Understanding Your Customer And Your Brand
- A powerful combination in tough times

Yamaha Dealer Convention, Yamaha Music Australia

Presented by
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Melbourne, Australia
Tuesday, April 1, 2003

“On average, the CEO’s of U.S. Corporations lose half their customers every five
years. This fact shocks most people. It shocks the CEO’s themselves, most of
whom have little insight into the causes of customer exodus, let alone the cures…”

Frederick F. Reichheld

"If it's not marked down, America's shoppers are telling merchants to forget it."

NY Times.com March 25, 2003
Retailers Adjust Reluctantly to Era of Permanent Discount

The same article reports:

"Retail executives say privately that they worry that the price cutting will continue
even after the war ends."

"Department stores have been particularly hard hit as they try to compete with
chain stores like Wal-Mart and Target, which have recently improved their clothing
offerings. And it's not just clothing: the price of computers in February fell 19.7
percent compared with a year ago."

"But some other retailers - exceptions to the general retail decline - still manage to
prosper. A few of the so-called niche players, like Chico's and Pacific Sunwear,
speciality chains that cater to frighteningly fickle teenagers, have scored in sales
and profits. Juicy Couture, another youth-oriented business, is about to be bought by Liz Claiborne, a company that has made acquisitions its byword in the past five years.

Jos. A. Banks, which offers men's clothing in three different tiers of luxury, is also booming; its chief executive has instituted an array of changes, including thank you notes to those who buy. Then there is Wal-Mart, which just keeps going, cutting prices and stealing customers from the competition."

The question is, of course, what makes some brands so successful? And how do you ensure that yours is one that flourishes rather than one that doesn't make it.

I'd like to introduce you to the concept of understanding the customer, and understanding the brand, and the powerful relationship that exists between them.

Brands and branding are subjects of increasing interest to marketers. The idea of what is a brand covers a great deal of ground. Brands can represent substantial companies, for example QANTAS or IBM, or inexpensive items like Post-it Notes or Freddo Frogs. Today, we will look at examples from different industries: retail stores, ice cream, cosmetics, white goods, Yamaha, Bang & Olufsen, and Yellow Pages – as well as what might be considered two of the most memorable icons of the twentieth century.

We will begin, with the framework that a product is something that is made, while:

\[ \text{a brand is something that is chosen}. \]

When we talk of the success of a brand we must ask whether we mean success in terms of: sales, contribution to market share, additional profit margin, loyalty generated, degree of invulnerability, awareness or corporate image contribution. Any or all of these can serve as measures of a brand’s success. However, today we will look from a different viewpoint – not from the viewpoint of those who create, develop and nurture brands but from the point of view of the ultimate audience, consumers of brands. For, just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so brand essence – the sum of impressions about a brand – is in the mind of the perceiver. And perceptions and reactions are a product of the way we look at the world.

“Marketers...should never lose sight of the fact that the final form of the brand is the mental evaluation held by the purchasers and users”

Leslie de Chernatony and Malcolm McDonald
Creating Powerful Brands in Consumer, Service and Industrial Markets

The very first thing a brand must do is differentiate itself from other brands and products. The authors above point out that the distinctiveness of a brand comes from three potential sources: from the brand itself, from the minds of those directly involved and from people involved with
the brand user. Clearly, two of these three sources are perceptual, deriving from consumer mindsets. Yet most of the literature on branding talks from the opposite view, from that of the corporation or entity which owns or markets the brand. It is for this reason that de Chernatony & McDonald suggest there is:

“too much emphasis on branding as something that is done to consumers, rather than branding as something consumers do things with.”

So, for our definition of success we will say that:

\textit{a successful brand understands its perception and therefore the people who perceive it.}

But before we enter the world of brands let us understand a little about Roy Morgan Research and the database called Roy Morgan Single Source from which we will derive results and insights later.

Roy Morgan Research is the largest Australian-owned market research company and has been in operation for more than 60 years. Our basic business is collecting information from the Australian public about what they do, what they consume, what they read in newspapers and magazines, what they watch on television and at the cinema, what they agree and disagree with on a large range of issues.

