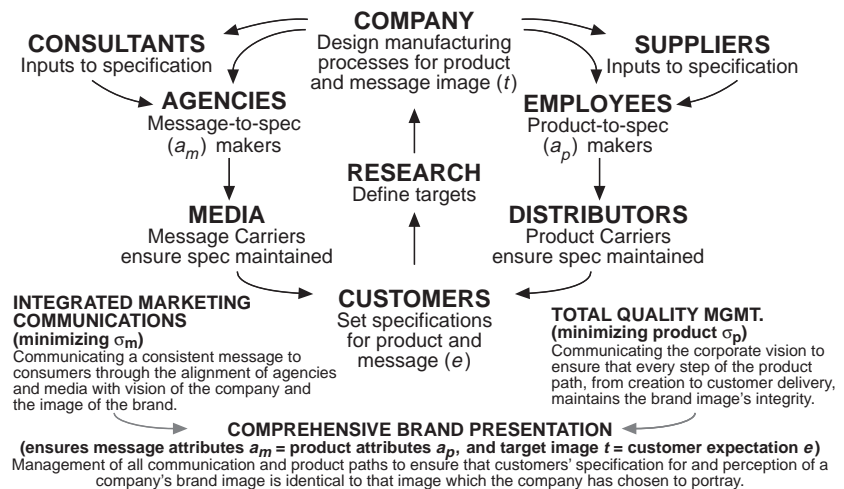
Figure 6. Marketing process chain

and that both are identical to the specifications originally set by the customer (e). In essence, the company establishes an image for its product which is as close as possible to what the customer sees and hears about it from the messages (a_m), as well in what he/she actually experiences with the product (a_p) with minimized variation (σ_m and σ_p respectively).

Principles

A powerful synergy

As stated earlier, the two components of CBP are total quality management and integrated marketing communications. There is a parallel track to these two programs, driven by the creation and delivery of something that the customer uses to make purchasing decisions, and utilizing the key tools of benchmarking, specification and process control. A powerful synergy is created by running the manufacturing and communications process chains in synchronization with one another, and this synergy can elevate the product's image to new heights. Figure 7 links the two process chains along their common elements: the customer, who sets the specifications of the product and the message; research, which communicates the customers' expectations and measures actual brand image; and company, which designs the processes and strategies which will produce the target brand image, whether they are for the product or the message.



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Figure 7. Comprehensive brand presentation

Execution

The responsibility for managing CBP clearly rests with a company's top management. Even though packaged goods companies have established positions of brand managers, the CEO of the company must set the tone for a corporate culture which is customer-focused and align the companies processes to support that culture. Top management must make the commitment to design and development of a product which is identical to customer specifications, or to how close they will affordably come. The chief marketing and operations officers must coordinate their efforts to understand and support one another's plans. The consumer research department must clearly hear and relay customers' expectations and brand image to ensure that the company's products are meeting customers' needs and outperforming the competition.

Research design

The research design for CBP is very simple. It begins with an assessment of the marketplace to learn or clarify existing customer expectations regarding the company's products, so that e_{min} and e_{max} can be identified. If the research is addressing an existing product, the actual brand image (a) can be determined for the company's product as well as any possible competition. In addition to the traditional awareness, trial and usage questions, the brand image should be evaluated across several key attributes, as identified by the customer specifications, with one set of ratings based only on marketing message (a_m) and another based only on actual product use (a_p). Variances in brand image from consumer specifications must be passed along to top management to determine whether they are allowable based on the target image or if changes need to be made to reduce the variance. The research should also identify critical characteristics (demographics, lifestyles), purchasing behavior and media preferences of customers to provide opportunities for efficiency in production and distribution.

Once the information is gathered and the decisions are made, it is up to the producers (company production department and advertising agency) to create the product and message which will incite customer purchasing. The research will provide the key attributes which must receive attention and provide the producers with direction on how to connect with the customers.

Advertising agencies

Why not expand on the concept of IMC and utilize advertising agencies, the external message experts, to develop internal messages which tell production employees and distributors about the messages (brand image attributes) the company is sending to customers? This would assist the company in motivating its employees to create and distribute a product which can deliver on the expectations which customers have. On the communications side, promotional advertising goals are defined as delivering target levels of awareness, interest, desire and purchase. It is also the agencies' responsibility to ensure that the media companies understand the company's mission and their role in delivering the message within the proper environment to reach the right customers. With that focus, media companies as the messenger must understand the context of the message, how it relates to their programming/delivery method, and what might be done to maximize both the reception by the customer and the motivation to buy.

Wal-Mart also has become more proactive in its messages through the use of commercials which portray customer profiles which describe a customer need (Thomas, 1997). A recent commercial featured a mother of several school-age children who was looking for school supplies. She stressed the need for selection, value and durability, as she could not afford anything more. Combined with that need is the way in which the customer perceives

Specific components must be analyzed

how Wal-Mart fulfills that need through the products and services it offers, citing examples of name brands and prices. This need fulfillment is intended as a message to customers about what they can expect (t_m) and to employees about what is expected of them (t_p).

