

Model: Brand Assets Concept

Type of model: Brand model (structure model)
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Domain: Identity & image

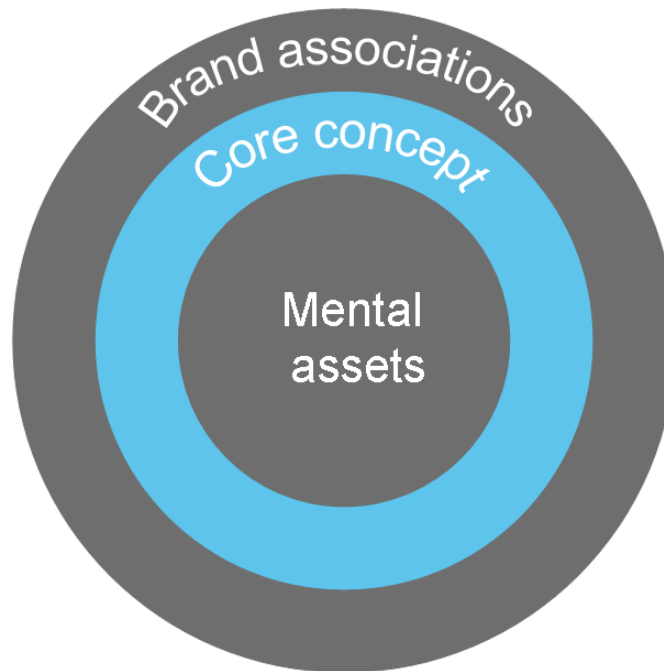


Figure 1: Three levels of brand meaning according to Franzen and Van Den Berg.

The *Brand Assets Concept* model can be used to assess whether brand associations are relevant to consumers. Brand associations can be considered relevant when they lead to people rating a brand more highly and/or get consumers to purchase products by that brand. The model discerns three layers (circles). The outer layer is the one of (all) 'brand associations'. A brand can conjure up a range of associations in consumers; not only associations prompted by advertising, but also associations based on personal experiences with the brand. Some of these brand associations are part of the 'core concept'; these are associations with relevance for the positioning of the brand in people's minds. The inner circle contains 'mental assets'; those associations that drive people's purchasing behaviour. The latter associations in particular have a positive effect on a brand's competitiveness/strength.

Consumers walk around with an endless number of brand associations in their heads. But these associations are not all equally relevant or relevant at all.

Certain associations may, for example, be in no way linked to the brand's core concept, as in the case of associations based on specific personal experiences with the brand. Other associations may come under the core concept, but not under the mental assets. These are associations that do not influence consumers' purchasing behaviour. Examples of associations people have with the brand Coca-Cola that are not part of that brand's mental assets are advertising jingles, the shape of the Coke bottle, and the brand's history. These associations will, after all, not spur consumers on to buy a Coke. In short, we can state that the *Brand Assets Concept* model can provide insight into the extent to which certain associations do or do not add to people's appreciation of the brand (core concept) and/or inspire consumers to buy the brand.

In the following we will further explain the three circles from this model:

1. Brand associations: this is Franzen and Van Den Berg's category for 'all brand-related information in a person's mind'. These associations are the end products of learning cycles. The subject matter for those learning cycles is made up of all contacts between man and brand: TV adverts, packaging, products and services, colours, users, personal experiences, etc. A network of associations is, in principle, made up of everything our mind can link to a brand. These can be cognitive links (knowledge elements) ('Mercedes = car'), affective links (evaluations) ('Ferrero Rocher = positive feeling'), combinations of cognitions and affections (attitudes) and behavioural intentions ('H&M = buy').
2. Core concept: this category encompasses associations that can be considered features that are typical of a specific brand. Franzen and Van Den Berg also define the core concept as 'those associations at the basis of a brand's positioning in people's minds'. They consider the core concept crucial for a brand. Because the core concept tells consumers what a brand stands for. The consumer's memory will use the core concept to assess to what degree the brand in question meets the features of the category. The closer a brand stays to those category-specific features, the higher it will be on consumers' list of potential purchases.
3. Mental assets: these are associations that influence consumers' behaviour. In other words: associations with a positive link to purchasing behaviour (so-called brand equity drivers). Successful brands tend to be the ones with simple and clear mental assets. Consumers then know exactly what they can expect from the brand. Examples are brands like Volvo (safety), FedEx (quick service) or Kleenex (tissue). An important prerequisite is that these associations tie in with the needs, wishes or desires of the consumer in question. That is because a mental asset can also have a negative effect.

Take cola enthusiasts with a dislike for the US, for example. They will be less likely to buy Coca-Cola, and probably sooner go for colas from other parts of the world (Mecca-Cola).

The *Brand Assets Concept* model lends itself perfectly for the development/tweaking of a branding strategy. One key outcome of assessments using this model is – alongside insight into a brand's network of associations - knowledge on which associations actually influence consumers' selection and purchasing behaviour. This kind of research requires greater effort and outlay than traditional (image) studies, but provides far more valuable information. It can, for example, answer the question to what degree a brand is linked to specific meaning, as well as the degree to which that meaning is considered characteristic of that brand. And following on from that: whether that meaning is positive or negative. These questions eventually lead to the key question: which associations lead to a higher rating of a brand and more people buying a brand, and to what extent does a brand manage to evoke such associations?

Reference(s)

- Franzen, G. (2006), *The SWOCC Book of Brand Management Models*, SWOCC, Amsterdam. *
- Franzen, G., Van den Berg, M. (2002), *Strategisch management van merken [Strategic brand management]*. Kluwer, Deventer. *

* : Available in the EURIB library.