

A step-by-step process to build valued brands

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Abstract

Purpose – The primary purpose of this study is to illustrate an analytical method to identify tangible and intangible customer values and to translate those values into brand identity differentiators and product specifications.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors adapt a product development analysis tool, the Value Opportunity Analysis (VOA), to the design of a brand identity, illustrating the use of the tool in a case study with International Truck and Engine.

Findings – The paper illustrates how the VOA was used as a tool for evaluating and crafting both a brand identity, and shows how the brand identity translates into product specifications so that products embody, communicate, and deliver the brand identity.

Research limitations/implications – Although the VOA has been used in diverse markets (business to business, consumer software, physical product), in this article the VOA is illustrated in the context of brand identity for physical products. Future studies should illustrate how the application of the method may vary across domains.

Practical implications – This approach will appeal to executives, brand managers and product managers who have a goal of maintaining a differentiated brand identity and clearly delivering brand values through the products in the brand portfolio.

Originality/value – Products serve as influential sources of information about a brand's identity. The paper treats the brand as a product to be designed, adapting an analytical approach to translate customer value into brand identity and ultimately into the specification of the products, to ensure that all are aligned to answer the marketplace needs in a way that differs from competitors.

Keywords Brand identity, Product attributes, Brand management

Paper type Case study

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

1. Introduction

Brand managers, chief marketing officers, and branding academics recognize that a brand is only valuable when it provides value to its customers. Fulfilling customer value is not just a goal for branding, nor is it simply the “identity” customers associate as the core representation of the company. Rather, it is *the* fundamental goal for a successful company, one that must coherently drive all aspects of the company. Thus the identity of the brand must be inextricably linked to customer needs, and it must be consistent with the company's capabilities and its branded products.

Creating a brand to fulfill customer value is a bold but obvious goal to achieve. The challenge for small and large companies alike is how to create a brand identity that is not only forward-thinking enough to meet both existing and future customer needs but at the same time is consistent with product attributes and features. Many companies fall short on delivering this goal because they lack formal analysis methods to link customer needs to their brands and products, and they

lack tools to identify which customer needs best fit company capabilities.

This article introduces a formal and repeatable process to create brand identities that fulfill customer needs and are consistent with companies' products and services. This process consists of four general steps for creating or modifying a brand identity: analysis, synthesis, translation and implementation:

- 1 *Analysis*. The analysis step provides the foundation of the process. The tool for this step is the Value Opportunity Analysis (VOA). The VOA, with its roots in product development, is shown to be effective as a unique but insightful method for identifying customer-based branding values. It is a tool to ascertain what values the company can offer that are consistent with customer needs and with the value delivered by the current and potential products. The insights from the brand-based VOA become core to what the new brand identity is or will become. The outcome of the VOA is a set of multifaceted and complex attributes of the brand identity.
- 2 *Synthesis*. The second step is to organize that complex set of identity attributes into an actionable mission, one that can be understood by those within the company and can be converted to messages for those outside (advertising agencies, suppliers, and customers). The goal is to create a simple continuum that clarifies the identity, gives a range of meaning to provide depth to the identity, and creates bounds to that range of meaning within which

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communication of the identity will be created. Analysis of the resulting continuum can lead to a single message that sums up the brand. The output of this step is a verbal identity.

- 3 *Translation.* The next part is to translate the verbal identity in context-appropriate languages (e.g. symbolic, visual, functional) to set up the implementation of the verbal identity into product, advertising, and other key interaction points with customers. Since physical products have become a core means to communicate branding we employ a visual form language to introduce a unique visual map, the integrated brand identity map. This map guides the implementation of the brand identity through the product’s physical form, relating the continuum-based metric of the verbal identity against one or more products’ form languages. The map can be used to verify how well existing products meet the brand message and to drive the development of future forms to address the range of values that define the brand.
- 4 *Implementation.* The final step is the implementation of the identity, the creation of products, services, advertising content, marketing visuals, customer service training guidelines, and so forth, consistent with the verbal message. In this step the context-appropriate languages become powerful guides to translating customer and company values into a consistent communicator of brand identity through an organization’s operation. We discuss the implementation of the identity within the context of our case study, Navistar’s International Truck brand.

Our contribution is a formal and repeatable process focused on the creation of brand identities that are consistent not only with the needs and desires of the customers but also with the nature of the products and services within a brand. The core tool, the Value Opportunity Analysis, has been used to navigate the early stage, fuzzy front end of product development in a variety of *Fortune* 500 companies, mid sized companies and start-ups, in areas as diverse as consumer products, robotics, vehicle design, utility connectors, software, clothing, medical devices and chemical processing. In what follows, we reintroduce the VOA as a tool for brand identity creation, illustrate its use in our work with the Truck group at Navistar International Corporation (NAV), and show how the Integrated Brand Identity Map can be used to align product forms with the brand identity.

2. The Value Opportunity Analysis tool for brands

The Value Opportunity Analysis (VOA) connects what companies provide through their products and services to what customers need and desire. The VOA addresses a comprehensive set of wants, needs and desires, breaking customer value into discrete chunks that span emotional and functional needs. The needs are specified at a general level so that they can be defined within the context of a given product. The result is an understanding of what aspects of the company will lead to its success, in particular those aspects that are unique to its products.

Cagan and Vogel (2002) introduced the VOA to identify conceptual attributes that connect a product or service to a customer’s desires. The VOA has been used to help design teams in a variety of industries to define the goals and attributes of a product up front, before the product begins to

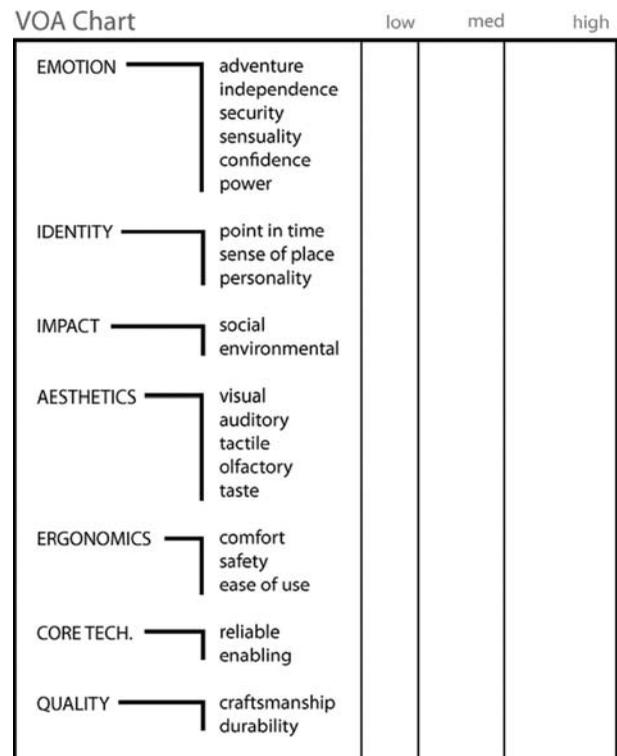
take form – the VOA tool is used when the product requirements are being defined, not once the product is designed.