Efficiency/effectiveness expectations

In CBP, there is an identifiable, measurable, quantifiable condition of being “out of control”, as signaled by $a \neq e$. But knowing that brand image is not meeting expectations is not enough to solve the problem. If there are product attributes which are below customers’ minimum expectations or competitive alternatives, then the company has quantifiable areas to improve. However, the attributes may be within specification and yet the anticipated levels of awareness, trial and usage have not been reached. There are specific components which must be analyzed to identify the manner in which to take corrective action. For example, the standard goal of a typical promotion is to maximize the probability of purchase, defined as P_{TM} . The marketing AIDA model (Kotler, 1996; Johnson and Chvala, 1997) relates P_{TM} functionally to the target market percent awareness (defined as P_{AWARE}), percent interested (P_I) and percent with desire (P_D). A reasonable representation of this functional relationship is:

$$P_{TM} = [P_{AWARE}(P_I \bullet P_D)]$$

That is, the probability of purchase (P_{TM}) over the sum of interested (I) customers over n target markets is driven centrally by awareness (P_{AWARE}). This relationship will assist in understanding whether the market is large enough to sustain the product, or if the message must be modified to increase customer desire.

As Table I shows, P_{AWARE} is a function of σ_m (the variation in message attributes from customer expectations). As the profile of σ_m increases beyond the in-control boundary, P_{AWARE} declines and iteratively P_{TM} declines, dragging P_{TM} below target. CBP, through IMC measurements, has the ability to detect out of control σ_m and constrain P_{TM} to a number within control limits, consistent with attribute targets t_m .

A diagnostic tool

A similar model can be applied to the product attributes as a diagnostic tool. Consider the goal of a successful product design as product repurchase, defined as P_{TP} . The components which would influence repurchase would be the percentage of the population who had tried the product (P_{TRIAL}), the percentage who were satisfied with its performance (P_S), and the percentage who found reason for further use (P_R). Applying the same formula, we would find that:

$$P_{TP} = [P_{TRIAL}(P_S \bullet P_R)]$$

In this case, repurchase is primarily driven by trial, and P_{TRIAL} is a function of σ_p (the variation in product attributes from customer expectations). Consumers may have the necessary awareness of the product, but the attributes are not sufficient to maintain the customer over a period of time.

	σ_m	P_{AWARE}	$P_{TM} = [P_{AWARE}(P_I \bullet P_D)]$
TQM	Low/in control	High/in control	High/in control
Not TQM	High/out of control	Low/out of control	Low/out of control

Note: $P_{AWARE} = f(1/\sigma_m)$

Table I. TQM influence on key purchasing measures

Two options

Simply improving the message is not enough to regain that customer, there must be a change in the product itself. Table II illustrates the same relationship of TQM to repurchasing on the manufacturing side as is experienced on the communication side.

Consider the two options when a message is not aligned with its product. If the message does not succeed in portraying the products' benefits to customers (i.e. $a_m < e$), they will not buy it. If the message overpromises ($a_m > e$) and/or the product does not deliver ($a_p < e$), then the customer will not buy it a second time. Table III simply states the effect of each process going out of control over the purchase behavior that would result.

In fact, over a longer period of time, two more serious repercussions are likely to occur when the message and product do not match (from the process(es) being out of control). The customer can experience cognitive dissidence with the company in general and be less likely to buy any of its products, and the customer can become less trusting of advertising in general and question the truth in any message he/she hears.

Companies do not appear to be too worried about this situation, because they do not measure σ_p or σ_m , the real responses to their actions. There is a time lag which takes place in the rejection of the product which can cause a company to miss the opportunity to stop customers from rejecting their product. Customers who begin to lose confidence will quietly reduce their usage and look for alternatives. By consistently measuring the customer buying process (P_{AWARE} and P_{TRIAL} as well as their related influences such as interest and satisfaction), and not just the resulting sales, companies can begin to appreciate the value of making a strong, compelling promise and fulfilling it with their product.

Levels of involvement and organizational learning

Note the importance that the two variables' levels of involvement and organizational learning have on an organization (Garvin, 1998; Marquandt, 1996). They influence how effectively the organization can execute plans, including internal communications programs. Low-learning, single-loop organizations (McKee, 1992) are limited in such execution, while Deutero-learning organizations are much less limited, i.e. execute better (Allee, 1997).

Benefits

There are competitive advantages to a company that aligns all of its resources, particularly its advertising agency, to ensure all employees and business partners fully understand, support and communicate its mission. First, customers will hear an in-control message which will excite them and

	σ_p	P_{TRIAL}	$P_{\text{TP}} = [P_{\text{TRIAL}}(P_{\text{S}} \bullet P_{\text{R}})]$
TQM	Low/in control	High/in control	High/in control
Not TQM	High/out of control	Low/out of control	Low/out of control

Note: $P_{\text{TRIAL}} = f(1/\sigma_p)$

Table II. TQM influence on key repurchasing measures

		High/rejection	σ_p Low/repurchase
σ_m	High/obscurity	Product failure	Niche market
	Low/recognition	Trial and rejection	Broad market

Table III. Result of interaction of variability

Brand presentation principles

motivate them to buy the product. Next, workers who make the product will be able to make informed decisions about how to make the best possible product because they know who will buy it and how it will be used (i.e. the target profile specification). Finally, customers will receive the payoff for their risk of trial and commitment for ongoing use by receiving an in-control product which meets or exceeds their expectations. By establishing a long-term relationship, the customer will accept the uncertainties of product changes and enhancements because he/she knows that the seller uses CBP and that a benefit to the user will follow.

