

IRRATIONAL ADVOCACY

INDEXSM

3 STAGES OF A PASSION BRAND



DO YOUR CUSTOMERS CAMP OUT THE NIGHT BEFORE A GRAND OPENING?

What turns casual customers into irrational advocates?



Being able to recognize and use emotional data at scale is one of the biggest opportunities created by technology today... Emotional data is the secret sauce behind key moments with customers.

– Deloitte Digital, May 2019

Why are some retailers forced to offer deep discounts, while others charge a premium and can't keep up with demand? Why are some high-performing medical institutions unknown, while others renowned? What about your brand? Do your fans fly your colors? Does your banker find joy in the art of banking?



**DO YOUR
FANS
FLY
YOUR
COLORS?**



**DOES YOUR
BANKER
FIND JOY
IN THE ART
OF BANKING?**

Passion Brands don't build community. They build cults, counter-cultures and crusades. The bar has been raised. Leading brands attain passionate fans who co-create the brand. The future will be built by companies who attain emotional brand equity defined by what we've identified as "Irrational AdvocacySM."

Our findings show this phenomenon does not happen by accident, and it's not beyond the control of a good brand management team. New research and emotionally intelligent technology provides insight to quantify and optimize passionate consumer-brand relationships.

KEY FINDING: *Irrational AdvocacySM is powered by purpose-driven branding*

PASSION BRANDS 2021SM



Introducing the first study on Irrational AdvocacySM

Primary study findings: Apple, Nike, Coca-Cola and Amazon were the top Passion Brands in our study. However, this volume chart is a sample regional report for the midwest only. We found deeper results differ by region. Initially developed with the University of Michigan, in partnership with Daniel Brian Advertising and Traverse Bay Strategy Group, a compendium study was compiled for further exploration.

Few surprises were discovered in the secondary study: Regardless of the study origin, methodology or skew, Apple remained among the top brands, which included some configuration of Nike and Amazon. Considering dimensions of Brand Intimacy, MBLM recently reported Amazon was ranked the most intimate brand, Jeep drove the automotive industry and Meijer didn't show up on the national list. In addition to regional impact, various segments stood out. For example, Chick-fil-A delivered the south as the loved retail chain, especially among women. And, according to Netbase, Instagram was the most loved brand with the most prolific social media advocacy and positive sentiment.

The purpose of this report is not to break down the brand rankings.

That is a separate report. More importantly, the following pages will outline our findings regarding what we believe were the common factors among the top Passion Brands that drove Irrational Advocacy among their consumers..

Compendium Leaders



EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT DIMENSIONALIZED

Diving deeper into the emotional engagement of the Passion Brands, we discovered that few of them exhibited engagement on the same dimension.

For example, Disney scored highest in Nostalgia as the “Best Friend,” building emotion of Trust, whereas Nike scored high as the “Esteemed Hero,” inducing the emotion of Pride. However, Amazon scored high on both ends of the spectrum as the “Celebrated Innovator” and “Committed Partner,” relatively associated with the emotions of feeling both Impressed and Loyal. Interestingly, each of these high scores were second position to Apple, who appeared to aggregate an additive score by leading in every emotional trigger.

VERBATIMS

APPLE

“...ENJOY their innovation”

AMAZON

“...I was with them before it was COOL”