The brand itself is a product to be designed. The brand identity must be one that delivers value to its customers, just as products must deliver value to customers. The VOA, then, is a perfect platform on which to design high value brands, because it focuses on the fusion of what the brand offers and what its customers seek, spanning rational and emotional values.

2.1 VOA attributes: intangible to tangible values

There are seven core attributes of the VOA – emotion, contextual identity, impact, aesthetics, ergonomics, core technology, and quality (Figure 1). In the upper portion of the VOA are the intangible values provided by the brand. The brand’s emotion must be appropriate to the branded products and desirable to the customer. The emotion is the core connection to the customer and primary means of the brand’s success; all other attributes support and enable the brand’s emotion. The contextual identity accommodates the forms and expectations for the context in which the brand lives, giving it personality. Even when the underlying values in the VOA are stable over time, they can appear to be dynamic due to changes in cultural communication forms and expectations. Mt. Dew, for instance, communicated its values in the 1950’s with the hillbilly Clem and in the 1990’s with slackers (Holt, 2003). While Mt. Dew’s values remained consistent over time, its point in time identity and personality were updated to be appropriate to its cultural context. In terms of environmental and social impact, how does the brand fulfill human needs in that category? The brand can enable social interactions (Harley-Davidson’s

Figure 1 VOA chart



support of parades and group rides) as well as environmental sustainability (Ben and Jerry's brand is eco-friendly and committed to social justice and every chair from Hermann Miller must pass stringent environmental impact analyses).

The attributes towards the bottom of the VOA represent relatively more tangible ways to provide the brand values to the customer. Aesthetics target the five senses as a non-verbal means of communication of the identity. The term ergonomics typically is utilized in a physical realm; for brand identity the use of the term ergonomics emphasizes the need for the brand to care for the customer who extensively interacts with the brand much as in the same way that a human factors specialist finds ways to allow users to interact with physical products without undue fatigue. Brand ergonomics includes physical interaction but goes further, providing comfort and ease in all customer touchpoints – the products, the service, the point of purchase, the help centers, and the advertising. It is also the feeling of being safe to use – that it will deliver what it claims and never impose further on the customer's personal life than desired. Brand ergonomics is a way to deliver some of the intangible values in the uppermost category on the brand VOA such as the values of safety and independence. The remaining categories of derived values are more obvious, in that the core technology and quality of the product family provide value to the customer, as appropriate, for the brand identity.

There are three major steps for using the VOA to create or refine a brand identity:

- 1 It is first necessary to define the VOA attributes for the brand in question. In the Appendix, we present initial definitions for each attribute of the VOA. These initial definitions are general, designed to be applied across a full gamut of contexts, such as brands for services, software, and tangible products. In every application they each need to be confirmed in their general form or adapted to meet the specific nature of any given brand effort. Each VOA attribute has been broken into specific aspects of the category that must be considered. Each sub-attribute may not be relevant to every brand application, but we have found that every requirement from a brand can be mapped to these categories. The definitions in the Appendix are adapted for branding from the product-oriented definitions presented in (Cagan and Vogel, 2002).
- 2 The next step is to evaluate the relevance and performance of the brand on the value attributes as defined in the first step. Again, not all values are relevant to a specific brand; gustatory would not be relevant to Harley, for instance. The performance of the brand is evaluated on the relevant values. For example, Harley-Davidson's brand has always excelled in emotional and identity value categories but originally would not have scored especially high for reliability. By scoring performance of a brand (low, medium, high), one can analyze a competitive brand, the current state of the focal brand, and even more importantly the VOA can be used to specify the desired state for a new or revised brand.
- 3 The last step of the use of the VOA for a brand identity is to list specific descriptors for each VOA attribute. These descriptors will convert the values of the VOA into a broad set of statements about the brand, a rich foundation of the brand's identity based on an insightful analysis of the holistic value that customers derive from the brand. As

discussed below, these descriptors can be analyzed, combined, or manipulated into a concise branding statement of a final brand identity.

In spanning the intangible values of the brand and the tangible brand values provided by the product, the VOA unites brand and product strategy. This unified framework has strong ramifications for both product and brand. The link from products to brand ensures the authenticity of the brand values and identity, in that the values considered are ones that can be truly delivered. The link from brand to products specifies the identity of products that are appropriate to support the brand. The next section, which contains a case study from Navistar, details the process of using the VOA for branding and for taking into account the ensuing ramifications for product identity.

3. Brand identity case study: International Truck – challenging convention

3.1 The company: ready for an identity change

International Truck's roots date back 175 years to when inventor Cyrus McCormick started McCormick Harvesting Machine Company. The company's heritage is agricultural, with McCormick's heirs and William Deering forming International Harvester in 1902. International Harvester's first trucks, produced in 1907, were designed to serve the farming industry. Over the next several decades International Harvester grew into a global power house and is one of the original Dow Jones companies. In 1985, after a debilitating showdown with the union, the company faced severe financial problems, sold off the agriculture side of the business, and formed Navistar International Corporation with a principal business in trucking.

Navistar International Corporation is a holding company for some of North America's leading transportation brands, operating in three principal segments:

- 1 vehicles;
- 2 engines; and
- 3 services.

The vehicle brands include International (trucks class 4 through 8), IC Corporation (school and commercial bus), Workhorse Custom Chassis (RV's and walk-in trucks and step vans). Engine brands include MaxxForce, Powerstroke (Ford Motor Company supplier), and MWM (distributed in South America). The service entities include Navistar Finance and Aware Electronics Group.

