



BRAND HARMONY

The concept of ensuring all components within a brand portfolio have a consistent name, visual identity and positioning among several geographic or product/service markets. In other words, is your product experience meeting the promise and expectation delivered by its sensory cues.



A Birds-Eye View of Brand Harmony

Every company has a brand, from a small business like HCD to a large conglomerate with hundreds of unique brands under its umbrella. Each brand has a unique personality created through communications set forth, services provided and/or products produced. **Every interaction with a brand**, from ad exposure to usage, **is an opportunity for evaluation**. Expectations entice buying behavior. Repurchase is driven through consumer satisfaction and met expectations.

The purpose of brand harmony is to ensure that all the inputs within a brand are telling a universal narrative. In order to achieve this harmony, everything from product design and marketing must be cohesive- the expectations consumers develop must meet the perceptions of their experience. While it seems obvious, it is often easier said than done. Imagine walking into a store to purchase fruit punch, seeing a bottle designed with oranges, apples and pineapples, but having it taste like coffee. The lack of congruency causes the company to be redefined by the consumer. It is important to note that changes in perception are influenced by both the product and marketing components of the experience. Regardless of how great the product is, the consumer will not appreciate it if the marketing fails to entice the consumer to buy the product. On the other hand, if the consumer does buy the product and is unimpressed with the experience, it is unlikely the consumer will repurchase.

Each consumer reserves the right to his/her own opinion about a brand, yet it is the company that has the power to position itself in a specific way to compliment consumer wants or needs. The role of brand identity allows a company to share its distinct story so that it will be understood by consumers. Through careful communication and insightful objectives, the intention and the perception of a brand can sync up—creating what HCD refers to as “Brand Harmony.”

Managing a Company Web of Goals

Each function within a company is striving for specific goals and milestones. While these different innerworkings, such as R&D or marketing, have individualized roles, a high-level objective can help these teams work as a collective. Breaking down silos to communicate among departments will help ensure harmony. Having a direction in brand development gives context for the internal team to understand or tease apart the relevance of their work (Glenda, 2011). Something as simple as developing a set theme of attributes to focus on will provide a simple guideline for navigating how to create authentic communications about the actual product.

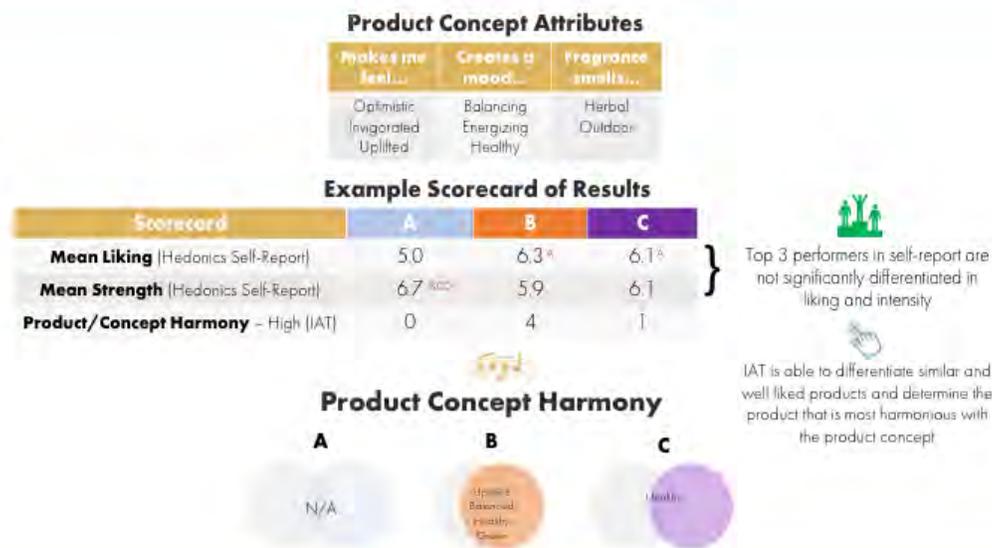
Through both brand and product perceptions blending together, the holistic experience increases brand equity and consumer satisfaction. Additionally, actively working towards a synergistic relationship across all levels of management can provide an opportunity to promote consumer

relationships, better understand limitations, learn areas of potential growth and develop a unified company message (Petromilli & Morrison, 2002).

Creating Product vs Concept Alignment

While it can be challenging to present a unified brand, HCD is able to utilize various neuro-psychological measures to gain an understanding of consumer perception and cohesion. Whether it be a product line extension, renovation or new product concept, prototype, or benchmark, various marketing outputs are often evaluated to ensure each stock keeping unit (SKU) fits within the brand profile. Brand Harmony research additionally exposes potential opportunities based on the associations currently being overlooked that could be advantageous to investigate in the future—essentially, the need gaps.

Associations and perceptions are analyzed frequently through implicit reaction time testing. Expectations must be met by product experience and vice versa. Any disruption can lead to a negative perception, which is why implicit evaluations can be very beneficial for the company. Analyzing interactions between sensory and cognitive perceptual modalities via implicit testing will determine the strength of the association experienced among a set of attributes. The attributes chosen can be driven by emotions, mood or descriptors, providing an understanding of the mental biases or associations connected to the stimuli.



In the example above, three products are tested to determine which submission has the greatest harmony within the product concept attributes. Unlike the self-reports that suggested each product performed similarly and delivered an unclear winner, the implicit test has the advantage of distinguishing the strength of each association pinpointing the most successful prototype to ensure harmony with the product concept.

Comparing the product and association relationship gives a clear indicator of which attributes are fit to concept. Knowing this information, option B is clearly outperforming the other two products by having key attributes match the product experience. Connecting the brand associations with the right product is how the holistic experience is developed, thus promoting overall consumer satisfaction.

Keep Evolving

Brand harmony is a useful backbone to ensure that your brand has an all-encompassing, consistent experience. The mold developed through the reflection of brand harmony can strategically process which decisions will either stray or reinforce the pre-determined expectations. Yet, it is worth noting that aligning with a specific brand identity requires continuous effort. Brand harmony, if utilized correctly, should be dynamic to evolve with the specific target market. **To remain relevant, the company must grow with the consumer.**

Assessing the product experience in conjunction with psychological emotional metrics can provide actionable measures to ensure the overall concept works toward the desired consumer experience. By having the product and marketing complement each other and highlight similar themes, the message is reinforced through brand harmony.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW HCD CAN HELP YOU ENSURE YOUR PRODUCT IS MEETING ITS PROMISE THROUGH BRAND HARMONIZATION, **PLEASE CONTACT** **INFO@HCDI.NET OR CALL 908.788.9393.**

CITATIONS

Petromilli, M., & Morrison, D. (2002). Creating brand harmony. *Marketing Management*, 11(4), 16-20.

Glenda, S.J. (2011). Brand alignment across channels. *Multichannel Merchant*, 28(1), 28-n/a.