

Model: Means-End Analysis

Type of model: Brand model (structure and process model)
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 Domain: Identity and Image

Means-end analysis provides a way of defining how (1) concrete features (attributes) of a product or service can be abstracted into brand values, and (2) how brand values can, in turn, be converted into concrete customer contacts. Means-end theory departs from the given that people give *meaning* to everything they see, hear, etc. And from the given that we subconsciously store these meanings in existing mental *schemata*. We do this with every person we meet (also referred to as stereotyping or ‘pigeon-holing’ people), but we also give meaning to our observations of products and brands. The underlying model for means-end analysis is the so-called means-end chain. Figure 1 depicts the structure of the means-end chain.

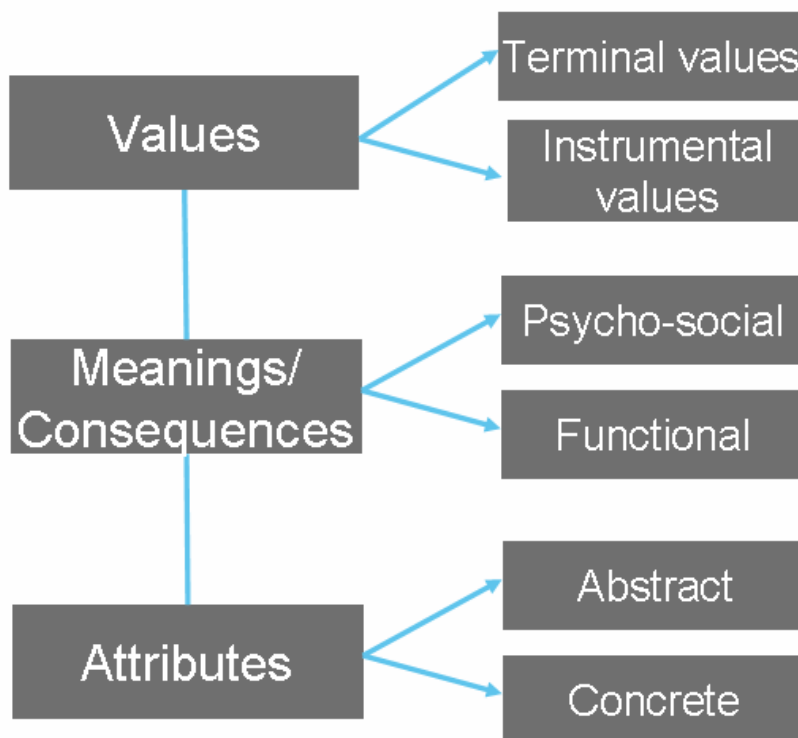


Figure 1: Structure of the means-end chain.

The structure of the means-end chain consists of three levels with two sub-levels each.

1. Values or goals¹:
 - a. terminal values: the values people want to pursue in their lives;
 - b. instrumental values: the way in which people seek to realize the terminal values in their lives.
2. Meanings/consequences:
 - a. psycho-social consequences: the way in which a consumer can use certain product or service features in a psycho-social context;
 - b. functional consequences: the consequences of the use of a product or service by a consumer.
3. Product or service characteristics:
 - a. abstract characteristics or benefits of the use of a product or service;
 - b. concrete features (attributes) of the product or service.

In practice, all six levels rarely converge in one product or brand. A straightforward example of a means-end chain for a product is a crisps brand that has added a specific flavouring to its crisps that leads people to eat less of them:

