

CHAPTER 7

MEASURING BRANDS



Why measure brands?

The previous chapter discussed the importance of a brand's values and how to identify these through qualitative research – such as group discussions and depth interviewing. Brand values were also broadly put into two groups; core values and others, including those aspects of a brand, which, although apparently trivial, are the very features which differentiate one brand from another. Having identified brand values, is this enough?

Understanding brand values may be fascinating but knowledge for its own sake is not the stuff of business. Managers of brands seek understanding for very practical reasons - to take effective action and whatever action is considered in relation to a brand, measurement may form an essential part of the necessary prior analysis.

Brands exist in a business world which is constantly changing. Nothing stands still and to just leave a brand without planning its future is a recipe for eventual decline. Consider the broad strategies which can be applied in planning any brand:

Strengthen or build the brand. This will lead in turn to higher sales of the products under the brand umbrella and hopefully higher profits - either through maintaining current margins or improving them and the latter can be very much tied up with brand strength - a strong brand can command a premium price for one thing. Building a brand may be from an initial base of strength (eg a brand with a history of recent growth, or a brand leader) or the opposite - brand strategy may be focused on reviving a flagging brand.

Protecting a brand. Building a brand can be thought of as dynamic or attacking strategy but the defence of a brand cannot be ignored. Virtually all brands exist in a competitive market and must fight to at least hold their position against competitors. The need for this will be on-going.

Extending a brand. If a brand is an umbrella over the product range, there is the option of bringing in other

products to market under the established name. In other words brand extension. There are many successful examples of this strategy but it can be high risk. Get it wrong and not only may the extensions falter but the whole brand may be de-valued.

Each of these strategies is concerned with the manipulation of brand values. The type of research discussed in the previous chapter can identify these values but this may not be enough to provide a basis for action. Many decisions also require us to measure these values in some way and only with quantification can sensible decisions be made. For example an advertising campaign may be a tactic to either build or defend a brand of industrial packaging materials. Qualitative research may have identified that the core values of the brand are *consistent quality, innovatory products* and *cost effective solutions to packaging problems*. Which of these should be featured in the advertising and if all, in what order of importance? The decision will rest on a quantification of these values - how important are they relative to each other? Action necessitates measurement.

Various elements of the brand can be measured depending on what has to be decided. Some common measures include:

Awareness. How well known is the brand? Both in the sense of the proportion of the target audience aware of the name and those having some depth of knowledge about it and the products marketed under the brand.

The relative importance of the brand values. If a brand is a bundle of attributes or values how important is each; either relative to each other or to the comparable values of competing brands?

Changing brand values. Brands, or at least successful brands have a long life but their values may change. Another type of measure for strategic planning is, therefore, plotting changes in a brand's values over time.

Brand strengths and weaknesses. Perceptions of a brand can be either positive or negative and qualitative research can identify both sorts of values. In successful brands the positive values clearly outweigh the negative but even the best of brands may have some downside. The need is to quantify values on some sort of evaluative scale.

So far we have referred vaguely to measuring brand values as though they are physical and tangible entities. Obviously they are not of this nature. We cannot pick a brand up and measure its values with instruments. In what sense do brands values exist? This is not a book of metaphysics and it is enough to assume that the values exist solely in the eye (or mind) of the beholder - customers and others in the marketplace. Brand measurement, therefore, is concerned with assessing the awareness, perceptions and image of brands.

What to measure

In discussing why measurement is needed we have touched on what can be measured. We now develop this subject.

Awareness

Awareness is a fundamental brand measure and is required in most strategies. Whatever values a successful brand must have, it has to be known in its marketplace. Sometimes this obvious point can be overlooked. To build a brand the primary requirement may be just to make it better known and marketing should focus on this rather than changing perceptions of the brand. Much advertising is wasted because this very simple point is missed.

Awareness can be thought of as existing at different levels amongst the marketplace. Firstly there is simple awareness of the brand name, secondly factual knowledge about the brand and lastly usage or familiarity.

