‘The essential brand book: Over 100 techniques to increase brand value’

by Iain Ellwood

Kogan Page, London; 2000; ISBN 07494-32769; 288pp; hardback; £19.95

Any book that has in its title ‘the essential’, grabs the interest and attention of most readers. But after raising expectations that this is a ‘must read’ book, does Iain Ellwood meet expectations? In a short answer, yes.

Iain has devised a well-structured, lucidly explained book, that provides a refreshingly insightful perspective on brand building. He grounds the material in the growing literature on brand management and exemplifies his points through copious examples. One could be pedantic and observe that the vast literature on brand marketing is not addressed in detail — but to do so would miss the contribution of this text. It is not a state of the art review, rather it is a wisely conceived discourse of the principles involved in strengthening brands. The reader is treated to a rich variety of examples that crisply show how critical branding principles can be employed to engender long-term brand success.

Each chapter opens with clear signposting, enabling the reader rapidly to appreciate what to expect. The author has devised a novel visual structure that shows where the reader is in the brand-strengthening journey. Not only does Iain explore how branding principles can be best engaged in the current environment, but bravely puts his neck out to

postulate ideas about brand building in an e-environment.

The book is divided into four logically linked sections. The first addresses the important issue of brand communication and extends brand thinking into the services sector. The second section, brand definitions, provides useful models to conceptualise the unique nature of brands. The third section treads the well-trodden domain of brand equity, initially looking at how legislation can help protect any inherent goodwill, then how the brand’s financial value can be assessed. The last section, brand strategy, considers scope for leveraging the brand, researching brands and the critical role of the CEO as a brand manager.

The material in this book is frequently portrayed through a plethora of well-presented models that rapidly enable the reader to appreciate how a variety of concepts can be harnessed to stimulate brand growth.

Overall, this is a well-conceived text that should stimulate ideas among busy executives about routes for growing their brands. It combines well-grounded models with pragmatic application to show the reader how brands can be nurtured.

Leslie de Chernatony
Editorial Board

'Advertising and the mind of the consumer: What works, what doesn't and why'

by Max Sutherland and Alice K Sylvester

Kogan Page, London; 2000; 2nd edition; ISBN 07494-29771; 326pp; paperback; £16.99

This collaborative effort between Max Sutherland and Alice Sylvester succeeds in taking the jargon-heavy issues of consumer behaviour and psychology and rendering them digestible to a practitioner audience. It is the authors' backgrounds that allows them to achieve this. Sutherland is Professor of Marketing at Monash University and Swinburne University of Technology in Australia, a former editor of the *Australian Marketing Researcher*, a former chairman of the Market Research Society of Australia, and former Chairman and Creative Director of NFO Market-Mind, a subsidiary of NFO Worldwide. His academic/consultancy background is complemented by Sylvester's practitioner experience as Vice President, Account Planning Director, Foote, Cone and Belding in Chicago; she has also worked for advertising agencies Young & Rubicam, Inc., Leo Burnett, and J. Walter Thomson. It is an impressive combination of talents and the book's resonance can largely be attributed to the diversity of experience which each author brings.

In a readable but not superficial style, Sutherland and Sylvester take a down-to-earth approach to demystifying the advertising business and process. The book is divided into two main parts. Part A goes un-

der the general heading, 'Why advertising has remained a mystery for so long' with sub-sections focusing on issues such as 'Influencing people: myths and mechanisms', 'The advertising message: oblique and indirect', 'Silent symbols and badges of identity', and 'Vicarious experience and virtual reality'. Having demystified the psychological and social mechanisms of advertising in Part A, the authors proceed in Part B, 'What works, what doesn't, and why', to evaluate the real-life effectiveness of advertising. The second part of the book has a more how-to-do-it feel than the first part, and will be of interest both to those already working in advertising and also to companies faced with commissioning advertising.

A central contention of the authors regarding the effectiveness and power of advertising is that, overall, the power of advertising has been overstated, with mysterious and suspicious potency attributed to the manipulative nature of the advertising function. In reality, claim Sutherland and Sylvester, advertising's power is much more limited than its opponents fear:

'Advertising's effectiveness has been much exaggerated. At the same time, this effectiveness is based on what seems to be

powerful psychological mechanisms: learning without awareness, making brands into symbols, having people see a brand in different ways, the influence of conformity, and the use of brands to express identity. So why is advertising not more powerful than it is?

This rhetorical question is answered in terms of competitors' advertising, budget limitations, resistance to change, and cognitive consistency.

It might appear strange for someone like Sylvester, employed in the world of advertising, to be seen to be downplaying the power of advertising. The authors are seeking, however, to put advertising's power into perspective by denying and disproving the inflated claims made both by some advertising professionals and also by anti-advertising conspiracy theorists. The power of advertising resides not in spectacular persuasive ability but rather in an incremental process of brand differentiation:

'As with the amount by which our kids grow in a day, we are just not aware of the small differences advertising can make. Even though these imperceptibly small changes in time add up to significant effects, individual increments are too small for us to notice. They are below the just noticeable difference (JND). Through the process of repetition, these small increments can produce major perceived differences between brands, but we are rarely aware of the process taking place.'

This willingness to acknowledge the limits of advertising while at the same time identifying its true potential lends much credibility to the book. Some advertising professionals might feel a little uneasy at the tricks of their trade being illuminated so publicly, but the

interested observer will enjoy being explained the jargon and mechanisms of the business. Using brands such as Kit Kat, Campbell's Soup, L'Oreal, AT&T, Toyota, Boots, and Nike, the authors demonstrate the use of cues that help increase the saliency of a brand:

'One way advertising can use cues is by tying a brand to something that frequently recurs in the ordinary environment. There are many common words, expressions, symbols or tunes that can be developed by means of repetition into mnemonic devices that trigger recollection of the brand.'

