

## Model: Brand Stretch

Type of model: Brand model (process model)  
 Author(s): David Taylor  
 Domain: Brand Stretching

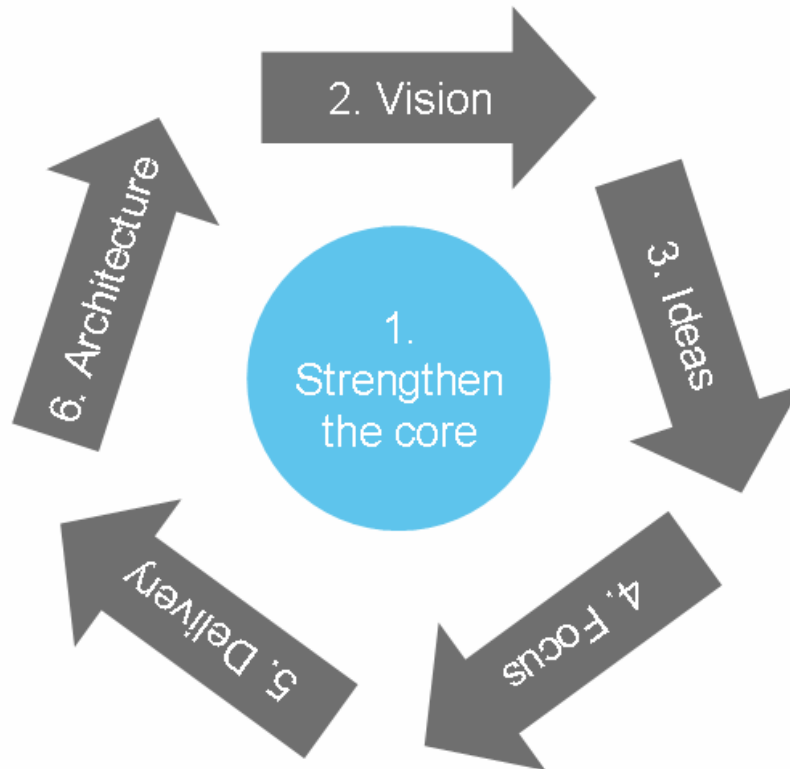


Figure 1: David Taylor's Brand Stretch Model

Brand extensions sometimes work out, but they also fail in many cases. In order to help brand managers tip the scales towards the success side, David Taylor has devised a roadmap. In his Brand Stretch Model, David Taylor formulates six steps to take to realize successful extensions: (1) *strengthening the brand*, (2) *formulating a brand vision*, (3) *coming up with possible extensions*, (4) *selecting extended products*, (5) *shaping extended products* and (6) *formulating the brand proposition for advertising*.

We will further outline the six steps in the following:

1. *Strengthening the brand*: a *strong* brand is an important prerequisite for successful extensions. An extension will only have a chance of succeeding when the mother brand is strong, and has a clear meaning in the market. A weak brand does not lend itself for image transfer. When a brand has

insufficient added value for consumers it is advisable to – prior to launching extended products - strengthen the core of the main brand. A strong and recognizable brand instils a kind of credibility and trust in consumers, which can be used as a point of departure. Taylor states that it is key to not be too quick to introduce extensions that are too far removed from the brand essence in terms of product/ meaning. Business wise, the extensions may be lucrative, but they can also dilute the meaning of the main brand. A better way of expanding is by exploring the boundaries step by step. That will limit confusion in consumers, and make sure the brand stays credible. An example is the Giant mountain bike brand, which has been gradually introducing other kinds of bikes under the same name. Giant can safely do that, as it has built a strong brand core over the years.

2. *Formulating a brand vision*: only when the brand has a strong core, a clear/ ambitious brand vision can be formulated. This vision should create clarity on the direction the company wants to take with the brand, and indicates the role the brand has to play for consumers. This vision can be ambitious; at a later stage in this roadmap decisions will be of a more rational nature. The lack of a clear vision can lead to a proliferation of new, lucrative extensions, each with their own sound and message. A clear vision helps build a univocal, strong and hence recognizable brand. Extensions will, as a result, not be used as a way of realizing short-term sales increases.
3. *Coming up with possible extensions (idea generation)*: a clear and inspiring brand vision can be used as a basis for the generation of structured ideas for extensions. These extensions should, however, be geared towards further strengthening the brand core. Taylor warns of the so-called fairytale world of innovation, meaning that ideas for extensions should not look too far into the future and be too grand. The first aim should, in Taylor's eyes, be to reinforce the existing brand core, and stretch the brand from there. Consumer platforms could, at this stage, be used to test new ideas. Taylor states that converting certain consumer insights into potential (concrete) products is an extremely effective way of designing realistic extensions. Extensions that are too far removed from the brand core will, according to Taylor, not be accepted by the market right away.
4. *The actual selection of extended products*: after extension ideas have been generated, the decision-making process starts. Two criteria play a key role here: one the hand it is about choosing the ideas that are good for business, and on the other to select those that match the formulated brand vision. In order to make the right decisions, a company will have to be able to adopt a critical attitude towards itself. It requires, for example, the ability to adequately identify its own competencies. These have to be mapped,

because otherwise a company will make promises it will not be able to keep. When choosing the extended products to go for, it is also important to bear expected revenue in mind. Taylor claims that experience has shown that – when a clear focus is lacking – chances are the wrong choices will be made, and that companies will find themselves saddled with projects that bring value reduction rather than value creation.

5. *Developing extended products:* when actually developing extended products, there is still a lot that can go wrong. Poor execution of the new product development and/or the marketing process can not only cause the extended product to fail, but also have a negative impact on the brand core. The most commonly named cause of extension failure is that the product does not deliver on its promise. Excellent execution (the extended product is better than expected), on the other hand, can have a greater positive impact than the company could ever have estimated beforehand. A qualitatively strong extended product can trigger 'word-of-mouth' advertising and/ or free publicity, which can lead to a huge boost in sales of the brand (including of the parent product). In closing, Taylor states that a brand with exceptionally high product quality can, in certain cases, also enable a brand to stretch further than the company initially thought possible. The reason behind that is that consumers are always willing to buy products that are of superior quality, even if the fit with the original brand product is not clear.
6. *Formulating the brand proposition for advertising:* when extending a brand, there is a chance the brand image consumers have will dilute. Sprawling brands can at one point give rise to the need for a management tool to help keep things under control. After all, the basis has to be a brand vision, with all extensions propagating the same values. The introduction of brand architecture that displays clear logical links between the different propositions can help ensure these problems stay manageable. This brand architecture has to lead to a situation where consumers have a clear idea of what the brand represents, and it has to enable the brand manager to stay on top of his brands.

#### *Reference(s)*

Taylor, D. (2004), *Brandstretch (why 1 in 2 extensions fail, and how to beat the odds)*. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, U.K. \*

\* : available in the EURIB library.