Simple name awareness means that the name is known whether or not there is a clear understanding of what is covered by the brand. Such awareness is commonly measured in two ways - unprompted and prompted awareness (the sum of the two is sometimes referred to as total awareness). The simplest measure of unprompted awareness is the answer to an open ended question such as:

Which brands can you think of?

Unprompted measures of awareness are invariably set in some context such as the awareness levels of other companies in a similar field. For example:

Which brands of building materials can you think of?

or

Which brands of surface finishing materials can you think of?

Such unprompted measures of brand awareness are important; a brand mentioned in a survey by say 50% of the marketplace may have no real problem in awareness, particularly if the next best known brand is some way behind. However, often no single brand is particularly well known in unprompted questioning and this reflects problems of recall. This leads us to another type of simple awareness measure: prompted recall. Care needs to be applied in measuring prompted recall as it would be easy to produce flattering but misleading results. For example, if I ask:

Are you familiar with Cape as a brand of building materials?

a positive response is almost demanded as the respondent does not wish to appear unfamiliar with a possibly famous name in his or her market. There is therefore an over-claiming of the name. Moreover, if in response to such a question, 85% appear to know the Cape name, what does this mean? Is awareness high or not? The preferred method of measuring prompted awareness is instead to show (or read out) a list of brand names and ask which are familiar. The very order which the names are presented could cause bias and so this is overcome by changing, between each interview, the sequence of names on the list. Even with this method there will be an element of over-claiming and the "true" level of awareness will lie somewhere between the unprompted and prompted levels assuming (as is normal) both measures are used. Sometimes a technique is used to estimate the level of the agreement factor (eg by including a bogus brand name and deflating all brand awareness levels in proportion to the claiming for this name) but generally the main interest in unprompted awareness is the position of "our" brand relative to others.

Beyond the simple awareness of the brand name are measures of the level of knowledge about the brand. Respondents may have heard of a name but really have little or no conception of what is included under the brand name. Typically this higher level awareness is measured in the context either of fairly specific product classifications (eg brands of engineering bricks) or market sectors (eg awareness of the Rolls Royce brand outside the aerospace industry). In either case differential awareness of the brand may indicate where marketing efforts should be concentrated. Questioning techniques can be the same as for simple name awareness (eg asking which brands of engineering bricks are known or prompting with a list of relevant brands) or it may take the form of focusing on the brand name of interest and establishing product or market associations eg:

What products do you link with the name Rolls Royce?

The third level of awareness measure is familiarity and usage. This can cover proportions of people who have actually purchased the brand within some time scale and how many have actually used it. These are valid measures in planning a brand strategy even though, paradoxically, they concern the outcome of a brand's strength and are not diagnostic in showing how to improve it.

Finally, in this context, it is worth stressing that valid brand measurements can be carried out amongst groups who have never bought or used the brand. Some find this idea puzzling - why are the opinions of those with no direct experience of any value? If I have never used a Siemens phone, how can I have a rational view of the brand? The significant point is that perceptions of brand values may well not be rational. Indeed many of the values surrounding a brand may exist outside rationality (eg values such as "warmth" and "heritage") but yet they influence behaviour.

Relative importance of brand values

A brand is made up of a bundle of values; some are core values and others are more peripheral. Qualitative research will identify what these values are but to plan a brand strategy we usually need to establish the relative importance of these values. How important is each, particularly in the buying decision? There are various techniques used in market research to achieve this sort of quantification and to some extent it is an area where fashions come and go.

The simplest method is just to present a list of the values and ask the respondent to put them in order of importance. Order bias can again be overcome by list rotation between interviews. Though crude, this approach may be effective in some cases; eg where the list of values is short and where opinions on the importance of the values are strongly held but how can you know this in advance?). Another approach is to have respondents rate rather than rank each factor. The rating is applied through administering either a semantic or numerical scale eg:

Semantic Scale

Thinking now about Cape as a brand of building materials. Would you say that consistency of quality is:

very important/fairly important/neither important or unimportant/not very important/not important at all?

or

Numerical Scale

Thinking now about Cape as a brand of building materials. What score of importance would you give to consistency of quality. Please give a score from 1 to 10 where 1 is completely unimportant and 10 is absolutely essential.