Every week we collect information from people in both metro and country areas, interviewing them face-to-face and leaving behind detailed self-completion surveys. All of this information, from over 55,000 people per annum, including around 25,000 self-completion surveys, is collated, assembled and made available via our own world-leading ASTEROID software. ASTEROID stores large amounts of data and runs numbers very quickly, always going back to compile from the unaggregated individual results.

We have also been able to consistently demonstrate that the information collected is accurate and benchmarks extremely closely with real world results. For example, our political polling and our readership figures are industry standard. The information we collect from people about their individual levels of saving and investment when grossed up to the total population are remarkably close to Reserve Bank of Australia estimates – usually varying only 3% or 4%. This was an important reason why our information was used by the Australian Government’s Financial System Inquiry (the “Wallis Report”) as well as the Productivity Commission’s Draft Report on Broadcasting.

Because this information comes from the \textit{one} (very large) sample of people, we call this Single Source and know that the results we derive are in fact results truly representative of the Australian population 14 years and over, not approximations based on attempts to combine separate gatherings of data from different samples of people.
We are thus able to combine results for groups of people whether they be DVD owners, regular players of musical instruments, high income individuals who believe they are optimistic about the future – or whatever. And we can look to see what the chosen groups do or don’t do, believe or don’t believe, watch or don’t watch, etc.
The reason for saying this is to reinforce that the viewpoint we come from is that of the consumer. From you, us and them - all of us as individuals in society. We need to understand this particular perspective, for it is the perspective of those who choose brands.

On the one hand, we might say that a strong brand is potentially the most important asset a company has – a binding signifier of everything of value that the company, the product, the service stands for; something which adds immense value to the balance sheet and for which other companies may be prepared to pay millions; something which, truly managed well, stands the test of time and potentially invests invincibility. Most people attending this conference would agree that this is what great brands are made of. Would anyone have come if they didn’t?

Then there’s another side to the story. If we take off our marketing director’s hat and put on that of a consumer, let’s say a woman looking in a supermarket or pharmacy for shampoo, and imagine the shampoo she usually purchases is no longer available or no longer appropriate. How does she find her way through the three dozen or more options available? What ingredients or combinations are most important? Which of the competing manufacturers claims makes most sense? How are the questions raised by the mass of possibilities to be resolved? The proliferation of products has created a situation somewhat akin to a decision-making marathon.

Fourteen years ago in an article entitled “Freedom of Choice Enslaves Dazed Consumer” – quite a title! – Ellen Goodman said the following:

“One thing is clear to the woman lathering the body-building protein into her scalp: What the advertisers call brand loyalty is a low-level consumer protest movement. It’s our way of cutting through the bouts of decision-making, avoiding the barrages of useless information. It’s a defence against the need to waste energy differentiating things that barely differ.”

So there we see two very different views of what brands are and what role they play. The key is that the important viewpoint belongs to the perceiver - perceptions are in the mind of the receiver. Hugh Mackay is well known for acknowledging this when he says:

“What matters is not what your advertising does to the audience, but what the audience does to your advertising.”

There is nothing particularly new in this. Many thousands of years ago philosophers in ancient India articulated the way fear arose and immobilised a person walking in the forest when a snake was encountered on the path. Only for that fear to be instantaneously dispelled when it was realised that the “snake” was actually only a piece of rope. The point is:

it’s not what is that matters, 
but what we take it to be.

Hence the power of brands as symbols.
When we select brands there are normally two primary components of choice: rational or overt reasoning, which is about the functional benefits of the brand, and emotional or covert reasoning which is about the symbolic benefits of the brand.

These correspond to Left Brain and Right Brain thinking. In the case of the functional aspects we might consider things like performance, availability, value for money. The symbolic aspects are more likely to be concerned with the way the brand reflects our own feelings about ourselves and the way the brand fits into our lives.

Major brands have well defined emotional links with their consumers.

This is very important because, while we may like to consider ourselves as rational beings, observation of our behaviour will show that we are more likely to be rationalising beings – frequently acting from the heart, justifying afterwards with the head.

The key thing to understand about symbols is that they communicate to a deeper level of ourselves. If we think about it, symbols necessarily preceded written language. Therefore they are a very ancient part of our makeup. The other thing to understand is that we invest meaning in the symbols. They have no inherent meaning other than what we give to them or allow them to have.