The brand in question, International Truck, has products that compete primarily in specific segments of trucking, the "class 4" through "class 8" segments. The classes represent the weights of trucks, where higher classes are heavier trucks. Classes 4-6 are medium duty trucks such as beverage delivery trucks, while class 8 trucks include the well known long-haul "18-wheelers." International holds the dominant market share in classes 6 and 7.

Even before this analysis of its brand identity, managers at International already recognized the goal is to make customer needs and desires its central focus. At Navistar's International Truck operations, nourishing the brand has always been about building profitable relationships by carefully managing numerous customer interactions. Building the brand has been about delighting customers as they interact with dealers

or financial services during the purchase phase or parts and service throughout the ownership phase.

Even so, there seemed to be so much potential in the brand, which had been so powerful throughout the majority of the twentieth century but had lost some of its luster in the last two decades of the century. Multiple branding studies showed Navistar's International truck brand was not only viewed as earnest and honorable with Midwestern values, but also as "dull and boring" – like a pair of old "brown shoes" or like a "sloppy joe"! However, a renewed spirit in innovative designs in the class 8 heavy truck market plus the introduction of a bold and "extreme" line-up of the world's largest pick-up trucks has begun to reinvigorate the International truck brand.

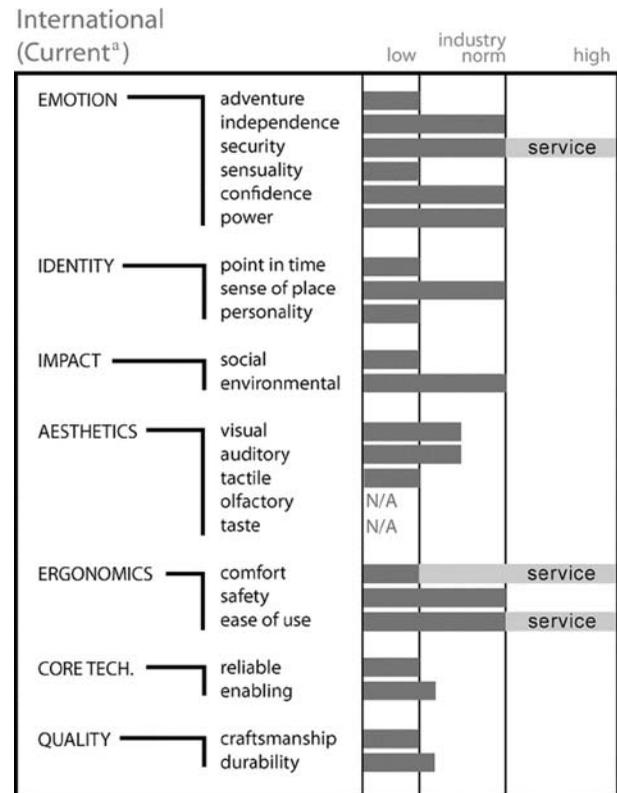
Senior management recognized that International had a timely opportunity to carefully analyze the brand and to craft an appropriate brand identity for the new century. They arranged for this analysis to be conducted in September, 2005. The results of this analysis, coming off the initiation of some exciting new product designs, impacted the subsequent messaging and product launch of the ProStar long haul truck, and are setting the stage for the launch of other forthcoming products.

3.2 Step 1: analysis

Multiple branding studies had previously been completed, so the current brand image was already known. What was needed was a direction in which to take the brand, a vision for changing the brand identity so that it would not only meet the desires of its customers but also would be consistent with the company's heritage and capabilities and would differentiate it from its competitors. It was for this task, for (re-)defining the brand, that the VOA was pivotal, in that the VOA connects the desires of the customers to the value provided by the brand. The VOA was used to analyze the current brand relative to the category norms. This analysis allowed management to assess not only International's current strengths but also its opportunities. The VOA was also applied to individual key competitors so that management at International could consider opportunities to differentiate the company.

When applied to a brand, in this case the current International brand, the VOA provides a critical analysis of what values the brand provides. The multiple branding studies and proactive user research that had already been conducted provided the customer feedback necessary as inputs to the VOA. The analysis of the current state is shown in Figure 2. The focus here is not any particular branded product, but the image of the brand as an entity. To calibrate the three perception levels (low, medium, high) to the expectations in the marketplace, we scored the industry norm perception as medium and evaluated the attributes on a scale of low, industry norm, high. As such, a low level would indicate that International's brand was behind the others, while a high level reveals would reveal a particular brand strength. It is important to recognize the implications of the relative scaling in particular with aspects such as the perception of safety or technology. The industry norm for these particular aspects is already at high absolute levels, in that all companies have excellent product safety and technology quality. In truck manufacturing, as in many other industries, quality and safety are a given – to compete today a manufacturer must have high quality technology. But, as discussed in Vogel *et al.* (2005), quality has become a commodity in this market, in that quality

Figure 2 VOA of current brand at International



Note: ^a Market perception as of September 2005

is available to all manufacturers and is no longer the differentiator that it once was.

In assessing the strengths of the current brand state, the analysis shown in Figure 2 was purposefully conservative in order to highlight opportunities for innovation in the brand. The only value attributes for which International management critically perceived their brand to excel were security, comfort, and ease of use. It turned out that International ranked high on these values only because of the service in the strong dealer network. International has more service centers than any competitor. The accessibility of service contributed to a peace of mind for truck owners and drivers, a feeling that they would be taken care of in an efficient manner anywhere and everywhere in the country. Like "brown shoes" and "sloppy joes," International is a comfortable brand with which to interact. International was easy to use in that International was predictable. In order to highlight on the chart the opportunity for other aspects of the brand to attain performance levels as high as International's service, we specifically denoted the contribution of service to the bar chart values using a lighter shade of gray.

The VOA chart in Figure 2 also reveals significant opportunities for the brand. The products themselves could be shored up on security, comfort, and ease of use in order to match the excellent performance of International's services. In this way, products and services would support one another and communicate a unified brand message. More importantly, International scores low on those aspects that make buyers look for excuses to buy the products: adventure,

sensuality, and personality. The brand has the potential to not only be a smart choice but also a desirable one.