There are many variations of such scaling techniques in use including a larger or smaller number of scale "points". Using such scales will certainly sort values into at least broad groups of importance but tend to fall down in differentiating the core values - all come out with similarly high scores and we are still uncertain how to manipulate the values in any brand strategy.

A more sophisticated approach is to use trade-off models or conjoint analysis. Using these tools, an attempt is made to mirror real choices made in the market place. These tools work well when we really do think about the different parts of the products or services we buy. The techniques replicates choices between bundles of values (the brand values) and then uses statistical analysis to de-construct and quantify the weight of each value in the decision.

The strengths and weaknesses of brands

Brands are not only bundles of values, each is perceived by the marketplace positively or negatively. The innovation element in the brand bundle for example may be seen very positively but reliability of supply may be negatively rated. This type of brand measurement is important diagnostically. The strong values of the brand can be built on but any negatives may point to an urgent need for remedial action. Brand research of this type is pretty well "image" research under another name.

Strengths and weaknesses of brands are generally established through research using scalar questions of the type mentioned above. Respondents in a survey are presented with a list of brand values - anything up to a couple of pages in length - and asked to rate the brand on either an evaluative semantic scale (eg excellent, very good, fairly good, neither good nor poor, fairly poor, etc, etc) or a numerical scale (eg a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is excellent and 1 is completely unacceptable). The brand can then be described in terms of evaluative scores (often using one "mean score" which summarises the distribution of scores along the scale). Areas of overall strength and weaknesses are then apparent and remedial action can be planned or strengths developed.

Even greater value can be obtained by combining an analysis of the importance of the brand values with their evaluative ratings. It may well be that the brand is very strong in relation to innovation but is this important? It may be pointless to build a strategy on a brand value which has very low importance in the marketplace. It is helpful to analyse the brand values on an X Y graph plotting the importance of each brand value on one axis and the strength of the different brand values on the other. Figure 7.1 is an example.