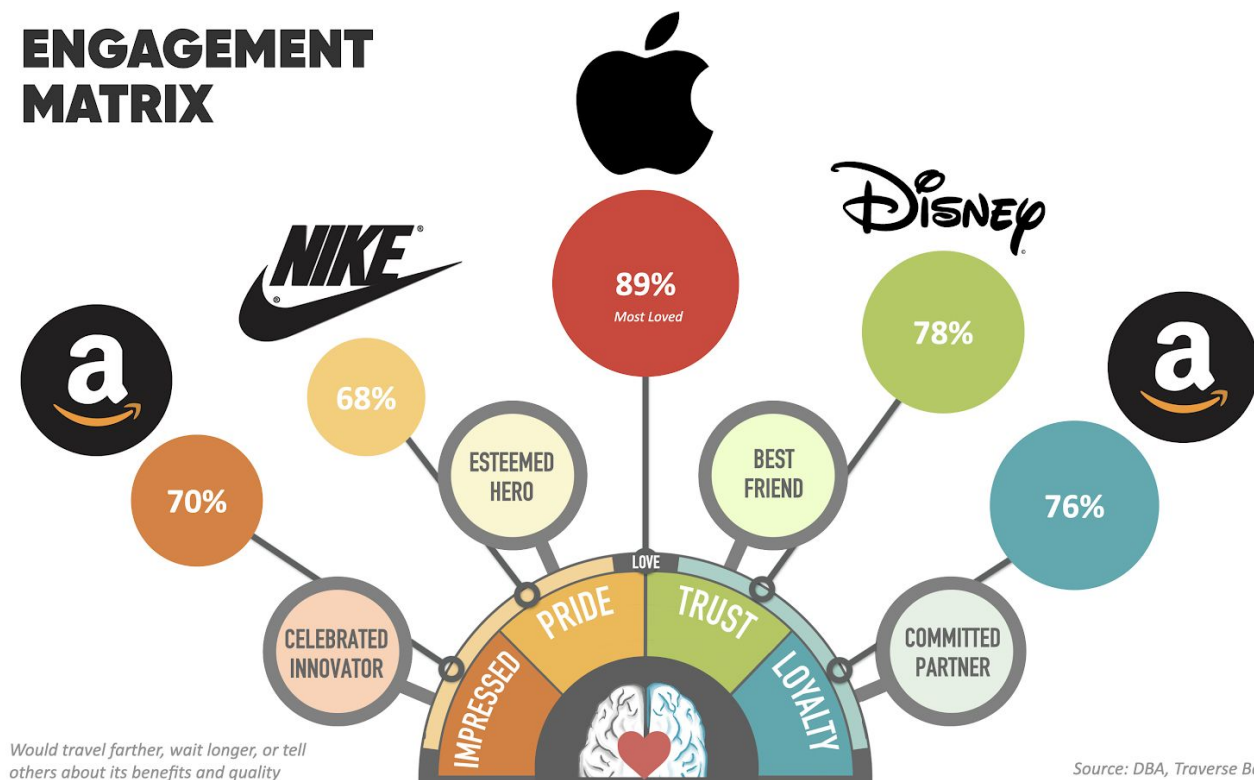
NIKE

“...promotes fitness and WELLBEING”

DISNEY

“...TOGETHERNESS with my family”

ENGAGEMENT MATRIX



Analyzing the verbatims

When we looked at the open-ended comments, we were able to associate the emotional scores with specific drivers of those scores. Words like, “enjoy” and “cool” were used to describe the Passion Brands. Most significantly, we observed recognition for how these brands improved human condition through an impact on “wellbeing” or “togetherness.”

PATHWAY TO IRRATIONAL ADVOCACYSM

Every brand manager wants raving fans who passionately tell their story and co-create meaning to enhance brand value. But, how do we measure the propensity of a brand to achieve such an ambitious goal? To understand the underlying motivations of behavioral branding, we must understand community-brand dynamics.

THREE STAGES OF BRAND LOVE

Consumers progress in three stages of emotional engagement with brands. Not associated with rational brain processing, this emotional phenomenon happens when brand altruism meets consumer identity. Consumer emotions climax in the co-creation of brand value – as an expression of brand love.

1. PRIMAL ATTRACTION – the “seeker”

The first stage of emotional engagement is “primal attraction.” In this disruption of status quo, an emotional trigger is created through an enticing design, storytelling or personal engagement. Most often motivated by an advertisement or branded experience, the consumer becomes a “seeker.” On a mission to collect information, the seeker subconsciously searches for indications of the brand's values and purpose as well as relevance.

2. MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION – the “joiner”

As the consumer recognizes congruence with their personal values, the brand becomes a proxy for self-identification. Evolving from a seeker to a “joiner,” the consumer subscribes to membership with the brand tribe, aligning in co-identification with other people who share the same ideals and values. Importantly, adorning symbols, ceremonies and congregation attendance are contributed as a rite of passage into the tribe.

3. IRRATIONAL ADVOCACYSM – the “co-creator”

In the final stage, consumers experience “resonance,” or a fusion of their desires with the values and vision of the brand. Feeling an emotional obligation to participate in the co-creation of brand value, the passionate members become activists. The need for belonging in the tribe and supporting its values supersedes the desires for temporal brand features and benefits. Like martyrs in a spiritual quest, the evangelism of brand value brings eternal purpose – unleashing personalized exhibitions of brand love.

Purpose Aligns Meaningful Community: *More united around the communal “why” than any self-motivated “what,” the brand becomes the glue for meaningful community with altruistic purpose.*

“The role of the consumer is shifting from passive user to co-creator and active participant in the value process, and the brands are becoming social symbols that signal a coherent group identity. Brand loyalty is determined by the extent to which value congruence exists and the intensity of participation in the brand community and the value creation processes.”

– Hans Ruediger Kaufmann, *Exploring Behavioural Branding, Brand Love and Brand Co-Creation*, 2016

(Cherif and Miled, 2013; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Thomson et al., 2005; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012; Casaló et al., 2008; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Kaufmann et al., 2012.)

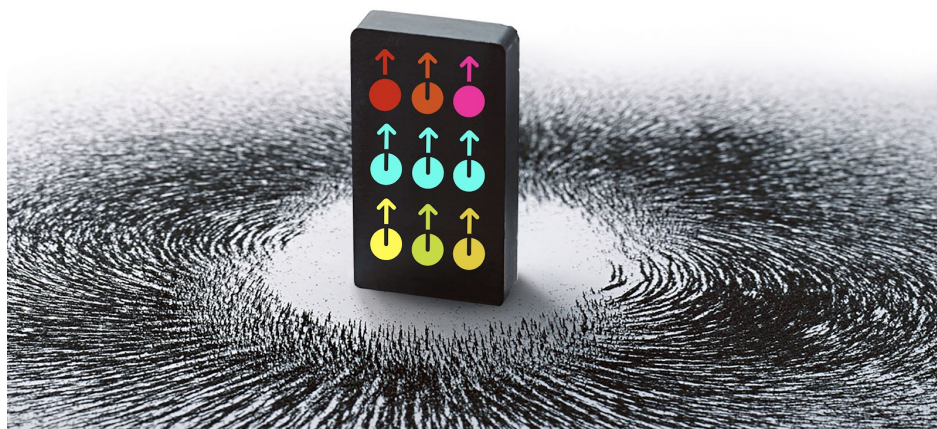


USE PLAIN ENGLISH. WHAT IS RESONANCE?

Resonance? Fusion? Co-Identification? What the heck are we talking about? Psychology language aside, let's explain what this means in the real world.

Let's start with the following analogy. What's the difference between a hunk of iron and a magnet?

ALIGNMENT



When electrons at the atomic level align in the same direction, a dead chunk of iron becomes a magnet. Spun in motion, this magnet becomes a generator that can light up a city. Human emotions work the same way. Shared emotional triggers in the human brain create alignment of potential energy in a group.

Resonance is emotional harmony. It's a unity of human energy toward a common cause or from a common experience. That's why we love to experience music as a group. We resonate together when we share the same love for a sound. Entire stadiums full of people love to join in an emotional climax at a sporting event. We resonate in cheering, clapping and stomping when we all love the same team.

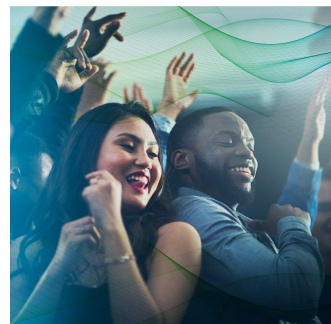
Beyond the roar of a crowd, humanity is at its best when it becomes united in emotional energy to leave a mark on history. It's the emotion of love when two people passionately join in intimacy. Emotions can be a powerful energy that can drive a loved one to suffer or even die for another. Conversely, intimacy has no power when only one of the participants is feeling emotional energy.