Prior to crafting the new identity, competitors were benchmarked in similar fashion, using the VOA. Each competitor was analyzed – Peterbilt, Western Star, Volvo, Freightliner, Kenworth – to best understand which competitors owned, or excelled, at each attribute.

3.2.1 Crafting the identity

The analysis of the current state of the brand as well as the competitive landscape provides the information for management to take the next step, to propose a vision for an updated brand identity of International. The vision for International’s brand identity is shown in the VOA chart in Figure 3. The bars that extend the furthest represent the envisioned strengths for the brand.

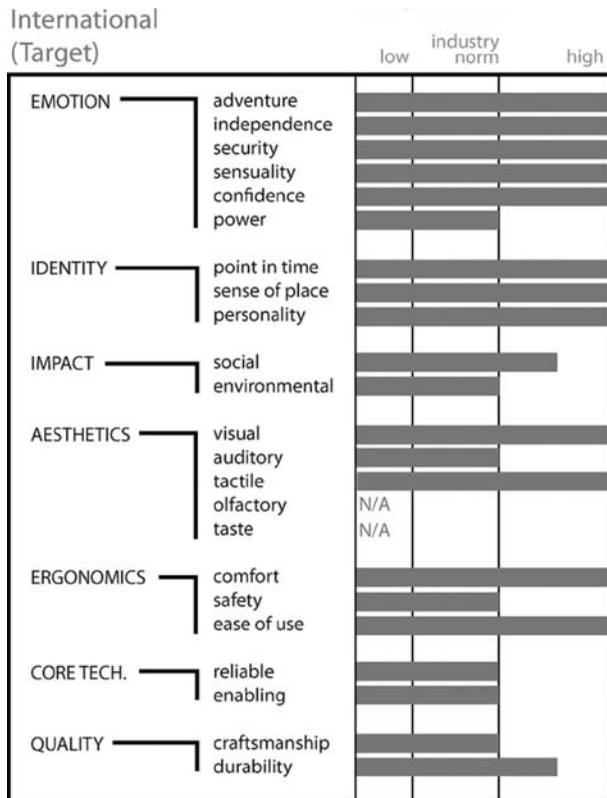
The vision for the new International was to make the brand emotionally exciting, to maximize the emotional VO attributes. The goal also was to ensure that products and services contributed appropriately to the brand identity, for example by being comfortable and easy to use across the board, not just in service; to create a strong visual and tactile identity (which would emerge from the great new designs of the most visible vehicles, the long haul trucks); and, partially from that aesthetic, to create a strong communicator for the brand. Fundamentally, the meanings associated with a brand come from the values delivered by its products and services. The product, while not the only source of interaction, is the most enduring one in the automotive and truck categories. So a major method of establishing the new identity would be to bring out products that deliver not only technological value but also emotional value, making sure to connect the values

delivered by the products with meanings of the brand. Notice that the vision was not to maximize all derived values. Those values that are envisioned to differentiate the International brand are the ones that show up at the highest performance level. Of course, the key to success is that the derived values of the International brand connect to the needs and desires – functional and emotional – of the brand’s stakeholders.

Given the core VO attributes that would differentiate the International brand, what brand attributes connected the personality and direction of International to the VO attributes? How would the VOA be instantiated for the company? Figure 4 shows the brand attributes for each of the relevant VO attributes. These brand attributes came from considering each attribute within the context of the company, and identifying descriptors for what each of the attributes meant within the context of a commercial truck brand. For instance, adventure in the context of a commercial truck would not be about uncertainty in the environment, not about new experiences. Adventure would instead describe the capabilities of the brand to overcome and master obstacles and new environments. In context, the adventurous brand would be spirited, bold, challenging convention, edgy, a maverick and a trailblazer.

The VOA of the brand provides a rich brand identity that can encompass a portfolio of products, services and messages to meet the needs of multiple customer segments and other stakeholders. The remaining tasks for defining the brand identity all work to distill the rich set of descriptors into a smaller set of concepts that capture the essence of the identity. Multiple approaches could be used for this distillation; here we highlight the approach used in the case study for International. To begin, the emotional VO attributes of adventure, sensuality, and confidence, the visual aesthetics, and the personality of the identity were the most critical to emphasize in the transition to the new branding statement because they were not part of the existing identity. In the brand descriptors for these VO attributes, several stood out as capturing the desires of the customers and appear in bold text in Figure 4: spirited, provocative, delivers, unapologetic, proud, sense of self, assuredness, capable, professional, challenges convention, bold, honorable, optimistic, and sexy were the words with meanings that would differentiate the perception of International as a company.

Figure 3 VOA of target branding value proposition at International



3.3 Step 2: synthesis – the verbal identity

The next step is to encapsulate the rich multi-faceted identity descriptors into a concise, unified structure that appropriately portrays the identity of the company with customers. Continuums are useful for brand identities in that they define a space in which the brands operate and live. Once the space is defined, management can provide points of emphasis in that space for new initiatives. Some companies use more than one dimension to map out a space for their identities. Samsung’s identity is heavily influenced by the Korean culture and utilizes two dimensions:

- 1 Reason to feeling; and
- 2 Simplicity to complexity (see Breen, 2005, for information on the re-definition of Samsung’s brand identity).

The goal is to use as few dimensions as possible but keep the resulting message rich enough to drive critical aspects of the company’s interaction with its stakeholders.

Figure 4 Target VOA with branding attributes

		low	industry norm	high	
EMOTION	adventure independence security sensuality confidence power				spirited, bold, challenges convention, edginess, maverick, trailblazer open road, freedom, cowboy, in control accessible, supportive, reliable, stable sexy, provocative, intriguing, cachet, passionate sense of self, assuredness, unapologetic, delivers, confident, the right choice tough, authoritative
IDENTITY	point in time sense of place personality				addresses trends, cohesive message appropriate capable, honorable, proud, professional, optimistic, unique, authentic
IMPACT	social environmental				tradition of innovation, a choice thought leader
AESTHETICS	visual auditory tactile olfactory taste				distinctive, high-performance, eye-catching, premium quiet inside, bold outside positive, enhancing, quality N/A N/A
ERGONOMICS	comfort safety ease of use				supportive, trustworthy, honest, dependable feels safe accessible, approachable
CORE TECH.	reliable enabling				consistent, high performance technology leader
QUALITY	craftsmanship durability				manufacturing excellence, to specification better expectations

In our case study, we mapped the brand terms from the previous step on a single continuum between two fundamental terms: foundational and provocative. The continuum for International recognizes that the brand should retain its foundation that gives stability to the brand and connects to its history as one of the oldest companies in America. At the same time the brand must be provocative, reaching deep into the emotion of the customer and pushing the edge of what is expected in the industry – International must stand out from the crowd. Figure 5 shows the mapping of these terms onto the foundational-provocative continuum. The goal is not to have every product or service developed by the company to encompass this entire continuum. However, the range laid out in the figure is the basis from which new initiatives can be driven, and, in general, the entirety of products and services should together run the gamut of the range.

