

grasp

... brand archaeology

“New” has historically had a certain wow factor attached to it, but many of us are increasingly less compelled by the new. A proven track record has rarely counted against a brand but grasp now sees a positively renewed interest in the heritage of organisations. We call this brand archaeology ...

Principles of brand archaeology

Image – It is increasingly difficult to divorce a brand from its history. The mighty P&G would rather sell on their substantial investment in Sunny Delight than attempt to correct it’s positioning themselves. Rather than fight long-term associations, it can often be useful to revive or renew them ... *this will often require research; many businesses have found that constant interest in new ideas can override the need to remember!*

People – Over time, and through the image of a brand, that brand gains a cultural influence with its consumers and employees. Consumers identify heritage brands with personal nostalgia, employees reflect on the team spirit of delivering a shared brand. Consumers change their purchasing behaviour, employers change their practices ... *but positive historical connections can be re-drawn, not least through meaningful dialogue.*

Emotive – As the people principle would suggest, successful brand archaeology often unearths emotional associations ... *these associations can be very engaging for current, lapsed and new customers/consumers alike.*

Association – In a world increasingly influenced by ethics, the rekindled dream of a better past is somehow better than a dream that has been carried halfway around the world or that has no connection to its hypothetical origins ... *Historical, emotional associations can successfully beat modern, artificial constructs.*

Learning – It is tempting to keep trying new things and this is a good route to learning. Another route to learning (though often harder) that is potentially more lucrative is to look at what worked before ... *did we stop doing things that worked, why did we stop, what could we have improved on?*

Evolution – In the evolution of a brand, there is a challenge to marry the past with the future ... *this challenge can most safely be met by researching your customers’ perception.*

Difference – Differentiation can be readily achieved by using your brand's heritage ... *no other business shares your heritage, make it as meaningful as you can: what are the benefits to the end user of this heritage? Tell your story with flair through PR, packaging and any other medium you can get your hands on!*

Case Studies

Rather than keep applying the futuristic equipment used in his world-leading restaurant, Heston Blumenthal (favourite kitchen gadget: liquid nitrogen) is using his latest venture to resurrect historical recipes. One of the most successful car launches of recent years has been the new Mini. "Olde worlde" farmers markets have become the "lifestyle" food shops of choice for many foodies.

Sutherland Yorkshire Potted Beef

Sutherlands have been making traditional Yorkshire meat spreads since Edwin Talbot Sutherland first started selling them on the streets of Sheffield in 1927. Their products are still known and loved across the UK; the strongest following in Yorkshire appreciated the great value and high meat content of the products in spite of the dated packaging.



Without revolutionising the design and scaring off traditional shoppers, the business was able to make the pack more contemporary through better photography and clearer colourways. New varieties have been added, and the business embarked upon a PR campaign that centred on the great story behind the products. All of this helped "beef up" the business for the 21st Century.

Wensleydale Creamery

The Wensleydale Creamery (at Hawes in the Yorkshire dales) makes the only significant amount of Wensleydale cheese, in Wensleydale, with cows that graze on the unique pastures in this beautiful part of the world. This cheese has been made in the dale for 800 years. The Creamery guarantees isolated local dairy farmers a market for their high quality milk and in many ways is a business that stubbornly refuses to lie down in the face of external threats. It has twice been shut down by external management and has been saved each time by local management. This story, and many smaller parts of it, forms the basis for renewed marketing activity



as the UK becomes more interested in provenance, quality, food miles and heritage!

Farrah's

When Gary Marston bought the Farrah's toffee business it's owners had released all their staff and sold all their stock. The owners explained to Gary that their customers were shutting up shop and the factory needed too much investment. The blue & silver tins – whose design dated from before the 1st World War – were too expensive.



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Gary knew he was already selling a significant amount of the toffee from one shop, so he expressed an interest in buying the recipe ... the owner proceeded to tell him what a wonderful business it was! Gary then explains, *"when we got into it we realised it was the same recipe as from the 1840s, made in big copper pans and stirred with wooden paddles"*.

Having unearthed this, and other, valuable marketing tools Gary and his team have been able to provide continuity of supply for their own shop (at the bottom of Montpellier in Harrogate), for other local business and to open up a whole new gift shop trade for the brand.

Research!

Research can help you uncover the value of your brand (now and in the future!) and ensure that you do not over/underestimate its value. Research can help you drive brand value by identifying which elements of your brand and your delivery of it are negative and which are positive in the eyes of your customers, shoppers and consumers. Significantly, research can help do this with different segments of your customer base.

Research can help you uncover the story of your business, what makes it tick? This can be fed into your PR strategy to great effect, it can refresh communications (internal and external) and the benefit of an outside angle on your heritage can provide a positive awareness of what makes you different.

Forward-looking, creative research can help you develop your brand, suggesting where you can successfully stretch and where you should focus.

Summary

Consider the value of your heritage. In planning your next piece of marketing activity, or your next strategic review: are there useful gems in your organisational heritage that appear underused?

The historical image of your business (or industry) does not change with each new piece of advertising. People – your end users and your colleagues – do not forget the past and can carry very strong emotional associations with the history of an organisation. We are often keenest to learn about new markets, what our competitors are doing, what future trends will hold ... but how often do we look back at what has preceded us but lives on in the genes of our businesses? We can evolve what we do and how we do it, but it helps if we ground this evolution in the history of the business.

Research plays a fundamental role in uncovering the forgotten past and rekindling the key elements that have maintained or regained relevance to today.

References

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