By combining emotions and aligning their directional force toward a common vision, mission or values construct, humans gain unrelenting power as a group.

Employed effectively, "resonance" promotes the customer to the creative department, working on the behalf of the brand.

It is broadly believed that emotions are the basis for 80 percent of the decisions a person makes in a day; yet — beyond marketing — very few organizations sufficiently and intentionally act upon how and when emotions impact customers' connection and loyalty to a brand. The ability to leverage emotionally intelligent platforms to recognize and use emotional data at scale is one of the biggest, most important opportunities for companies going forward.

– Deloitte Digital, May 2019



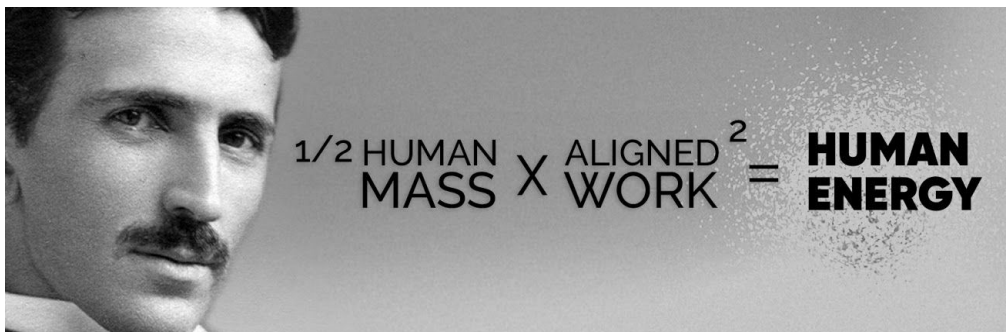
When this alignment or “fusion” takes place, consumer passion is no longer derived from the inanimate object the brand produces, such as a shoe by Nike, or a watch from Apple. It’s driven by the cause of the brand community which those adorning symbols represent. We call this power, “Brand Energy.”

THE POWER OF EMOTION

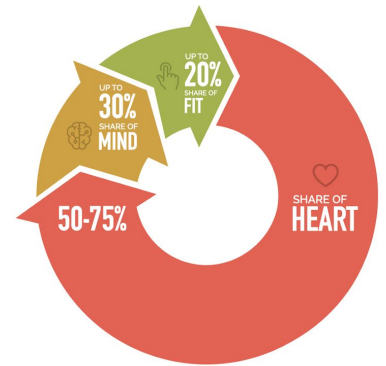
BRAND ENERGY: While the exponential energy of group unity is part of our equation, we needed a model to understand what drives brand love at an individual level. We discovered it in the groundbreaking study performed by Forrester Research¹ titled Brand Energy. In it, 4,436 U.S. adults were studied to determine what drives brand engagement, recall, price sensitivity, loyalty and advocacy. For current customers, half of the impact was attributed to emotion, but for non-customers, emotion accounted for 75% of brand engagement. This finding inspired further study on the subject of group dynamics and emotional alignment.

HUMAN ENERGY: Consider the inventor of electromagnetic systems that drive the world’s power grid. Nikola Tesla’s early scientific marvels are just beginning to be understood. Later, turning his ideas toward social progress, Tesla insisted emotional feelings are not a flaw in the human design, but a multiplying force for change.

Viewing all humanity as part of a collective organism destined for unity, he called it “the human mass.” Like a great generator of electricity, he believed the secret to human progress is found in resonance. In the 1800s, he predicted humanity would become united wirelessly, first by devices held in our pockets – then united in our cause, exponential progress would take place, automating all laborious work, ending hunger and launching a path to world peace.