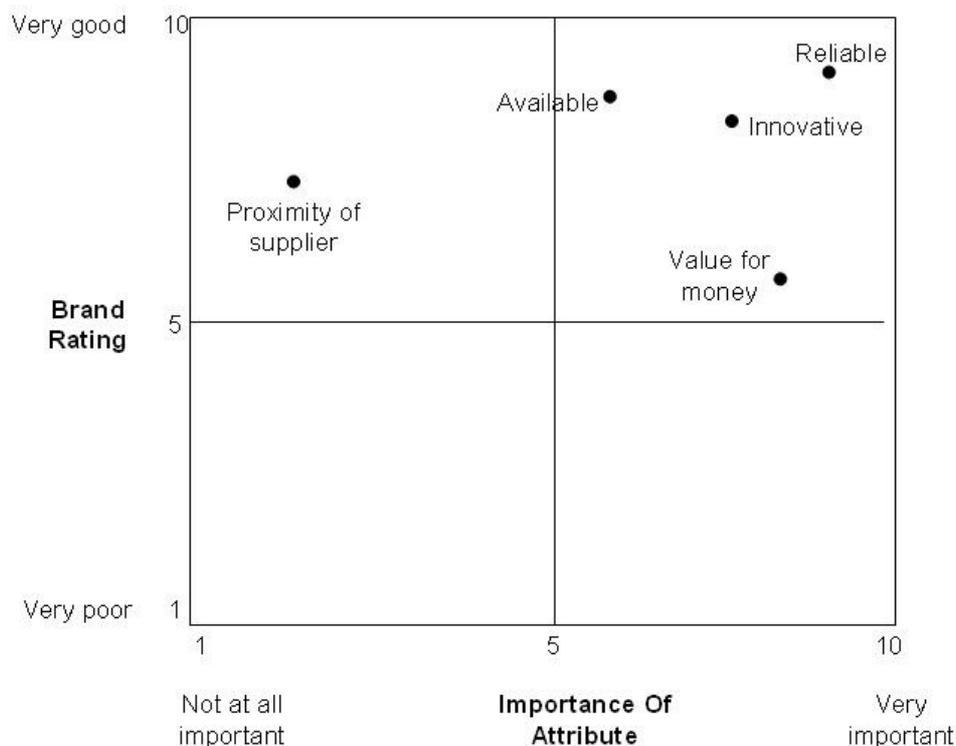


Fig 7.1 – Plotting brand values

Until this point in our discussion of measuring brand strengths and weaknesses, it has been assumed that only one brand is covered. In this case interpretation of the results of the measures can be difficult or unrealistic. If a brand has a score of 3.9 (out of 5) for friendly service, what does this mean? Is this good or bad? Generally interpretation requires comparison. Comparison of the scores on each brand value is one approach. For example, if all the other brand values have scores of 4.5 and over we can conclude that the 3.9 score on friendly service is at least low relative to the other brand values and this may suggest attention in this area. Researchers know from experience what is normal in these measurements and tend to look at the scores in a typical corridor of acceptability. For example, their experience (eg gained through brand research across markets) may indicate that scores above 4.5 indicate excellence, 4 to 4.5 is good, 3.5 to 4 is about acceptable but below 3.5 indicates real weaknesses.

To some extent, however, such measurement and interpretation of the values of just one brand is artificial. Brands do not exist in isolation but compete and, therefore, the realistic measurement of the strengths and weaknesses of brand values should involve brand comparisons. Brand measurement research, in this case, therefore, involves the evaluation of each brand value for a number of brands in turn. Figure 7.2 illustrates this with a comparison of three brands and five brand values. The relative standing of each brand is apparent and we can plan a strategy to improve the position of our own brand.