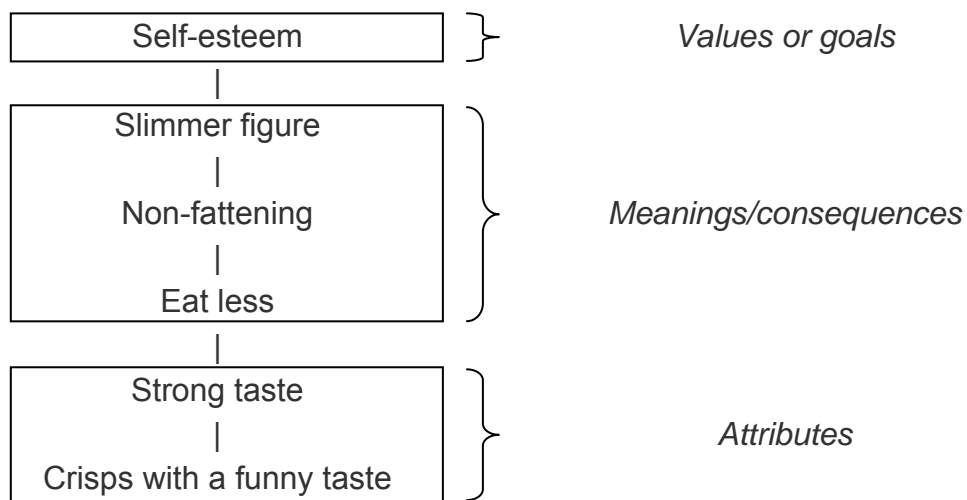


Figure 2: An example of a means-end chain

In this example, crisps with an unusual taste sensation (taste as a ‘negative benefit’) cause you to cut down on them, making eating crisps less fattening, leading to you maintaining a slimmer figure, which eventually helps boost your self-esteem. In a market – as with individual brands – there is more than one means-end chain. Several means-end chains can be grouped together in a so-called value map. Figure 3 is an example of such a value map.

¹: Appendix 1 to this document includes two comprehensive lists of values.

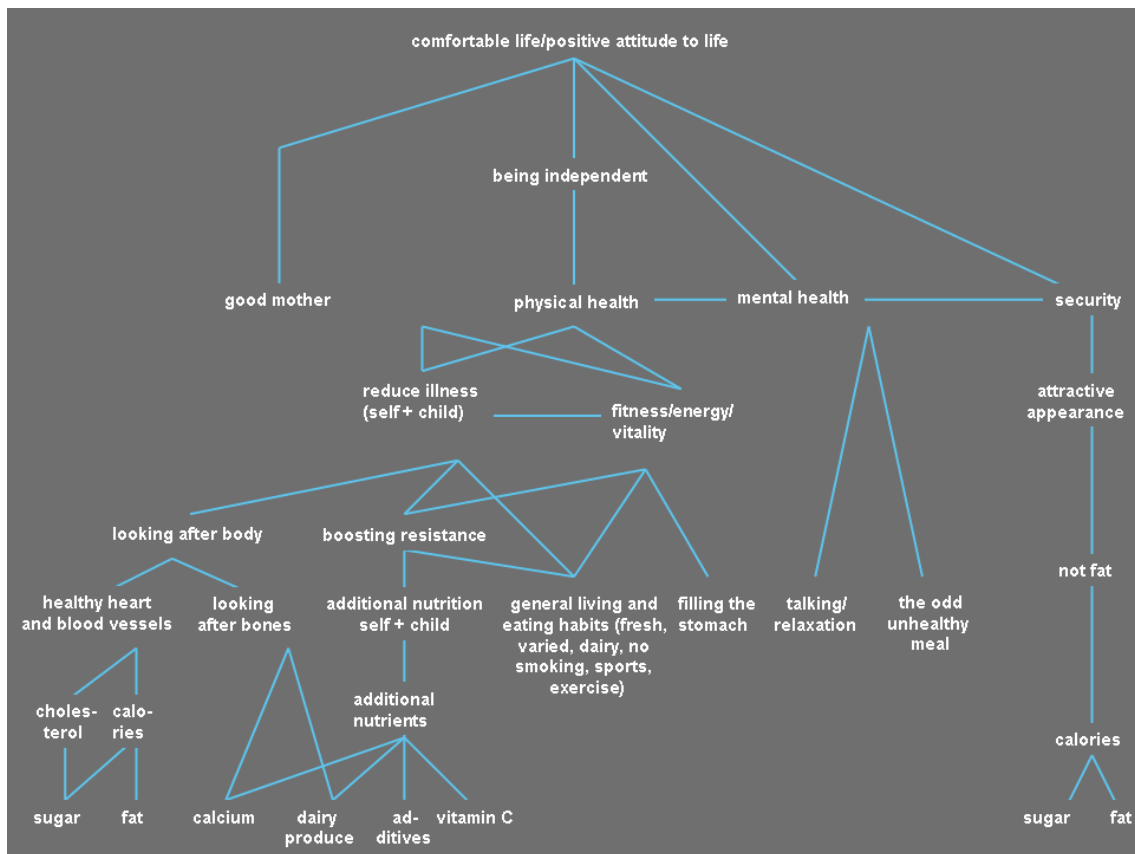


Figure 3: A fictitious example of a value map for dairy products

When making a value map, you can distinguish between one for a market or a product class, and a value map for a brand within that market. By first drawing up a value map for a market, a brand manager will be in a prime position to then select which means-end chains he/she wants to base his brand means-end chain on within this value map. So where the brand is concerned, it is all about claiming a specific part of a value map for a market. For example: car maker Volvo has been claiming the value ‘safety’ with sub-levels (ABS, safety cage etc.) for years, whereas Volkswagen claims reliability, and Seat sporty.