This is easily demonstrated with one of the most well remembered and clearly understood symbols this century has experienced. What began as a symbol of hope and inspiration for one group of very demotivated people, in just 10 years etched itself into history as one of the most feared and reviled symbols known to mankind, namely the swastika - the symbol in the 20th century and today, of Nazism, oppression, hatred and genocide. Adopted in 1935 by someone who was out of business by 1945. Yet, even today, there are still groups of people who rally behind this symbol and what it has come to stand for.
What is less well-known is, that in a completely different context, this symbol has an extremely positive connotation. The word “swastika” is a Sanskrit word literally meaning “well being” (*su*, well; *asti*, being). It is one of the very oldest symbols known to mankind, a primary symbolic form usually associated with the sun in its aspects of warmth, benevolence and radiating goodness. To the ancient Chinese it was said to represent immortality. It is in common use today in India and the East and we can find examples archaeologically dating back to the third millennium BC in the Indus Valley and Crete and in Mesopotamia between 5000 and 6000 BC. Perhaps it was known much, much earlier. An armband made from mammoth ivory found in Mezin, the Ukraine, dating to 18,000 BC (20,000 years ago) bears patterns which are very closely related to the swastika.

So, for a vast expanse of time this symbol represented good fortune. It is only since the first third of this century that the ancient solar symbol has gone from *auspicious* to *suspicious*.

And, while this is an exceptional case, it proves two points of importance to brands. Firstly, any symbol represents only what it is taken to represent:

*meaning is bestowed rather than inherent.*
Secondly, meaning can change if not safeguarded.

And just on that last point, consider this:

“On average, the CEO’s of U.S. Corporations lose half their customers every five years. This fact shocks most people. It shocks the CEO’s themselves, most of whom have little insight into the causes of customer exodus, let alone the cures…”

Frederick F. Reichheld
Havard Business Review, March – April 1997

For these lost customers, the meaning in the relationship has changed.

Now, let’s look at another outstanding symbol of the 20th century, one which clearly represents all that is good in humankind: hope, aspiration, achievement, competition, cooperation, leadership, pride in performing well.

We are talking, of course, of the Olympic Games and their five-ring symbol. This symbol is clearly one of the great and enduring brands of the world – despite the controversy which has surrounded it of late.

The Olympics generate interest all around the world. Even when the Games were to be held in Sydney (not exactly next door to the rest of the world) and were still more than two years away, many people around the world expressed interest in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The Gallup International Olympic Games Survey Oct 97 – Apr 98 showed that in almost two thirds of cases, of 25 diverse countries surveyed, more than half the population were interested and in 90% of cases 40% or more were interested.
Major consumer brands understand the important pulling power of the Olympics brand, so we saw the likes of Coca Cola, AMP, IBM, McDonalds, Visa, Kodak, Telstra, Westpac and Ansett all jostling to derive advantage from the Olympics.

But perhaps the more interesting thing about the Olympics in Australia was seeing the way respect for the Olympics dropped as one scandal after another was layered onto an overkill of hype so that the Australian public’s interest began to flag. When however the reality hit, the Games lived up to, even exceeded expectation and the real power of the brand was seen in the customer experience. The brand lives on!

So what can we take from this?

Brands can be nurtured. Their relationships with their audience and with other brands can be developed and changed. They are living entities whose existence is in our minds. Thus the kind of relationship that brand custodians might wish to nurture, which would have the most unassailable position, would be that of close and indispensable friend. In the words of Hugh Mackay:

“Consumers relate to brands rather as they do to other people. Most of what we need to know can be learnt from our experience of making, keeping and losing friends. The rules are essentially the same.”

So, if a brand is a perception and a perception is a way of looking at the world, what do we know about ways of looking at the world?

In the first place, no two people view any situation the same way. Eyewitness accounts of real life events typically vary, let alone the differences of view that are amplified when there is some personal or emotional attachment involved.
Obviously viewpoints vary according to many factors. It’s very easy to see that such things as age, income, socioeconomic status, the presence of children, whether we live in the country or city, can and do affect our viewpoints. But none of these explain the way people living in the same street with similar incomes, etc. still view the world differently, have different attitudes to life, purchase different things, watch different programs on TV or are more or less involved with things like the Internet.