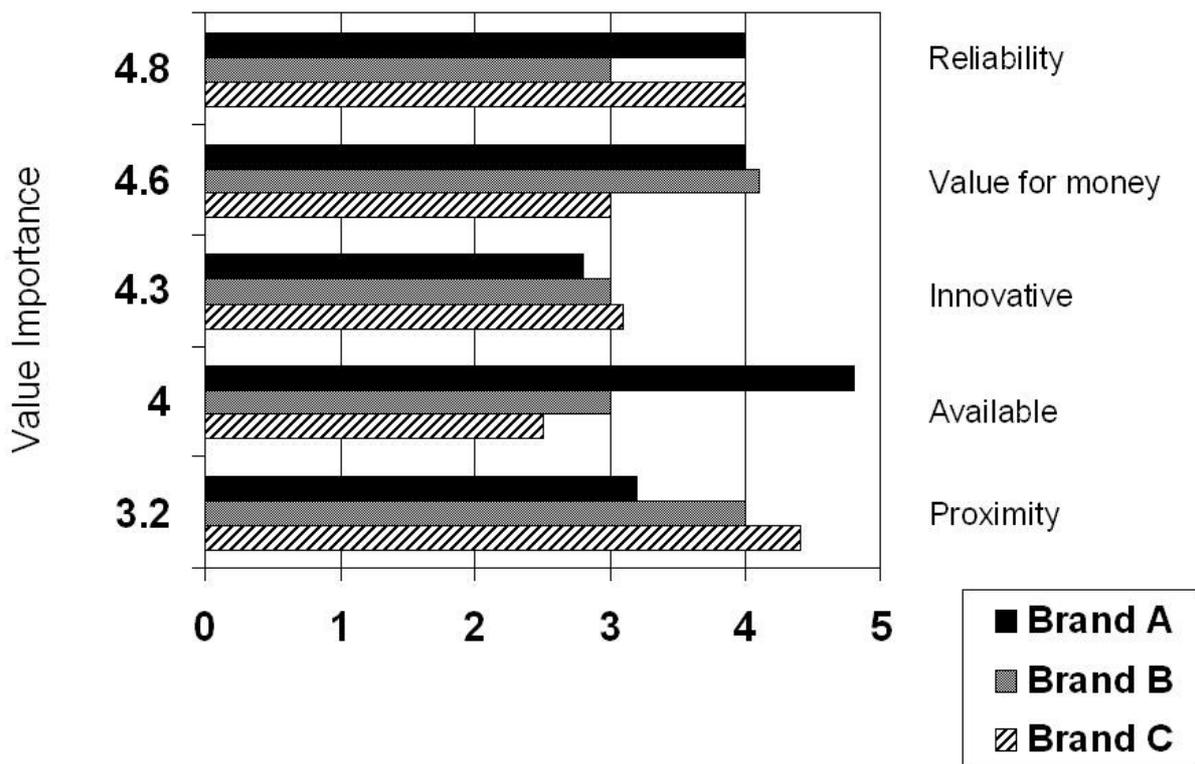


Fig 7.2 – Comparison of brands and their values

Brand comparison of this sort can also be combined with the measurement of the relative importance of the brand values in the market place - in the chart above the importance of the brand values is shown on the left (and the brand values are in descending order of importance).

A practical concern in this type of research is which brand value and which brands to include. The brand values should be drawn from a list of the those identified through qualitative research but to keep the length of the interview reasonably short, some pruning may be necessary (remember that the respondent has to give a separate rating for the number of the brand values and for every brand that is rated).

Similar pruning of the brand list may also be called for. Usually the brands which are compared are the most active or serious competitors and sometimes they include other "benchmarks", such as brand leaders in comparable markets. This can be useful where it is thought that brands in other sectors are strong on service (or some other value) and this factor is crucial to brand planning.

Positioning brands

The data produced from measuring the strengths and weaknesses of several brands can be analysed to produce brand maps which pinpoint the positioning of brands in terms of their values. This enables brand similarities and differentiation to be identified and used in strategic brand development planning.

Brand mapping is carried out with special statistical analysis packages which effectively plot each brand in multi-space with the brand values as the dimensions. The output can be difficult to understand; it is not easy for most of us to think in multi-dimensions and three dimensions is the limit of true graphic representation. The analysis output is usually represented in a two dimension chart as below but it has to be understood that the position of each brand is determined not by the apparent two dimensions but by many and that the distance between the brands is determined by all the brand values. This type of map does, however, highlight brand differentiation.

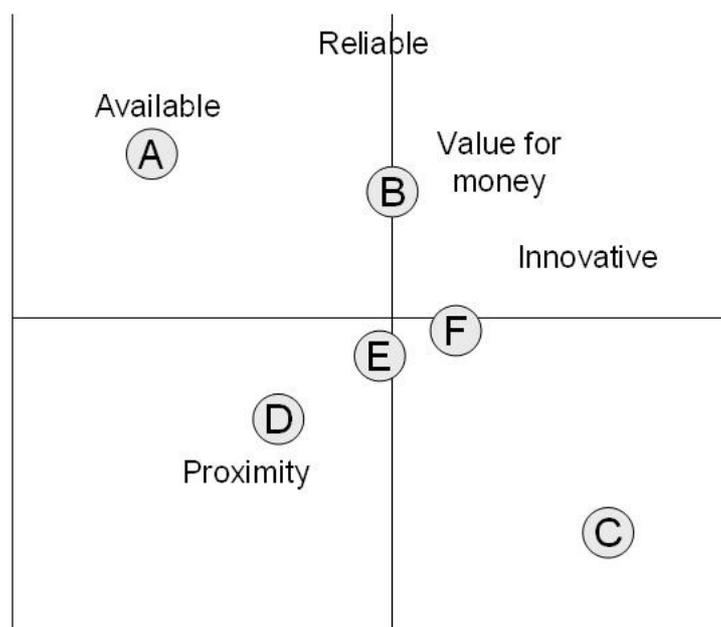


Fig 7.3 – Brand Map

As well as producing brand maps, this analysis also generates descriptions of each brand in terms of brand value "scores". Having, therefore, identified the degree of difference of brands you can use the descriptions to understand how they differ. The descriptions of brands A and C shown in the above chart, are provided below. In this case the brand values are quantified simply as above average - compared to all brands (+), average (0) and below average (-).