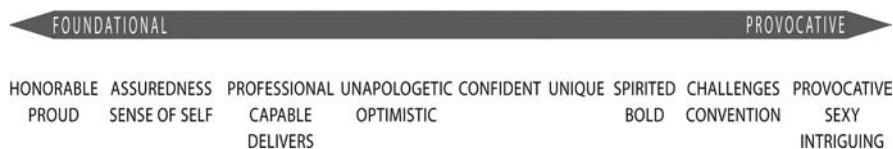
The continuum gives structure and definition to the space for the brand. Understanding the overall corporate mission and dynamics allows one or more key identity attributes to drive the overall brand message. The team used its knowledge of the corporate mission, the history of the company, current and emerging customer needs and desires, extensive market research, products nearing production, and management’s vision for the company. Their resulting vision was “Challenges convention”. As can be seen in the set of descriptors, which as a group define the brand, “challenges convention” does not rashly depart from marketplace needs

but rather dependably and capably delivers on bold, though possibly surprising, new initiatives to add value to customers. International’s products, services and relationships with their customers would be different than the convention as found in the industry. That key message alone points to each of the branding attributes and sets the stage for consistent branding statements and corporate messages that would drive employees, dealers, customers, and products alike. The resulting continuum of identity attributes and the identification of key attributes form the verbal identity for the brand.

3.4 Step 3: translation

The analysis and synthesis steps provide vision and direction for the brand identity in verbal form; the translation step makes the verbal identity actionable. Each touchpoint with the brand must be aligned with the brand identity in order to translate the vision for the brand into the reality of the desired brand image in the marketplace. There are multiple touchpoints of the brand, such as advertising content, product labeling, signage and logos, and customer service. One of the most important touchpoints is the product itself. Products are powerful ways to establish meaning, to provide experience, to craft relationships with customers. Leveraging the strengths of the branded products is foundational to our approach to building valued brands, recognizing the power of the product or service as a brand communicator. The product

Figure 5 Continuum of branding attributes mapped onto branding essence



not only can communicate information about a brand or associations of brand identity, but the customer’s interaction with a product allows the product to provide emotions and feelings to the customers. Relationships of any kind develop over time through experiences, and the ongoing customer-product interaction thus ends up as the most powerful and meaningful influence on the brand image. For physical products, its form is the icon of brand communications.

The value-based verbal identity, resulting from the synthesis process, captures the brand identity in words. For those companies with physical products, the brand identity should be communicated visually through product form. We use a formal method to show how to use product form to embody and communicate the vision for the brand identity. An initial task is to understand and define a product’s visual brand language. Once the visual brand language is established, the visual brand language can be mapped onto the verbal brand identity continuum.

3.4.1 Visual brand language – a language for a product’s physical form

Visual brand languages are graphical references that define and demarcate the visuals that define a given product family. Visual brand languages are used by industrial designers in developing products that meet consistent visual references, allowing similar visual appearances for product families. Whirlpool’s visual brand language has led to varied designs that are consistent within a brand (@Issue, 2005). GM has visual languages for each of its brands, from Chevy to Hummer. Many designers use visual brand languages innately and subconsciously. Others, like those at Whirlpool and GM, formalize the language. We have a formal, repeatable approach to deriving visual brand languages. Details of the approach with an example that derives the Buick visual brand language can be found in McCormack *et al.* (2004).

The method is to first obtain representative images of the product over its relevant history. Each image is represented by lines and curves that highlight key characteristics of the image – the outline, the main features, and important highlights. Figure 6(a) shows a 1955 R Series International truck and its equivalent line representation (Figure 6(b)). Note how the line drawing communicates an abstraction of the main features of the vehicle. The line drawing highlights the design language for the vehicle of a large horizontal rectangular base and a vertical rounded rectangle centered on top. These individual product line drawing images are then grouped

together with images of products of similar characteristics. In this case they are also grouped by time frame. This grouping forms an era, and a representative common image abstracted from the images of each vehicle in the era is derived (Figure 6(c)). This image is the highest abstraction that differentiates one era from another. Twenty eras result from this analysis over 2,000 trucks in International’s history (all 20 can be seen in Durr and Sullivan, 2007). Further analysis by the chief designer on those 20 eras identified only six eras (Figure 7) as representing the key visual form attributes of International Truck as it moves forward with new truck designs.

3.4.2 Translating the brand identity into product form – integrated brand identity map

The integrated brand identity map, introduced in Figure 8, integrates the product visual identity with the verbal brand identity, using the physical product history for the company. The continuum for the verbal identity, spanning the space from foundational to provocative for International, is shown across the top of the map. The key visual branding eras are shown in the rows of the map. The six key eras capture much of the branding attributes that sit on the foundational to provocative continuum, and these six eras were determined to be core to future product development.

The horizontal bars indicate what portions of the verbal identity are communicated by the visual forms of the eras. The bars fade for those portions of the continuum that are not communicated by the product era. For instance, the upcoming 2008 product shown in the first row communicates the entire spectrum of the brand identity to today’s audience. The second row, from a recently introduced vehicle, communicates the foundational end of the spectrum but does not bolster the provocative end of the spectrum. Interestingly, the vehicles from the 1930s end up communicating the ends of the identity spectrum to today’s audiences without strongly communicating the middle.