At Roy Morgan Research work has been carried out for more than 15 years on gaining a better understanding of what are the prime motivations of choice and change. This work was pioneered by Colin Benjamin of the Horizons Network and Michele Levine of Roy Morgan Research, and builds on studies done elsewhere in the world including cross-cultural studies by Geert Hofstede. It has been tested and found robust in Australia, as well as internationally.

I’d like to stop here and introduce the Roy Morgan Values Segments - if we could put the video on - The Roy Morgan Values Segments is a useful way of understanding different kinds of people in our society - what motivates them, and how they will want different things from a musical instrument or entertainment equipment.

The ten Roy Morgan Values Segments fit on the Values Cross in what amounts to increasing openness to change and preparedness to pay more (across), and increasing individualism and expectations of quality (upwards).

In very broad terms we see four quadrants:
- **Old & Familiar** – the perspective of the price conscious customer
- **Maintain the Status Quo** – the perspective of the traditional value-seeking customer
- **New & Different** – the perspective of the variety and personal value seeking customer
- **High Innovation** – the perspective of the quality / value seeking customer
How does this work in the marketplace in relation to brands? Let’s consider the case of two apparently identical yet differently branded ice creams: Drumstick and Cornetto. In each case they are purchased by men or women in virtually the same ratio. If we look at the age of purchasers it also varies very little between the two brands. Nor is there much variation between the two brands in terms of how many are bought per occasion or the extent to which they are bought for self, children or other adult. However, when we look at purchasing by Roy Morgan Values Segments we see considerable differences. This, of course, reflects the fact that, though apparently similar, these two products are branded differently and consequently appeal to different people with different ways of looking at the world.

It is a common experience when using the Values Segments to find they give us a unique perspective, because they tap into the deeper drivers of choice and change. When we look at retail stores we find them also appealing to different Values Segments. Fosseys is positioned in the price conscious quadrant, Harris Scarfe in the traditional value seeking quadrant, while K...
Mart and Big W occupy the family middle ground. Myer/Grace Bros and especially David Jones appeal to a market where higher quality and higher price are both options.

All of these are valid positions. They merely reflect different approaches by retailers which appeal to different mixes of customers. In the November 2, 1998 issue of BRW Magazine, Coles Myer revealed how they had used specific combinations of Values Segments\(^1\) to help identify where and how to set up their new “Let’s Eat” stores. We can similarly look at other distributions of appeal on the Values Cross, for example with white goods. Simpson and Hoover occupy the middle ground with Fisher & Paykel communicating a more innovative technological appeal.

What about Yamaha? Where would Yamaha fit? Our preliminary analysis of the stereo and hifi market suggests Yamaha has strength in the younger market (Young Optimism and Look at Me) as well as in the Visible Achievement segments.

This contrasts with say, Sanyo with much higher top-of-mind awareness - which is stronger in the older Basic Needs and Traditional Family Life segments.

Or Bang & Olufsen which has low top-of-mind awareness, but powerfully on aspirational values. Bang & Olufsen has very strong Socially Aware positioning, also incorporating Visible Achievement and Young Optimism.

Coming back to brands, we have to consider the issue of communication, the major role of which is usually borne by advertising.

*The cost of reaching a target audience depends largely on how precisely we can identify them.*
And this, of course is one of the keys to communication - identifying the right channels to reach those we hope to influence. However, beyond this lies a more important and more difficult task: speaking in a manner that will first of all be heard, secondly be listened to, and thirdly be understood and acted upon.

*Effectively influencing a target audience depends largely on how thoroughly we understand them.*

Let's look again at Bang & Olufsen. Bang & Olufsen's global positioning is quintessentially *Socially Aware.* The advertising is information rich. The product is displayed like a piece of modern art.

In the mid-1990's Bang & Olufsen wanted to expand their appeal. For various reasons largely related to spending power, the target identified was *Visible Achievement.* After much research, review, design and testing, the new concept emerged:

"*Bang & Olufsen - Of course.*"

The advertising had a warmer feel, colour, a home environment, people and even a dog, and the notion of:

"*Complement your success.*"

The advertising is only the tip of the iceberg - the entire relationship from store presentation, sales people's behaviour, the purchase process, post-purchase follow-up, and service, are all part of the relationship.