Tesla’s study eventually caused him to believe that two or more people in passionate alignment don’t merely double the impact of their work, but have an exponential power for change. Tesla viewed human alignment toward a common cause as a metaphysical energy governed by the same laws of nature that power a train or light up a city. Let’s set aside the metaphysical implications of human “oneness.” For our purposes, the metaphorical and philosophical lessons alone offer a profound model to rebrand a business, renew a marriage – or even heal a nation.



BRAND ENERGY

50-75% emotion

“Share of Heart” is based on passionate purpose/values

Up to 30% salience

“Share of Mind” is based on traditional top-of-mind awareness

Up to 20% fit

“Share of Fit” is relevant brand experience, features & benefits

“Conceive, then, man as a mass urged on by a force...and the energy associated with this mass can be measured, in accordance with well-known principles...In like manner we may conceive of human energy being measured by half the human mass multiplied with the square of the velocity.”

– Nikola Tesla

CULTS, COUNTER-CULTURES AND CRUSADES

In addition to an emotional connection, certain components were found to be necessary among leading brands before Irrational Advocacy can exist. These traits are most commonly found in religion: ***Irrational Advocacy is often accompanied by shared “isms,” adorning symbols, gestures of love, ceremony and rituals.***

Employees don't become evangelists without ceremony or sacraments.

Customers don't become co-creators without a clearly articulated cause. It must be demonstrated in the brand culture, provide values alignment and reside in authentic community, best described as a congregation.



VALUES DRIVE VALUE

Meaningful brands gain 46% more share of wallet than brands people don't care about. Brands that hold ideals to improve the human condition have proven market returns 400% higher than the market. And, purpose-based companies outpace their direct competitors by as much as 35 times.

Achieving unity around common ideals, the community comes to “resonance” for the cause. Finally compelled to believe the interest of the group is fused with self interest, members transcend their needs and become morally obligated as co-creators of the movement. ***In uncomplicated words, they fall in love.***

Consider the Harley-Davidson logo, the second most common tattoo found on riders, only after “mom.” Identity symbols and gestures of love are equally found among Jeep owners, who proudly salute with the “Jeep Wave” and join the local Jeep Jamboree with family and friends.

Bearing T-Shirts and other symbols of love for Nike or Adidas, brand members express their connectedness through their attire, while the Starbucks faithful wouldn't be caught drinking from a coffee cup without the symbol of their love on it. The emerging activist buyers support the community with their daily purchases as a moral matter, ritualistically going back to reaffirm their faithfulness with a review on Amazon.com, where even a negative review of a product is a positive experience with the Amazon brand.



Passion Brands hold ideals that align to consumers' values. They retain strong cultures and are more profitable, with returns 400% higher than the market.

Of course, the opposite is also true. When a brand's culture opposes its stated values, this can make the culture look schizophrenic and even offend consumers. This produces lower returns. Political argument is an example of such a retarding force. Working against the progress of society, one group on the left vehemently opposing the other on the right – This is a perfect cancellation of force.



"People who find meaning in their work don't hoard their energy and dedication. They give them freely, defying conventional economic assumptions about self-interest. They grow rather than stagnate. They do more — and they do it better."

– Harvard Business Review

This explains why so many talented organizations are dysfunctional. Alignment is more important than talent. The worst hire a company can make is a talented person who works against it. Emotional energy can go both ways. One social post by one rogue employee can undermine established brand values. In contrast, when brand values are reinforced throughout each encounter, healthy relationships and trust rule employee behavior.

Why does advertising often fail to produce Irrational Advocates? Most often, advertising offers no message of moral consequence. Too many ad managers ignore their feelings and overthink the message, adding proof points, products and logos where they don't belong. This is why so many ads fail the consumer sniff test. Nothing is worse than a self-centered advertisement that pushes product, but hurts the brand. How can we put this more bluntly?