Conclusion

An application of comprehensive brand presentation principles can enhance a company's success through the synergistic execution of its manufacturing and marketing process chains. With increased focus on the measurement of customer response to its communication and manufacturing efforts, variation from customer specifications will be minimized and customer satisfaction will increase. This effort can only succeed by involving all of the parties in the quality process; establishing long-term partnerships with consultants and suppliers to ensure quality inputs; keeping in mind the end customer, not only understanding their product use, but the purchase decision-making process as well; and creating an environment that supports the fulfillment of customer expectations, both in the message and the product.

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This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefit of the material present

Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

CBP – TQM for marketers

Marketers have always been a little uneasy about TQM. Not because we see TQM as a bad thing but because it seemed rather inward looking. I know advocates of TQM will dispute this and they are, as Haynes et al. show, quite correct. However, marketers saw little or nothing in TQM that they could apply to their main concern – the creation and development of the brand.

The occult science of brand management stayed aloof from the process orientation of TQM. What happened down in the engine room mattered only a little – marketers were setting the course and steering the ship. However, some marketers began to suggest – tentatively at first but now with growing insistence – that there is a better route to our destination. Rather than talking about the brand as a separate entity – something almost tangible – these marketers spoke of the brand in the same breath as the firm itself.

From this new focus we have found new marketing strategies – relationship marketing, customer focus, service quality and brand stewardship. It was only a matter of time before some wise marketers pointed out that there are important lessons to be learned from TQM. Haynes et al. demonstrate the value of such lessons with their concept of “comprehensive brand presentation” (CBP).

How to apply TQM to the intangible brand

Brands may be intangible but they are “things”. As marketers we are concerned to make this point so as to secure our place at the heart of the firm. And, since a brand is an asset (a “thing”) it stands to reason that TQM applies as much to brand management as it does to manufacturing. Indeed, TQM is incomplete if it excludes marketing activity – a vital aspect of business management.

Haynes et al. set out the three stages of CBP as follows:

- (1) assessment of the marketplace;*
- (2) clarification of existing customer expectations;*
- (3) creation of a product and message that “incites” customers to buy.*

On one level these three stages seem like common sense. But the elaboration of CBP shows us that success in these stages requires the alignment of manufacturing and marketing communications. Customer expectations inform the manufacturing process and feedback from the marketplace represents a crucial input to the product development and continuous improvement process. It is the task of marketing to establish this process and ensure that it is as efficient as possible.

CBP focuses on brand image and in doing so ensures that manufacturing and the delivery of service reflect that image. In essence CBP involves:

- using customer “specification” to establish a desired brand image;*
- portraying this desired brand image;*
- managing processes so as customer perceptions match this image.*

As we see in TQM, this exercise requires a “holistic” approach to management. Brand managers must be concerned with:

- *collecting regular customer feedback on brand image;*
- *ensuring employees “share” the customer’s desired image;*
- *measuring the gap between desired and actual brand image;*
- *informing the product development and production processes about image;*
- *creating a “physical” impression of the desired image;*
- *promoting this image through the right message.*

Each of these activities draws on traditional marketing practice but together they represent a different role within the firm for brand management. Marketers need to align their activities with the production process. And managers in production departments must see the customers’ feedback as a crucial element in production planning and management.

What we get from this CBP process is a focus from the firm on reflecting the customer’s desires from the product. This contrasts with the more typical approach where production is geared towards finding the lowest cost way of avoiding customer dissatisfaction. We begin to make products that will excite the customer because they reflect those customers’ desires rather than merely meeting demand.

Marketing is not just for marketers

One of the lessons from CBP is that marketers are no longer the only people concerned with the customer and the customer’s desires. As Haynes et al. point out, CBP can only succeed “...by involving all of the parties in the quality process.” This involvement extends beyond the normal boundaries of the firm and encompasses:

- *establishing long-term partnerships with consultants and suppliers to ensure quality of input;*
- *keeping the end customer in mind at all times, understanding their product use and the way they decide to purchase;*
- *creating and “environment supporting” the fulfilment of customer expectations from the product and from the brand message.*

CBP links with TQM efforts to generate a quality improvement process that focuses on what the firm says as well as what the firm does. The upshot of this approach is that communications to and from the marketplace are reflected in the physical products and services delivered by the business.

Everyone in the firm needs to understand how the new focus is placed. Senior management must be committed to the new process and employees at all levels need to work together on delivering a consistent, customer-focused and developmental message.

(A précis of the article “Comprehensive brand presentation: ensuring consistent brand image”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for MCB University Press.)