As an example…

William Burlace, our Media Services Director was in a previous life in charge of Marketing Communications at Yellow Pages Australia (Pacific Access Pty Ltd) in the years 1991 through
1995. He introduced a number of changes to their television, print, outdoor and direct marketing that were enormously successful. But they discovered that Heavy Users of Yellow Pages (once a week or more often) skewed 60% men, 40% women, while Light Users of Yellow Pages (less often that once per month) skewed 60% women, 40% men. Yellow Pages wanted to communicate to women about the virtues of using Yellow Pages – but how and where?

They conducted conventional qualitative research into women and shopping and learnt many things, especially how much smarter women are than men when it comes to shopping, how well they network and what kinds of shopping they enjoy and don’t. However this didn’t really tell how to couch our messages or where to put them. This is where the Roy Morgan Values Segments\(^1\) opened the door to a new way of understanding. They discovered that there were three key groups they wanted to communicate with (Socially Aware, Something Better and Young Optimism) and that they could choose specific women's magazines that each group was more likely to read.

If we looked at this today we might choose from the following magazines:

- for **Socially Aware**
  Sunday Life, The Australian Magazine, House and Garden, Australian Geographic
- for **Something Better**
  That’s Life, Take 5, TV Soap, For Me
- for **Young Optimism**
  Cosmopolitan, Cleo, Who Weekly, B

To attempt to mirror the mindsets with our message they came up with three different creative concepts.

For **Socially Aware**...
“Find all these people without leaving home” – showing lots of different possibilities to these avid consumers of information.

For **Something Better**...
“Any mother can tell you why they invented the Yellow Pages” – appealing to those women juggling the difficulties of multiple tasks (including kids) while attempting to improve their situation.

For **Young Optimism**...
“You’d be surprised how handy the Yellow Pages are when you’re setting up home.” – speaking to the sense of possibility and fulfilment that permeates this mindset.

\(^1\) Developed in conjunction with Colin Benjamin of the Horizons Network.
Another way of looking...

If we run a perceptual map of cosmetics brands and Values Segments\(^1\) using a mathematical technique called Correspondence Analysis we find *Socially Aware* closely related to Clarins and Clinique while *Something Better* is associated closely with Max Factor and Revlon. When we look at the way these brands advertise we see why this is so. Both Revlon and Max Factor make a strong appeal to glamour, beauty, looking good – the supermodel ideal – obviously appealing to the *Something Better* mindset. Clarins, however, provides not glamour but information, while Clinique in the way it features product only, with tangible evidence of quality, essentially speaks for itself to the intelligent quality purchaser. Hence their appeal to the *Socially Aware* mindset.

The way these brands speak (the style and tone of their advertising) determines the audience. Many other examples can be found which demonstrate how

\[ \text{the way we speak, as well as what we say, determines who will listen.} \]
New challenges face us in the world ahead.

The media landscape is changing and this will affect all communication. The internet is almost mainstream. Coupled with the increasing take-up of Pay TV, traditional channels such as free-to-air television are increasingly threatened.

For the marketer, the custodian of the brand, media fragmentation is but one of the challenges ahead. There is much talk of our growing connectedness thanks to the use of e-mail, sms, mobile phones, satellite technology and the Internet. But the glittering promises of technology have been tarnished somewhat of late and we still have a long way to go before the promised land is reached. Hand in hand we see growing disparity between rich and poor, a worldwide leadership vacuum and rising cynicism.

In the new world what will prevail?

Clearly, there are three consistent challenges for those who aspire to brand significance: leadership, relevance and relationship. Strong brands must stand for something which their adherents and advocates can rally behind, they must be “champions for their cause.” Strong brands must remain relevant to their constituencies. Strong brands must build and nurture the
relationships they have with their customers, lest the friendship dissipate and die. And we must not lose sight of the fact that, in the high-tech environment, “high-touch” will always be an issue of importance to us, because first and foremost we are humans not machines. This means that truly personalised service, word-of-mouth recommendations and such factors as credibility, trust and “walking-the-talk” will not fade away, but may even grow in importance.

In the new world people will still have the same basic needs and drives as have existed for millennia. One has only to read the early Greek plays to see that we are no different in substance now from then. And though the means of satisfaction will change, the key still remains the same.