POPULAR KIDS DON'T BRAG

**CONFIDENT PEOPLE DON'T BOAST ABOUT THEIR PROOF POINTS
SO, WHY SHOULD YOUR ADVERTISING?**

Have we all forgotten the basic social skills from high school? The best way to make friends is to show interest in the other person. The best way to make enemies is to extol the virtues of yourself and show off. This holds true for purpose-based branding. It's not about proving your moral superiority, God forbid.

As confucius said, "There is one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life - Reciprocity."

RECIPROCITY IN MARKETING?

Passion Brands celebrate the values of the hero in their story: The customer. Nike celebrates heroic athletes who overcame incredible obstacles to victory. Apple celebrates those who "Think Different," and who are "crazy enough to think they can change the world." Amazon celebrates consumer reviews. Not their own self-aggrandized opinion. Passion Brands celebrate their consumer, and trust the law of reciprocity to work on their behalf.

This is how brands like Apple, Nike and Coca-Cola consistently win the race of emotional brand equity. These brands don't lead with the features and benefits of a shoe design or the price of a bottle of Coke. Coke leads with happiness, afterall. Watch the most mimicked commercial of the 2020 coronavirus epidemic. In "Creativity Goes On," Apple didn't lead with the processing power of its products or a price promotion. In fact, by ignoring the product and focusing on the everyday heroes who used it to overcome their lockdown, Apple became the champion of everyday heroes.



People don't find love in an inanimate object. The reason people love brands is not for the features and benefits, but for their values. Objects are temporal, but values are eternal.

Don't pass the plate: If you want to have a cult following, your brand will need to find religion on this issue. A great cult leader doesn't gain followers by preaching about his own virtue or passing the donation plate. People join movements because members have been drawn to a positive and hopeful message about themselves.



"The best example of all and one of the greatest jobs of marketing the universe has ever seen is Nike. Remember, Nike sells a commodity. They sell shoes. And yet, when you think of Nike. You feel something different than a shoe company. In their ads, as you know, they don't ever talk about their products. They don't ever tell you about their air soles or why they are better than Reebok's air soles. What does Nike do in their advertising? They honor great athletes and they honor great athletics. That's who they are. That's what they are about."

– Steve Jobs

GENERATING SHARE OF FANSSM

Don't merely create ads. Capture movements.

In our study, we designed a tool to help brand managers cut through the noise and hone in on the pure signal of 5 key dimensions of brand passion:

TOP FUNNEL: *Capture Seekers*

SHARE OF ATTENTION: Viewing an average of 1,300 digital ads per month, 82% of consumers ignore them (Harris Interactive, 2018). This sobering statistic reminds us of the importance of disrupting the status quo with emotional content that gains attention at the right place, right time and with the proper amount of investment weight. Primal Attraction begins here.

MID FUNNEL: *Build Joiners*

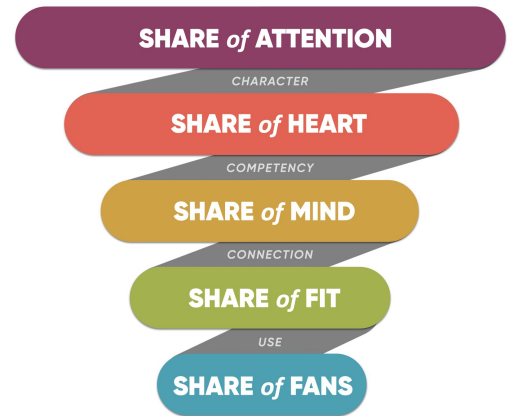
SHARE OF HEART: Passion brands build co-identity with brand tribes by celebrating the values and vision of the consumers who are the heroes of the brand. Over time, emotional engagement becomes translated into nostalgia, which represents long-term brand value. Try to avoid promoting products or services as you engage a conversation around values. Put simply, if you want to protect your personal brand don't ask a girl to marry you on the first date. She wants to know your brand values and vision first.

SHARE OF MIND: Awareness is grown by repetition. By dating. This is a volume game that uses "more" as the tactical advantage. More visibility. More media mentions. More regular, ongoing engagements with the brand tribe in their daily life. Passion Brands become part of the consumer ritual. They provide opportunities for members to subscribe to the brand by bestowing badges, symbols, loyalty rewards and free entertainment.