This integrated brand identity map becomes a single reference to the brand identity of the company for product form. The map gives context that relates the branding message with the product form, guiding marketers in the development of branding statements and advertisements, studio or industrial designers in the development of new product forms, engineers in the choice of features and decisions on how to manufacture a product, and suppliers (especially full service suppliers) in the development of

Figure 6 Key characteristics of a product

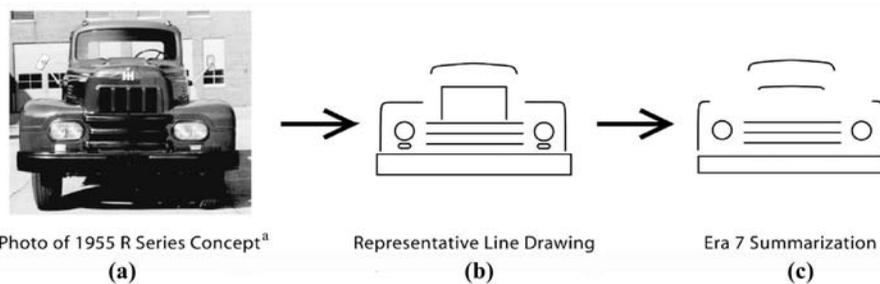


Photo of 1955 R Series Concept^a

(a)

Representative Line Drawing

(b)

Era 7 Summarization

(c)

Notes: (a) 1955 R Series International; (b) Line abstraction of vehicle; (c) higher level abstraction that captures essence of this and other vehicles within an era. ^a Production model had single headlights

Figure 7 Six key eras of visual brand identity for International

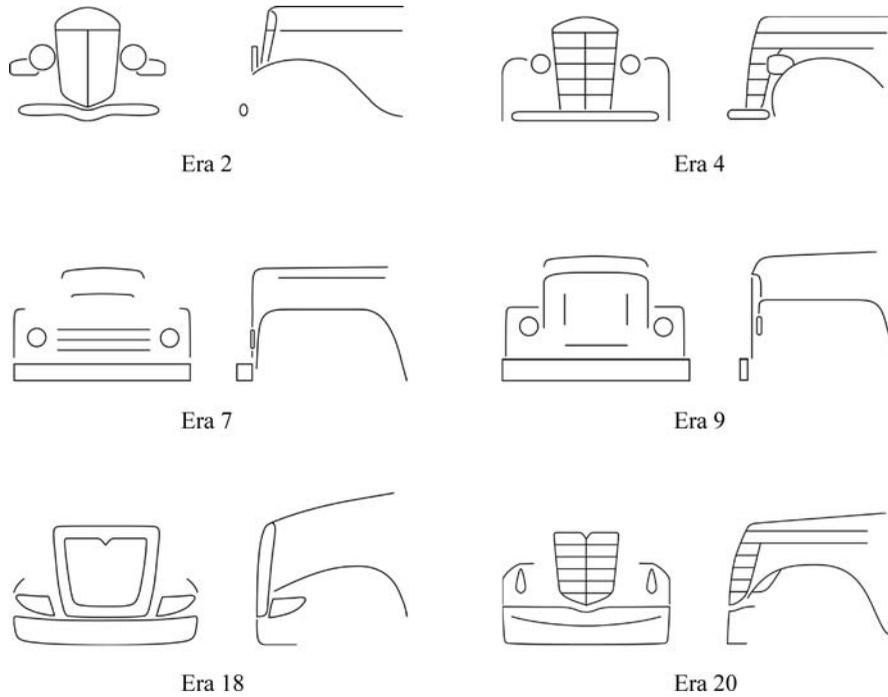
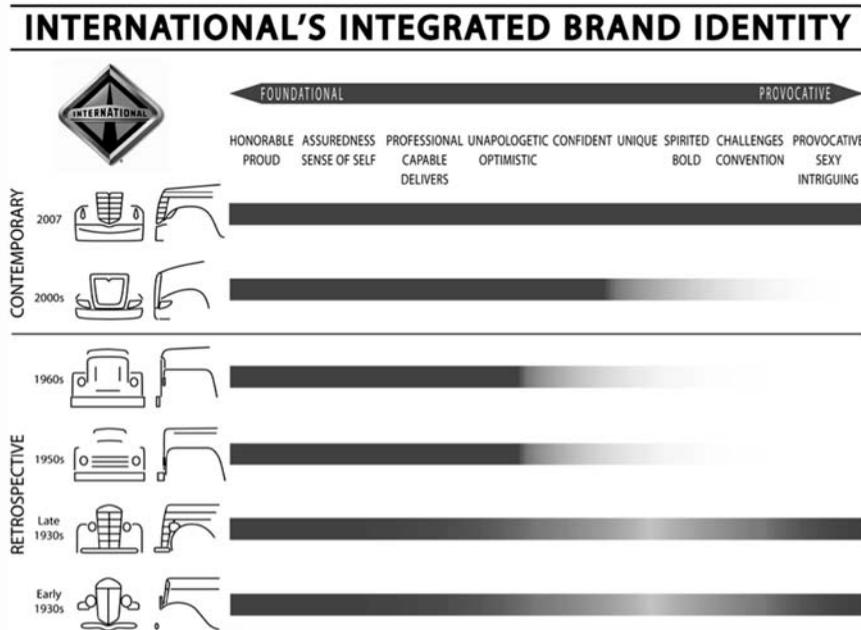


Figure 8 Integrated brand identity map



components that will integrate into the product for the company.

3.5 Step 4: implementation

The results of the translation step must be put into actionable outcomes for the company. We have illustrated the translation step in the context of the physical form of products; the translation step can also be conducted for other contexts as

well such as advertising content. Companies can use these contexts to drive product, service, advertising and other developments with confidence that their outcome will tie into its desired branding, be consistent across the board, and know that the resulting communication stems directly from customer needs and desires.