*We need to understand the world from the point of view of those with whom we seek to have a relationship.*

To conclude, brand custodians need to:
- keep the message alive (powerful brands communicate well)
- nurture the brand (remember the swastika)
- keep the relationship salient (does the message mirror the mindset?)

When we consider that channels of communication are critical, we must acknowledge that brands can be channelled by mindset. Thus:

*the really important issue is channel to mind.*

As advertising is a primary component in the brand communication process, we must not forget that it is not sufficient to just throw our message out, hoping it will find an audience. Impact or reinforcement value is only a function of actual viewing. Lest we fall into Lord Lever-Hulme’s dilemma of knowing half our advertising is wasted, but not which half, we urgently need to apply integrated methods to our media selection which take advantage of the ability to directly link behaviour, attitudes, consumer mindsets and media consumption.

This is the realm of the true single source database – linked insights for effective action.
PSYCHOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS DRIVING CHANGE AND CHOICE

Basic Needs

Value Drivers

- Order, security and self respect
- Strong community focus and participation in local activities
- Sense of happiness and wisdom that generates acceptance of life situation
- Financial pressures lead to concern with the costs of living
- VERY CAREFUL AND PRICE CONSCIOUS

A Fairer Deal

Value Drivers

- Pessimistic, cynical, insecure and struggling financially
- “Everyone else gets all the fun and I miss out”
- Life is pretty tough leading to anger, disillusionment and frustration
- Hostility toward authority and pleasure in being able to get back at society
- WE GET A RAW DEAL IN LIFE

Conventional Family Life

Value Drivers

- Giving children the opportunities they deserve
- Do it yourself to reduce costs for financial security
- Preoccupied with providing a safe, warm family environment
- Work incentive is to provide for a better family lifestyle
- MY FAMILY MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME
Traditional Family Life

Value Drivers

- Strong family focus with traditional family roles, values and structure
- Empty nesters or people living with an extended family
- Getting the family to visit them, or better still, going to stay with them
- Old and familiar lifestyles including gardening and home maintenance
- Don’t seek activity or excitement from their lifestyle
- STAYING IN TOUCH WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY
Look At Me
Value Drivers

- Young, active, unsophisticated, hedonistic and self centred
- Peer driven, seeking freedom away from the family
- Living for now and looking for fun and excitement
- Jobs not career, wages not a salary, but good pay is important
- Pushing out the boundaries – “All my friends are doing it”
- PARENTS WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND

Something Better
Value Drivers

- Competitive, individualistic, ambitious and never satisfied
- External locus of control – compare themselves to others
- See themselves as more progressive and display their successes
- Strongly object to government intervention in the lives of individuals
- EGO DRIVEN FOCUS ON GETTING A BIGGER DEAL

Real Conservatism
Value Drivers

- Asset rich and income poor, heavy investors and collectors
- Moral and ethical in an ‘old world’ sense – “it used to be better when”
- Monarchists and supporters of the establishment
- Disciplined, ordered, predictable and security conscious
- Private school network with ‘old school tie’ values
- CONSERVATIVE, CAUTIOUS AND RESISTANT TO INNOVATION

Young Optimism
Value Drivers
Seeking to improve their prospects in life to fulfil a lifetime ambition
- Want a respected place in society with style, image and recognition
- Forward thinking, experience hungry technocrats and young professionals
- Idealistic, career opportunists with a desire to travel and see the world
- Look more at the process than the outcome – how you do it, not what you do
- OPTIMISTIC, OPPORTUNISTIC AND OUTDOOR ORIENTED

Visible Achievement
Value Drivers

- Confident, competent and productive visible success stories
- Seek recognition of personal achievement and the value of hard work
- Family life is important with high expectations for children and the family
- Work for financial reward, job stimulation and the power of the position
- Maintain the traditional values about home, work and society
- FIND THE WIN/WIN or else its going to be I WIN – YOU LOSE

Socially Aware
Value Drivers

- Trend Setters, socially responsible, idealistic and natural politicians
- Belong to pressure groups and enjoy persuading others to their opinion
- Must have the latest & greatest toys
- CREATIVE, INNOVATIVE, INFORMATION VACUUM CLEANERS