Comparison Of Two Brands From A Brand Map

	Brand A	Brand B
Reliability	+	0
Value for money	-	+
Innovative	0	+
Available	+	-
Proximity	0	0

Measuring across time

Brand values of one or several brands can be tracked over time to show whether they are changing and this type of monitoring can be a valuable tool in managing a brand. It can be used to warn of a deteriorating position as well as providing an evaluative measure of marketing activities. The methods of research involved are in principle the same as previously described except that the research is repeated at appropriate intervals. What an appropriate interval is, depends on the age of the brand. In the case of a long established brand, annual measurement may be adequate, whilst for a new brand the values may need plotting several times a year. The brand coverage can be restricted to the one brand or extended to include competitor brands; the latter approach involves higher (but not that much higher) research costs.

Tracking research such as this involves some important issues in research design since it is essential that any variations in brand values can be reasonably assumed to be real and not simply effects of research variation. In particular samples must be strictly comparable. Any brand manager buying this type of research should understand these issues and resolve them with the research provider.

Who to measure

As we have already discussed, brand values are no more nor no less than perceptions. An important issue in brand measurement is, therefore, whose perceptions are relevant? There is no simple answer; it depends on what you plan to do with the measurements.

The attitudes of present customers are clearly vital in any measurement of brands since it is their actions which will determine the brand's survival in at least the short term. If the purpose of measuring the brand is related to

a defensive strategy it may be enough to limit research to customers; in the short term, survival is almost certainly going to depend on holding on to existing customers. One reason for this is that in many industrial markets the sales gestation period is too long for potential customers to be brought on board quickly.

By contrast, long term development of a brand often depends on attracting new customers and in this case brand measurement amongst potential customers as well as customers is required. Often potential customers will be actual customers of other brands. As previously mentioned, it should not be assumed that potential customers, without experience of the products within the brand, have no perceptions of the brand; possibly it is negative perceptions which inhibit them becoming customers. There is also a sub-group of potential customers whose perceptions may be particularly relevant to brand planning; lost or lapsed customers - those who in the past bought the brand but now no longer do so.

Identifying customers may be easily carried out from sales records (although more on this issue shortly) but the task may be much harder in the case of potential customers. Lists of possible users of the products may be available from directories and similar, but often screening is necessary to finally identify real potential customers.

Beyond the circle of potential customers is the rather vaguer region of opinion formers. This is a heterogeneous group including such as trade journalists, regulators and possibly government and even suppliers of materials used in the products within the brand. The attitudes of these groups may have an effect on the long term development of the brand or occasionally in a short term crisis (eg some environmental disaster that in some way involves the brand or threatened and adverse legislation).

We have so far implied that "customers" are a self-evident group and in many industrial markets (eg most capital equipment) this is so - products are supplied directly. Customers in these circumstances are obvious and lists of them are likely to be readily available. However, in other markets the structure is rather more complicated. In the semiconductor industry, for example, a huge volume of products are sold through a distribution network (possibly with more than one level) and the perceptions of the stockists, dealers or wholesalers may be as important to a brand's future as the perceptions of the final and indirect customers. It is possible for a brand to be well regarded by final customers but to suffer through a history of problems in the distribution chain. However strong, a brand will not sell if distributors do not stock it. In markets served by distribution networks, therefore, brand measurement is often required through all levels of the chain.

The construction industry is an example of a value chain with some complexity. Specifiers such as architects may have as much or more influence on the brands bought as the construction companies actually placing the orders. Moreover, specifiers may well see brands in a rather different way to the buyers; innovation in design may for example be far more important. Possible further complications in customer definition in the construction industry is introduced by sub-contractors and installers (eg of heating systems) who also may both

influence the purchase decision and see brands from a different perspective. Finally there is the final user of the products (eg the tenant of an office block) and in the construction industry (and in most industrial markets) this group is quite distinct from distributors, specifiers or buyers. In the longer term the attitudes of users may well shape the future growth of the brand and their inclusion in brand research should at least be considered.

Since, like beauty, brand values lie only in the eyes (or minds) of beholders, it follows that to speak of brand values as a unitary measure is misleading. Within a market place one brand may be regarded quite differently by the various sub-groups involved. These may be customers compared to potential customers or specifiers compared to buyers or distributors. Even single classifications such as specifiers can be further broken down into various segments - by size of practice, practice specialisation etc. Understanding variations in brand values between such groups can increase the power of managers to steer their brands. Marketing effort may for example be concentrated in a sector where attitudes to the brand are below average. Alternatively, as a matter of policy, it may be decided to foster different brand values amongst different groups to meet their varied needs. In either case brand measurement should involve research amongst the various critical sub-groups.