How is International approaching this challenge? The verbal identity and visual brand language work yielded a

forward looking prescription for brand identity and the connection between brand identity and product strategy, building off the historical brand assets of the company. The amalgamation of customer insights and the combined verbal identity and visual brand language provided the needed clarity and alignment to create a brand statement in which to develop product and communication strategy. Tactically, International's product and communication strategy to achieve brand resonance includes:

- *Design* – visually impactful, design creates the emotional connection to the customer. At the point-of-purchase, skillfully designed products create desire and can lead customers to look for ways to rationalize product purchase. During the usage lifecycle of the product, design details shape the brand-customer relationship and craft the product usage experience. Traditionally of lesser importance in the commercial product space, there has been a paucity of attention to design in B2B products. In the area of the truck driver, design is clearly an important ingredient and a growing one.
- *Product performance* – that combination of attributes that results in a compelling feeling, product performance serves as the rational basis for product purchase and usage. In the domain of trucks, product performance includes the feeling of “how it drives/feels”, product reliability, fuel efficiency, and technology innovation. Performance is achieved through seamless integration of product attributes that dovetail to yield observable behavioral marketplace outcomes.
- *Distribution* – a key touchpoint, distribution can be used to develop enduring relationships with customers, where the “dependability” and “trust” are based not only on product performance but also on the accessibility and responsiveness of International's personnel.
- *Messaging* – with a well defined brand identity, external messaging can be developed to succinctly convey elements of the brand identity. One current messaging campaign, “Miles Ahead!” emphasizes the notion of challenging convention.

The re-defining of Navistar's International Truck Group's brand to “challenges convention” is part of an evolution of the company. A new direction for a brand would be meaningless without new direction for its products. There have been several new products introduced in recent years, and there are several more in the pipeline. These products are already changing Navistar internally. At Navistar, the media success of the CXT pickup truck gave the company in effect permission and confidence to propel Navistar's International Truck brand from its comfort zone – conservative and Midwestern – to a more modern and bold tone...one centered on ingenuity and being more unconventional in an industry not known for bold innovation. More recently, its latest long haul truck product (ProStar) was recently unveiled as the most aerodynamic design in its class. Even the tone of communications for this vehicle has been bolder than what had been the convention for Navistar. The product development of ProStar gave the employees the courage and confidence to think more boldly about what to bring to the marketplace. Indeed, this new spirit has even infected the corporate culture to the point where the marketing and product development folks secretly developed and recently introduced the Lonestar, a paradigm changing long haul truck

that is Navistar's most bold and unconventional offering yet. Even before production release the reaction from this new vehicle has been stimulating to customers and competitors alike, with potential drivers getting Lonestar tattoos even before they have driven in the truck.

The tools and methods discussed in this article helped derive the brand identity and set the strategy for future products. The resulting branding statement and visual cues gives Navistar a rich dynamic brand with multiple directions to grow and connect with its current and future customers. The method also helped unite critical players for branding within the company, allowing different functions within the company to reach a common understanding and vision. There was, for instance, interest and enthusiasm for both the verbal identity and visual brand language from both the marketing and design management, introducing a new level of internal collaboration and lasting tighter alliance between these important players who must together create and maintain the brand within the company. Even the analysis of the number of visual eras in the brand's history helped the players to recognize the need for a consistent message across its family of products.

4. Concluding remarks

Brand is much more than a “recognition” factor, much more than a conveyor of additional information about unseen qualities of company products. Brand is a “feeling good” factor, resonating with customer emotion and serving as a source of meaning to customers. International is striving for a comprehensive approach to branding that generates a powerful customer-brand relationship, creating a strong “feeling good” factor. In time, the invigoration of International's brand must lead to a change in customer behavior, creating demand for International's products and services and ultimately business success.

Although management almost always recognizes that brand can fulfill a comprehensive set of wants, needs, and desires which span emotional and functional needs, the challenge is to how to set the direction and to take concrete steps in line with the identified vision. While crafting a brand identity often seems to be a creative activity that lacks definition, we view the brand identity itself as a product to be designed. This article introduces a practical and analytical four step process to create brand identities for companies, a process that creates brands in much the same way that products are designed, focused on customer needs. By focusing on needs, the outcome is strategic and forward-thinking rather than descriptive of the current status quo. As such, our process and tools complement existing brand tracking and research studies which document current brand image.

Our method creates brand identities that are consistent not only with the needs and desires of the customers but also with the nature of the products and services within a brand. When a brand identity is closely aligned with the value that its products and services provide, the products and services can be powerful communicators of the brand, themselves establishing meaning, providing experience, and crafting relationships with customers. In addition, the products have access to their users despite the increasing clutter of today's media channels. Products owned by customers proclaim their brand identity daily, reducing the need to access customers through traditional channels. For a truck manufacturer such

as International, the brand is communicated through every truck on the road, through service that supports the vehicle, and via communications that gives drivers, maintainers, and owners confidence in the performance and pride in what the vehicles say about their business or about themselves. The result of our process is a brand aligned with products and services and a suite of products and services that communicate and champion the brand.

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Appendix. Value opportunity attribute definitions for brand

Adapted from VOA definitions from Cagan and Vogel (2002).

Emotion

The goals of the brand with respect to perceptual affect of the customer in response to the brand:

- Sense of adventure: the brand promotes excitement and exploration.
- Feeling of independence: the brand provides a sense of freedom from constraints.
- Sense of security: the brand provides a feeling of safety and stability.
- Sensuality: the brand provides a luxurious experience.
- Confidence: the brand supports self-assurance of the user.
- Power: the brand promotes authority and control, and a feeling of supremacy in its customers.

Contextual identity

- Personality: a multifaceted set of human traits of the brand that embody, give life to, and augment the values of the brand, differentiating the brand from its direct competition.

- Point in time: in order for a brand to be successful it must fit into the social, economic, and technological trends in the marketplace.
- Sense of place: brands must be designed to fit into the context of their products’ use.

Impact

- Social: a brand can have a variety of effects on the lifestyle of a target group, from improving the social well-being of the group to creating a new social setting.
- Environmental: the brand is associated with sustainability, focusing on minimizing any negative environmental impact of manufacturing, of resource use of the product during use, and of disposal of the product.

Aesthetics

- Visual: the visual presentation of brand messages must relate shape, color and texture to the context of the product and the target market.
- Tactile: the physical feel of the company’s products contributes to the brand image and must enhance the brand experience.
- Auditory: appropriate sounds enhance the brand message.
- Olfactory: appropriate sense of smell through appropriate aromas enhances the brand message.
- Gustatory: appropriate sense of taste enhances the brand message.

Ergonomics

- Ease of use: the branded products and services must be appropriately easy to use from both a physical and cognitive perspective.
- Safety: a brand must be perceived to be safe – its products safe and its perception secure.
- Comfort: products and services in a brand should be comfortable to own, purchase and use and not create undo stress during use.