SHARE OF FIT: Relevance is developed by understanding consumer needs and addressing them with product and promotional solutions. Don't forget the "wow" emotion. It's important to use breakthrough innovation to build moments of amazement with remark-worthy services and products. Then you can provide proof points, promotional offers and finally ask for the sale.

BOTTOM FUNNEL: *Engage Co-Creators*

SHARE OF FANS: Never be satisfied by taking the sale. Allow customers to co-create brand value. Create places where they can review your products, reinforcing consumer satisfaction after the purchase. Provide platforms to share and venues to promote your product on your behalf. Once they are emotionally engaged, potential advocacy has been generated. Potential brand energy must be converted to kinetic brand energy. Beyond social likes and shares, Irrational Advocates produce remark-worthy acts of brand love.



"AdAge declared back in March, 2015 that 'ROI is dead. A new metric is needed for customer relationships.' But how do you manage and measure emotions? Brand engagement is won or lost on emotions."

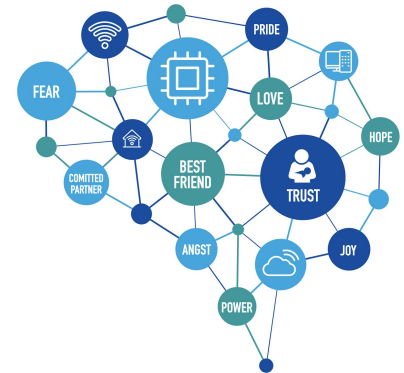
– Ashley Freeman, *How Do You Measure Feelings? Emotions & Brand Engagement*, 2015

CO-CREATION ENDS CONFLICT AND CONFUSION

So, if our brand culture is out of alignment, where do we start? Start with one simple principle for your value creation model:

People tend to support things they help create.

Co-workers and customers want to co-create meaningful goals with brands they love. Using this powerful lever, leading brands align thousands of influencers, instead of merely a few dozen leaders at the top. Co-creation is not dictated from the boardroom. Top-down imposed values rarely get adopted. Through mutual value ideation and co-creation of the brand, stakeholders invent their own message and the brand experience in wonderful ways leadership could not have predicted or enforced.



The human brain uses between 60% to 80% of its processing power on prediction. When the brain predicts positive outcomes, it creates the emotion of trust. The predictive analytics of the brain tend to trust its own intuition better than others, therefore the consumer brain is more likely to support its own ideas, regardless of their efficacy.

HIRE PARTNERS – NOT EMPLOYEES

According to a Gallup poll, 70 percent of employees are not engaged or, worse, actively disengaged. Up to half of 100 million workers are essentially "checked out" and don't really care if their companies succeed or not.

Passion Brands don't hire employees. They hire partners. Partners don't respond well to being told what to do, but by finding agreement on the "why." They want to be trusted with the "how." In our study of the phenomenon of Irrational Advocacy, we've discovered stakeholders went above and beyond the call of duty for the brand because they internalized the brand values as their own. Brand identity and the employee identity became one and the same.

*Recently a Cambridge Massachusetts study of 38,000 workers found there is one thing that makes employees happier, effective and more loyal: **employers who treat them like a partner.***

Aligned groups of volunteer contributors among churches, political parties, and military platoons need no step-by-step instructions or outside leadership once resonance takes hold. Each person, governed from within, will inevitably make each micro-decision to drive change toward the same greater cause – as if coordinated to do so. By giving trust, trust is returned.

CONCLUSIONS:

Irrational Advocacy puts the power of branding in the hands of the customer. It is most often achieved through purpose-driven branding. For Passion Brands, brand building is not a poster-making exercise. It's a participatory team-building exercise for solving alignment problems and creating unity of values and vision. First by employees, then consumers. The major findings are:

1. PASSION BRANDS EMBRACE THE POWER OF EMOTION: Emotions are not a flaw in the human design, nor should they be used for consumer manipulation. Emotions are predictive analytics, such as trust and brand love. Consumers use their emotions to predict fair treatment by the brands, and they weigh these predictions based on an alignment to the values and vision of a brand, rather than the features and benefits of the brand product.

