

**Book: 'Brand meaning'**

Brand Meaning is worth a read for a number of reasons. Firstly because Batey accentuates the trickiest part of branding: how can an inconspicuous brand become a meaningful iconic brand? Although he does not provide any golden tips, he does describe the things to take into account, and what you need to know. A second reason to read this book is for its sound scientific underpinning, which does not only draw on the latest literature and research on the subject. For many of the subjects he covers, Batey provides descriptions of their historical background (of values, for examples), thus not slipping into descriptions or predictions of what could possibly become fleeting trends in the long term. A third reason for picking up this book is that Batey contextualizes the concept 'brand meaning'. That means he does not only deal with brands' psychology, but also brands' financial value, and brand stretching.

Brand Meaning is made up of eight chapters. Batey starts off with an essay on the financial value of brands, and then moves on to the mental world a brand exists in. In the second chapter he zooms in on motivation; why and how people look for meaning in things (i.e. brands). This chapter is a must read for any self-respecting brand manager; if only as a way of going over all relevant interesting information again. In this chapter, Batey discusses subjects such as the relationship between human needs and the benefits brands can provide, values (including the Schwartz Value System used by social psychologists and anthropologists), means-end theory, emotion, and the role brands play in the shaping of people's self-image. Batey wraps this chapter up with an extensive description of the twelve archetypes and their relation to brands.

Chapter 3 of Brand Meaning is about perception, and in particular how specific cues can influence and/or steer our observations. Batey deals with all sensory systems at length here (visual, auditive, taste, scent and touch), and even describes a method of how brands can target these cues. Chapter 4 deals with the meaning of things, with concepts and theories such as connotation, denotation, semiotics, tangible and intangible qualities, and symbolic meaning reviewed. Chapter 5 goes on to focus on the meaning of brands, linking associations and meanings. This is where Batey distinguishes between primary and implicit brand meaning (with the latter being more subconscious, and shaped by an archetype, for example). Although the book has a strong theoretic grounding, Batey always manages to come up with applicable practical implications.

In Chapter 6, Batey bridges the gap between brand meaning and branding strategy. He does so by, for example, looking at the implications for brand extensions, but also by homing in on the effects of brand extension on brand meaning. The motto of Chapter 7 is captured by a Good Year quote: 'brands start off as labels on products and end up as icons of meaning'. In other words, this chapter focuses on the evolution of brand meaning. Batey finishes his book with a chapter on brand communication and how this can contribute to the creation and maintaining of brand meaning.

Seeing as Batey does not come from the world of marketing, but still worked in advertising for years, he provides insight into this world through the eyes of a 'relative outsider'. Every now and then, this yields very refreshing insights. Some examples of Batey's unorthodox remarks:

- 'Though companies create brand identities, people create brand meaning'.
- 'Meaning is at the heart of consumer behaviour'.
- 'Actual self + Brand = Ideal self'.

And finally: 'According to the Henley Centre in the United Kingdom (1999), consumers place far more trust in the Kellogg's brand than they do in members of Parliament'.

#### *Reference(s)*

Batey, M. (2008), Brand meaning. Routledge, New York, N.Y. \*

\* : available in the EURIB library.