Another aspect of who should be measured in brand research is sampling. Except in some specialised industrial markets where the customer base is very small, it is neither practical nor desirable to research all units making up the market. Instead samples are researched. Sampling is based on statistical theory although in many industrial markets this must be tempered with what is practical. This book is not the place to cover either the theory or practice of sampling - there are many specialised sources to consult. However, some particular issues to consider and which a brand manager should discuss with the research supplier include the following:

Sample size. Accuracy of the data from a sample is largely linked to sample size with acceptable quantification requiring minimum samples. This is quite commonly understood in at least a vague way but less widely appreciated is that the critical minimum size applies equally at the sub-group level. If for example, brand measurements are to be compared between sectors of customers, the sample size of each sector must be sufficiently large to produce valid data. In markets with comparatively large "universes" the critical sample size will certainly be 100+ and research involving quantitative comparisons of sub-samples of 10, 20 or 30 is probably quite worthless. The position, may however, be different in industrial markets made up of small numbers of players since, in this case, apparently small sub-samples may in fact represent a high proportion of the sector.

Sample stratification. In industrial markets, purchasing units are not equal. BT has a vastly larger spend on electronic components than the Acme Telephone Company. Sampling for brand measurement, or in any other industrial market research, must take this into account by stratifying the sample with the inclusion of sub-sets of different sized companies in the marketplace.

Unbiased samples. Research is based on randomised samples even where the sample is not strictly random.

Random has a specific meaning and does not just mean interviewing the first fifty companies on a list (especially if the list is in size order). A practical problem can often arise in preparing a sample of current customers. The list from which the sample is drawn may need "cleaning" to take out duplicates, check addresses etc but the sales department must not be allowed to take out their problem customers. Such customers undoubtedly have a perspective which must be included in brand measurement.

Managing the research

The type of research work involved in the quantitative measurement of brands is almost always outside the capabilities of an in-house research team let alone a do-it-yourself exercise by the brand manager. The only exception might be a specialised industrial market with only a handful of players. For this reason and because the topic is too large, this book cannot attempt to provide detailed guidance on the carrying out the research - there are many excellent practical books on market research. We, therefore, assume that brand measurement research will be commissioned from a market research agency with some experience in this area. The brand manager must, however, at least brief the research agency and agree some aspects of the project. The following are important areas to think about.

Aim of the research. Be quite clear and specific what you want to achieve from the research and make sure the research agency understands this need. In turn expect the agency to succinctly define the research objective in its proposals.

Budget. Sometimes this is easier said than done, but you should have set a budget for the research by the time you brief the agency (or agencies if you are seeking competitive quotes). On the whole it is better to give the agency at least a ballpark of what you are willing to spend. It wastes everyone's time if the agency designs a £50,000 project but you cannot spend more than £10,000.

Information coverage. You should know in advance and in quite specific detail the scope of the information to be provided through the research eg awareness measures and brand value perceptions for a defined number of brands. The final specification is likely to be a joint effort of both the agency and yourself. Again it should be laid out in the proposal.

Sampling. The marketplace to be researched and its sectors should be defined and the sample sizes specified appropriately. The minimum level at which reliable quantified data is to be provided should be clearly understood by both parties. The agency should have the expertise to recommend sample sizes but be prepared to ask for a rationale. The practicalities of how the sample is to be drawn should also be specified in the proposal. Make sure you are clear about what you are expected to do in this respect.

Interviewing method. All established interviewing methods can be considered for brand measurement

research. Face-to-face interviewing can be horrendously expensive. Phone interviewing is well established though lots of scoring on attitude scales can be tedious. Self-completion and e-surveys are very effective in this sort of research but there is always the worry of bias from a high proportion of non-response. A combination of phone and e-survey can sometimes maximise the advantages and overcome the difficulties of both methods. Whatever, method is used, a well designed and structured questionnaire is essential and you should agree it before fieldwork starts - it is too late afterwards.