2. PASSION BRANDS UNIFY ON VALUES & VISION: Passion Brands such as Apple, Nike and Coca-Cola act like religions. They create a vision of a better world, where everyday heroes make a difference. They gain Irrational Advocacy because they don't underestimate the power of a unifying cause. Their message is not built on features and benefits such as processing power, flavor, sturdy materials or even price promotions. Passion Brands, who gained 70% of the "most loved" rankings built their brands on promotion of a world-changing vision of the future or aspirational values such as simplicity & innovation (Apple & Amazon), happiness (Coca-Cola) or inspiration for victory (Nike).

3. PASSION BRANDS DON'T BRAG OR "PASS THE PLATE:" They follow the law of reciprocity. People believe in brands that believe in them. Consumer emotions are a powerful agent to detect brand intent. By simply doing the right thing by their customers, Passion Brands add value to their lives without expectation. They offer inspiration with their advertising by investing in the users of their products or service and relying on consumer emotions to judge the brand fairly. This builds the most powerful predictive emotion in the human brain - TRUST.

4. PASSION BRANDS LEVERAGE CO-CREATION: Passion Brands are not built by the corporate leadership alone, but by participation of every employee at every level, and by the consumer as well. Passion brands "think backwards." They envision the end, and the stakeholders make it so. The most powerful brands share symbols of brand love and engage in ceremonies that bring brand tribes together for co-creation of brand value – toward a universal human cause.

"If you don't trust others, you make them untrustworthy.... When the master governs, the people are hardly aware that he exists. When the master leads, he doesn't talk, he acts. When his work is done, the people say "Amazing, we did it all by ourselves."

– Lao Tzu
(teacher of Confucius)

"The greatest gift God ever gave man is not the gift of sight, but the gift of vision."

– Myles Munroe

Is it time to energize your brand?

In a branding exercise, internal culture building is mission critical. Branding exercises should happen regularly and should take advantage of your collective intelligence. If it's been a few years, your team has probably fallen out of alignment.

JOIN A WEBINAR FOR THE FULL STUDY

CONTACT US if you would like to have your brand participate in the 2021 study or if you would like to create a custom study to learn more about how you can increase brand advocacy and co-creation for your organization.

danielbrian.com

248.601.5222

contact@danielbrian.com

RECOMMENDED READING



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SOURCES

PRIMARY STUDY: Irrational Advocacy IndexSM, Passion Brands 2020SM

– © Daniel Brian Advertising® in partnership with Traverse Bay Strategy Group, in partnership with the University of Michigan

By Daniel Brian Cobb and Michael Wilberding, 2020 – <https://danielbrian.com/>

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Definition of Co-Creation: Co-creation is defined by the study as "an active social process of collaboration, sharing and participation in the context of the community, leads to loyalty." The belief from initial study is that moving a buyer to a co-creator is primarily a matter of aligning the values of the brand with the employees and buyers in resonance with the brand. This creates a salient social identity with a "consciousness of kind, a feeling that binds every individual to the other community members and separates them from the non-members..." culminating in a "sense of moral responsibility" to the group."

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Based on a study by Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton, brands that apply the principles of behavioral economics outperform their peers by 85% in sales growth and 25% in gross margin.

Emotions act like a moral compass. The brain uses 60-80 percent of its energy on prediction.

<https://www.sciencefocus.com>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5669377/>



**"THE MOST SUCCESSFUL
CULT BRANDS CREATE A SORT
OF FLYWHEEL EFFECT, WHEREIN
CUSTOMER EVANGELISM
ESSENTIALLY CO-OPTS
– OR ENTIRELY REPLACES –
TRADITIONAL SALES
AND MARKETING."**

– Bloomberg BusinessWeek, July 2020