

## What Is Your Brand Strength?

By Jim Young

Originally published in eZineArticles

Every organization's primary goal, whether they realize it or not, is to maximize the strength of their brand. We say this because, while an organization may not realize that this is their primary goal, if you were to go through the elements of their brand with them, they would most likely say they want to maximize each of these elements and, further, that doing so is critical to the success of their organization.

So what are the elements that comprise a brand? More simply, what *is* a brand? Different research and brand consultants will have slightly different variations of the elements and the level of importance they assign to each of them in coming up with an overall brand strength score, but most brand strength (or brand health) score models use the same core elements.

The first element we look at is brand awareness. High brand awareness is the foundation for the health and strength of a brand. Without it, all the other brand elements lose much of their importance. There are two types of awareness, unaided and aided. Unaided awareness is that which is top-of-mind, or unprompted. Aided is that which is prompted, from a list of brands which the respondent acknowledges they are aware of (but which they didn't mention unaided). Unaided awareness is more important than aided awareness. Since there is a direct correlation between unaided brand awareness and revenue, a primary goal for any organization is to have the highest unaided brand awareness of any of the competitors in their space. Without high unaided brand awareness, an organization is fighting an uphill battle against competitors that have higher awareness. With high unaided, or top-of-mind, brand awareness, potential customers are much more likely to consider your brand on their next purchase in your category than if you're not top-of-mind. Because of this, high unaided awareness is directly correlated to revenue. While unaided awareness has greater impact on brand strength and revenue, aided awareness still has its importance, because it is a first step in eventually developing unaided awareness. Thus, aided awareness is important, but less important as a brand strength metric than unaided awareness, and thus is assigned a lower weighting.

A second important element comprising the brand and the brand strength score is the strength of associations with the brand on the top purchase drivers. After determining the most important purchase drivers for the category, research is conducted to measure how well each of the competitors is performing on these drivers.

A third key area that we measure to help determine brand strength is future purchase intent, both from current customers (so, for them, it's brand loyalty) and prospective customers. Purchase intent is a strong indicator of perceived overall value of a brand. If a current customer is happy with the product or service, then they will come back. If a prospective customer is likely to consider your brand in the future, it is due to some combination of dissatisfaction with their current brand(s) and a positive perception of your brand. From your perspective, that's a good thing, and an important indicator of future sales.

The fourth and final element that comprises the overall brand strength score is customer satisfaction. We could write an entire paper, or even a book, about the importance of customer satisfaction, but we'll just say for the purposes of this short article that customer satisfaction is an extremely important metric for all organizations to measure, for several reasons. We'll focus though on just two of these reasons. The first is that keeping your customers happy means you *keep* them. Each customer you don't lose is one less new customer you have to spend money on to attract, and it costs six to seven times as much to gain a new customer as it does to retain a current one. Second, a dissatisfied customer is three times as likely to tell others about their dissatisfaction as a satisfied customer is to tell others of their satisfaction. Because of this fact, a rising level of dissatisfaction both degrades the organization's brand esteem (which in turn makes prospective customers less likely to consider your brand) as well as directly impacts the bottom line due to the additional customer acquisition costs incurred resulting from the lost customers.

By using brand strength models like the one we employ with our clients, organizations have a strong tool to assess their brand's strength as well as the information they need to improve their position against the competition, increase sales, and build sustainable success.