Data analysis. The agency should describe any special analysis techniques they intend to use such as trade-off or conjoint analysis and brand mapping. Even if your understanding of the techniques is slight, you should feel confident of the agencies abilities; just having the software and pressing the buttons is not enough.

Output. Decide in what form you want output from the agency; print-outs of the statistical analyses only, interpretation of data or a full blown report with conclusions and recommendations. Sometimes the latter can be a waste of money - the researchers may be very competent technically but lack either the ability or experience to recommend a strategy.

And what does it all mean

Developing the previous point, it must always be remembered that brand measurement is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Complex research should not be carried out simply to push back the frontiers of knowledge. It must make a practical contribution to decision making. This incidentally is an argument against over-sophisticated research; if you do not understand it you are unlikely to use the resulting data effectively. The rest of this book is about how to positively plan and develop brands and the role brand measurement has in this will hopefully be clear. However, there are two general issues worth discussing here; the problem of perception and reality and the halo effect.

The problem of perception and reality can be illustrated in relation to brands of printers. Research shows that a negative brand value for all brands is customer support – printers are thought to breakdown too often and to be fixed too slowly or cannot be fixed at all (for any sensible price). This is the perception and it effects purchasers in relation to all brands of printers. But there is a real opportunity here. If a brand can be manipulated so that customer support is seen to be a positive value then the potential for growth will be considerable. What, however, lies behind the perception? What is needed is an honest analysis to establish actual performance levels in relation to customer support. If a truthful analysis indicates that service is indeed poor then some real changes will be needed before anything else can be considered. Massaging the image is simply not enough. But what in the opposite case? If the printer company has a fantastic “free ship and return” policy which is little known and understood, there could be an obvious action to change the perception; perhaps with advertising focusing on the issue and communicating a critical positive brand value - the very best level of

service.

The problem of the perceptions lagging the reality as in the case of printers, is not uncommon. Possibly it is a hangover from times when printers were notoriously unreliable - it is an inertia factor. The halo effect is in some ways similar. A successful brand may rest on a few but very important core values which are perceived very positively by the marketplace. However, in research the brand may appear highly positive in all respects despite objectively identified problems in some areas. This is the halo effect and the danger is that deficiencies will be masked and not acted upon. This may not matter - after all the problems are apparently forgiven in the marketplace. However, resentment may grow, imperceptibly at first, but then like a weak pipe, burst open and lead to a rapid de-valuing of the brand.

There is also the opposite to the halo effect; call it demonisation. In this case, some critical core brand values are perceived very negatively and research shows that the brand is poorly rated on all brand values and even where objectively the opposite is the case. Monopolist suppliers and large companies can suffer from this as their power generates a sense of resentment amongst some customers, even though their service is not as poor as is warranted. A more detailed discussion on retrieving flagging and negative brands is covered in a later chapter.

Summary of chapter 7

Strategies for brands include strengthening and building them, protecting against competitors and extending brands to cover additional products and businesses. Decisions in these and other areas often require measurement - where does a brand stand now and over time and how does it compare with competitors' brands?

Relevant brand measures include:

Awareness. How well known is the brand compared with others in the market? Measurement covers both unprompted and prompted awareness.

Importance of brand values. Which of a brand's values are the most important? Which is second etc? Methods of measuring including ranking, against a scale of importance and sophisticated techniques such as trade off analysis.

Strengths and weaknesses of a brand. This includes comparing brand values with each other, against an established normative standard or against competitors. Relative measurement is usually the most effective. Brands can also be "mapped" to understand how, quantitatively, they differ from each other.

Brand measurement involves researching and quantifying perceptions of a brand amongst its market. Relevant groups to research are as for qualitative research - customers, potential customers and others including, if relevant, the distribution network and independent specifiers.

The requirements of brand measurement are such that in nearly all cases a professional research agency should be briefed and commissioned to carry out the work. The outcome must be interpreted with care, including the distinction between perceptions and objective facts. The effect of brand halos and the opposite must be considered.