In order to come to a value map, you will have to interview consumers. The technique developed for that is referred to as *laddering*. Laddering is based on the ‘Why question’; a respondent in an interview is asked why a certain attribute is important to him/her, and subsequently why the reason he/she gave is important to him, etc. etc. Laddering is often used in combination with grouping exercises, such as:

1. Kelly’s Repertory Grid;
2. Natural Grouping.

Kelly's Repertory Grid method presents a consumer with *three* products or (cards with) brand names, and then asks him/her which two he/she feels make the best match, and why the third one does not fit in. This question can be repeated a number of times (there are three possible brand combinations here), always followed by the 'Why question' (i.e. 'why do these two match, and does the other not fit in?'). Natural grouping involves more than three products or brand names, making for considerably more possible matches than with the Repertory Grid (the maximum number of matches in Natural Grouping depends on the number of products or brand names used).

Laddering can take two different approaches. Firstly, asking bottom-up questions. This involves the interviewer asking which attributes a consumer considers relevant and why, etc. The interviewer is then out to compile a means-end chain from the bottom up (attributes → meanings → values). And secondly, the interviewer can, as soon as he/ she has an idea of which values are considered important, start targeting the question whether and how a value can be realized in practice. This is the top-down line of questioning (values → consequences → attributes). If the values of a brand are already known, the interviewer can almost right away start asking top-down questions.

Each brand has different 'domains' of customer contacts. An FMCG/ fast-moving consumer goods brand has three: product appearance, marketing communication, and any possible after-sales service. The brand can manifest itself differently in each of these three domains. Even though brand values have to be constant throughout these three domains, the way in which these can be used in a practical context does differ. If an FMCG brand stands for the value 'reliable', for example, this value can be expressed differently on the product's packaging than in marketing communication. Retail formats have more domains to consider than an FMCG brand: product appearance (of the own brand), marketing communication, after-sales service, product range, shop layout, and employee behaviour. When applying means-end analysis, a value map can be compiled for each domain, which sometimes makes this method a rather laborious one.

We should finally also point out that means-end analysis is a technique that managers/ researchers should use with a certain level of creativity. On the one hand because the interview may produce an unexpected means-end chain, which the interviewer will then have to further explore in subsequent interviews (this requires flexibility and willingness to stray from any preset line of questioning). On the other hand, creativity is required because means-end

chains sometimes appear to go against the ‘laws of logic’. We can substantiate that by referring to a specific means-end analysis survey that was done for a retail format. One of the values posited in this survey was ‘reliability’, which was converted into the consequence that the store would provide customers with value for money. In practice, the value was reflected in sharply-priced own brand products, a money back guarantee and no-frills shop fittings. However, in one of the interviews a woman also associated low prices with long queues at the checkout (she figured that low prices meant the supermarket had to cut checkout staff to stay profitable). In follow-up interviews this new finding was further verified, and it emerged that several consumers had the same associations with (rather) long queues at the checkout.

Appendix 1

Please find below two lists of terminal values; the first being the RVS/ Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach 1973) list of 18 terminal values, and the second the LOV/ List of Values (Kahle e.a. 1986) with nine values. These values have been classified on the basis of the three levels from Maslov's hierarchy of needs.

<u>Material & biological</u>	<u>Relational</u>	<u>Self-actualization</u>
Freedom	Mature love	Self-respect
Security	Friendship	Equality
Peace	Comfortable life	World of beauty
Pleasure	Happiness	Wisdom
An exciting life	Accomplishment	Inner harmony
Family security	Social recognition	Salvation
Excitement	Sense of belonging	Self-fulfilment
Fun & enjoyment	Being well respected	Self-respect
Security	Warm relationships	
Sense of accomplishment	with others	

Reference(s)

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* : available in the EURIB library.