

Model: Brand Circle

Type of model: Brand model (process model)
 Author(s): Hugh Davidson
 Domain: Brand Stretching

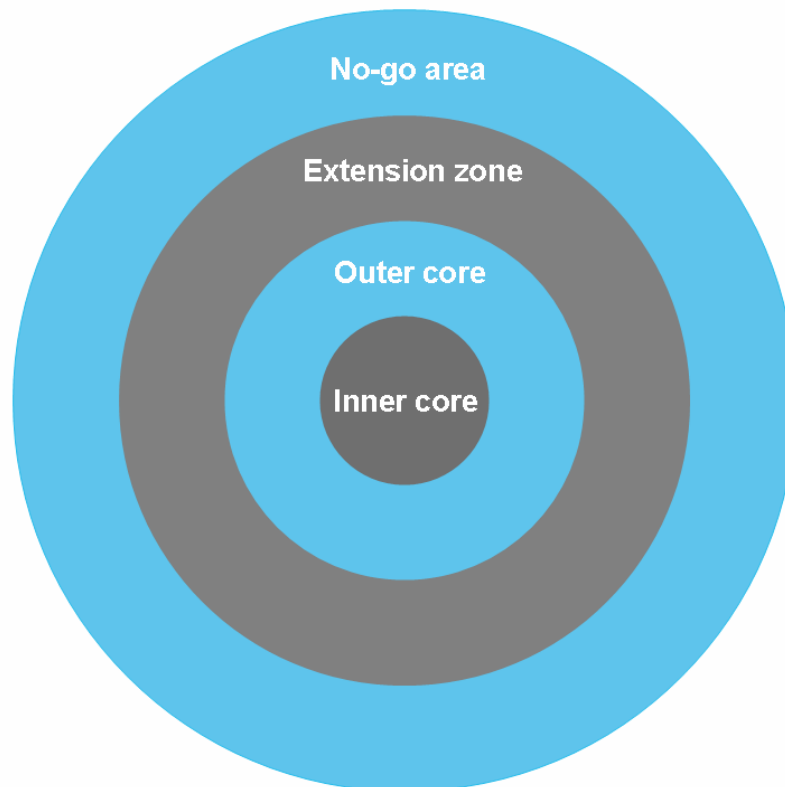


Figure 1: Davidson's 'Brand Circle'

In his 'Brand Circle', Hugh Davidson defines four areas that are relevant for brand extensions. The idea behind his circle is that a brand starts from a brand core, from which it gradually evolves into a broader brand. The model offers insight into how a brand can be stretched out into other categories. The inner core is the point of departure of the brand cycle. From there a brand can introduce more products, providing the brand is sufficiently strong, and there is a brand fit, both in the outer core and in the extension zone. When stretching a brand, it is also advisable to identify the brand's boundaries; in this model this is captured in the 'no-go area'.

In the following we will further delve into the four areas of the 'Brand Circle':

1. Inner core: this where the core products of a brand are located, products that encapsulate the brand identity. This identity can, for example, be linked to a certain flavour, distinctive design or superior technology. These tend to

be the products the brand uses to present itself in the market. The inner core is basically part of the brand's DNA, and hence decisive for the answer to the question what extensions will fit the brand. Line extensions representing the brand DNA come under this inner brand core. In the case of a soft drinks brand, these could be the main flavours offered by the brand.

2. Outer core: this is where products are located that match (part of) the associations evoked by the brand, but which are not as suited for use in attempts to raise the brand's market profile. As in the inner core, this area is limited to line extensions. These kinds of extensions are mostly sparked by new market demand, and not introduced as a way of broadening the brand on the basis of the brand essence. A brand of carbonated soft drinks, for example, could choose to launch a 'no bubbles' version of another one of its soft drinks, as a way of tailoring to people that dislike fizzy drinks.
3. Extension zone: this is the area of a brand's latent potential. This includes brand and concept extensions. Brand extensions are products that take the brand into a new product category, different from the products from the inner core, but still of the same product type. For example: Ice cream by Mars falls into another product category than Mars candy bars, but both are still the same type of product (i.e. food). Insights for potential products in the extension zone can only be gained by conducting qualitative (explorative) research. This does, of course, include checking at a later stage whether the product actually fits the brand; that can be done through quantitative research/ field testing. The brand does not affect the customer's quality perception as greatly as in the case of products in the inner and outer core. Products in the extension zone should, in other words, be of extremely good quality.
4. No-go area: this is where we find products that actually harm the brand. The idea is, of course, to avoid ending up in the outer-most circle, but it is always advisable to identify possible products that would take the brand into this 'no-go area' in order to know what not to go for.

Reference(s)

Davidson, J.H. (1987), *Offensive marketing or, how to make your competitors followers*. Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth.*

Kapferer, J.N. (2004) *The new strategic brand management (creating and sustaining brand equity long term)*. Kogan Page Limited, London.*

* : available in the EURIB library.