Core technology

- Enabling: core technology must be appropriately advanced to provide sufficient capabilities to a brand; core technology may be emerging high technology or well manufactured traditional technology, as long as it meets customer expectations in performance. Technology here refers to its general definition, the practical application of knowledge.
- Reliable: customers expect technology in brands to work consistently.

Quality

The brand is perceived to meet or exceed performance expectations:

- Craftsmanship – fit and finish: the brand’s products should be made with sufficient precision to meet performance expectations.
- Durability – performance over time: the craftsmanship must hold up over the expected life of the brand’s products.

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Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

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 benefits of the material present.

It is widely acknowledged that a brand achieves its true worth by offering value to customers. Meeting both existing and future customer needs should not be simply perceived as just another objective but as the brand's very essence that must also consistently reflect the organization's capabilities and its branded products. Creating a brand identity that fulfils this criterion is a key challenge for different sized companies around the world.

Creating brand identity

In their article, Boatwright *et al.* suggest a process that enables organizations to create or modify their brand identities. Four general stages are incorporated into the framework:

- *Analysis.* The aim within this phase is to assess the brand's current state and determine the key values that meet customer needs. Identification of the complex attributes is the foundation for a new or modified brand identity.
- *Synthesis.* Organization of the identity attributes is the focus of this stage to clarify meaning both within the company and for external stakeholders. A continuum helps provide this clarity and equips brand identity with greater meaning and depth.
- *Translation.* At this point, the verbal identity created previously is translated into symbolic, visual and functional languages relevant to each context. Doing this enables the brand identity to be communicated to the customer through the likes of products, advertising and other significant touch points. Products are key brand communicators so the authors introduce the unique integrated brand identity map to convey identity through

the product's physical form. The map can assess how existing products reflect the brand message and drive the creation of future product forms.

- *Implementation.* During this final step, the goal is to ensure that brand identity is properly implemented and that such as products, services, advertising and marketing reflect the brand message. Here, the context-appropriate languages play a major part in ensuring that each facet of organizational operations accurately conveys brand identity.

Boatwright *et al.* use the Value Opportunity Analysis (VOA) tool during the crucial first stage. They describe VOA as "a unique but insightful method for identifying customer-based branding values". It is a proven mechanism in the initial steps of product development and has been deployed in a variety of industries by organizations ranging from *Fortune* 500 listings to start-ups. The premise here is that brands likewise have to be designed.

The VOA is the framework's key component and provides the platform needed to ensure that company provision matches customer wants. According to the authors, a company gains awareness of which of its aspects will help it succeed. Those unique to its products are deemed especially significant.

Intangible and tangible attributes lie at the core of the VOA:

- *Emotion.* Provides the central connection to the customer and crucial to success. The other attributes all provide support so that the customer emotionally engages with the brand.
- *Contextual identity.* Relates to the "forms and expectations" that bring the brand to life in the context that it lives in.
- *Impact.* How the brand functions in terms of social interactions and environmental sustainability.
- *Aesthetics.* Non-verbal communication of the brand is performed through the five senses.
- *Ergonomics.* Relates to the customer's physical interaction with the brand and extends to all touchpoints. This attribute relates to values like safety and independence and the authors believe that brand ergonomics can help to deliver such intangible values.

Core technology and quality are the final attributes and Boatwright *et al.* believe that their value to brand identity is readily apparent. They also note the significance of incorporating intangible brand values and tangible product values into the VOA. The "unified framework" helps ensure that the brand is delivering its values and identity; and products are upholding the brand.

Employing the VOA to create or hone a brand's identity involves three major steps:

- 1 Classifying the VOA attributes for the brand. General classification is done initially but attributes can subsequently be adapted to suit the specifics of a particular brand. Sub-attributes are listed for the VOA attributes but may not be relevant for every brand offering.
- 2 Performance evaluation of the relevant value attributes identified in the first phase. This functions to analyze the current position of the brand and identify where action is needed to achieve a desired future state. Competing brands can also be assessed.

- 3 Compile a list of specific descriptors for each VOA attribute to generate statements about the brand that provide a “rich foundation” of its identity.

Prior user research is conducted beforehand to provide necessary VOA inputs in the shape of customer feedback. Both emotional and functional wants are identified at a general level so that their relevance to a specified product can be defined later.

Applying the framework

The authors apply their framework within a case study of International Truck, a brand that dates back 175 years. Potent for much of its existence, International lost its way at the back end of the twentieth century as some consumers labeled it uninspiring. But innovative truck designs and boldness in other product areas revived fortunes and provided a platform for the brand’s future direction.

Performance analysis of the brand indicated high ratings for security, comfort and ease of use. Since International’s service centers were largely responsible for these rankings, opportunity existed to improve product ratings in these areas and project a “unified brand message”.

Even more significant was the low score of the brand for adventure, sensuality and personality. These key aspects entice the customer, so part of the new vision was to make the brand more exciting. Brand attributes and their descriptors were identified for each VO attribute relevant to the context. Emotional VO attributes that were not part of the current identity were seen as most significant.

Foundational and provocative were the perimeters used to create the continuum in the synthesis phase. This reflects the brand’s structure and position can incorporate both tradition and innovativeness.

Translation of the verbal identity is performed using the brand’s physical products that Boatwright *et al.* consider

iconic. They then provide a formula for creating visual brand language using emblematic images from the product’s history. The verbal brand identity and product visual identity are subsequently combined to form the integrated brand identity map that will guide such as designers, engineers and marketers in brand development, manufacture and advertising. The translation step can be used to determine the physical make-up of products and service and advertising developments.

Implementation of International’s new identity incorporates:

- a product design that emotionally connects with customers, arouses desire and shapes the usage experience;
- performance measured in terms of reliability, efficiency, innovation and how the truck drives;
- dependency and trust indicated by the availability and responsiveness of company personnel; and
- effective messaging to express components of brand identity.

Boatwright *et al.* note that the framework has enabled International to become “a rich dynamic brand with multiple directions to grow and connect with its current and future customers”. Product, service and communication all constantly reinforce the brand’s identity, meaning that conventional marketing channels are needed less. In addition, the drive to produce a consistent message has led to the emergence of a company distinguished by its proactive ethos and greater collaboration.

(A précis of the article “A step-by-step process to build valued brands”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)