The question of saliency is also looked at in terms of brand attributes:

'The chain of associations (visual and verbal) that a brand automatically triggers in our mind can be ranked in the order in which they are triggered, with the most salient ones at the top. This is the attribute agenda ... One of the most important aspects of advertising, then, is to play the focal beam of attention on a particular attribute and make that attribute more salient for us when we think of the brand. In other words, advertising influences the attribute agenda for a brand by rearranging the order in which we think of its attributes.'

Another way in which advertising works is in affecting a brand's perceived popularity, which is, according to the authors, an important dimension of image:

'Advertising makes the brand *appear* popular. It influences its perceived popularity. The more a brand is advertised, the more popular and familiar it is perceived to be ... We as consumers somehow infer that a product is popular simply because it is advertised. The psychological mechanism behind this is known as the *false fame effect*.'

This noting of the *false fame effect* leads on to a discussion of the bandwagon effect:

‘People tend to climb on the bandwagon of anything that seems to be gaining in popularity. If a new brand begins to acquire “high visibility” and is seen as something that “everyone is talking about” or that “more and more people are using”, this can be an attraction, a “come-on”, a temptation for us to try it too.’

The authors point out that there is also a flipside to the bandwagon effect in that, if a product is seen to be used by too many people, then it risks being perceived as ‘common’ and hence undesirable.

With chapters on advertising activities such as continuous tracking, new product launches, what happens when you stop advertising, learning to use 15-second TV commercials, ‘underweight advertising: execution anorexia’, why radio ads aren’t recalled, and measurement of advertising effects in memory, the book is a rich source of information and expert comment. Received wisdom is demolished where necessary and the scope and power of advertising is rescued from the exaggerated claims ritually made of it.

Keith Dinnie
Book Review Editor

'Another one bites the grass: Making sense of international advertising'

by Simon Anholt

John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York; 2000; ISBN 0471-35488-0; 326pp; hardback; \$29.95

This is a marvellous book. Predicated on the belief that many businesses which are currently embracing globalisation are doing so in a way that fails to understand the needs and feelings of the culture they are attempting to reach, 'Another One Bites the Grass' attempts to show companies how to market successfully to a foreign culture while maintaining brand integrity. Author Simon Anholt states that the aim of the book is 'to show how to harness the power of language, culture, brands and creativity in order to achieve the best advertising in the world — it's about ways of celebrating and exploiting the enormous difficulties they represent, rather than seeing them as obstacles to be jumped over or weaseled around at any cost'. Received wisdom is demolished at regular intervals, in chapters with titles such as 'The Trouble with Words', 'Global Brand or Global Bland?', and 'Network = Notwork'.

Although the book's focus is primarily on international advertising and the mechanics of delivering global campaigns that work across differing cultures, brand strategists will also find profound and challenging insights into how to express critical brand values in a world that may be shrinking but which on the other hand is probably not becoming as homogenous as many prophets of globalisation claim. A key element in ensuring such success,

according to Anholt, is recognition of the fact that translation of copy from English into any other language must be avoided at all cost:

'Translating advertising copy is like painting the tip of an iceberg and hoping the whole thing will turn red: what makes copy work is not the words themselves, but subtle combinations of those words, and most of all the echoes and repercussions of those words within the mind of the reader. These are precisely the subtleties which translation fails to convey. Advertising is not made of words, but made of culture.'

Anholt is no philistine, quite the opposite, and his cultural sensitivity lends great weight to his observations on international advertising.

Humour abounds in Chapter 1 as it does throughout the rest of the book, and even though the author claims that he does not want to do what everyone else does and regale his audience with tales of international brand name howlers, he cannot resist quoting a few examples from his 'vast private collection of disaster stories'. Nissan attract particular derision for absurdities such as the Nissan *Vanette Escargo*, the Nissan *Cedric*, and the Nissan *Supreme Pantry-boy Deluxe*, the latter 'sadly only available in Japan at present'. And don't even ask about the Mitsubishi *Pajero*.

Another issue briefly touched upon in the first chapter, and which could probably have done with a more

detailed examination, is the question of whether or not to use English when advertising in non-English-speaking cultures: 'Sentiments expressed in a foreign language are often seen by the recipient through a misty, glamorising veil of partial comprehension, which in the right context can be extremely good for the brand ... The important point to remember about using English in non-English speaking countries (or, indeed, using any language outside its home market) is that what you gain in glamour by seeming foreign, you lose in precise communication, because people's understanding of your language can only be superficial.' This is a dilemma I had first-hand experience of while conducting a brand image profile research project in the Greek market on behalf of a Scotch whisky company. When asked whether they preferred advertising in Greece for Scotch whisky to be in English or in Greek, there was an almost even split from respondents between support for English ('because that is authentic — that is where the product comes from') and support for Greek ('we are in Greece! So they should speak our language, not theirs').

Having dealt impressively with the language question, the author then moves on in Chapter 2 to the wider realm of culture and how a high degree of cultural sensitivity is essential for successful international advertising. Again, Anholt's target of choice is the tedious predictability and lack of imagination evident in most international advertising:

'Personally, if I have to look at one more global ad where some loathsome international executive with round glasses is read-

ing his child a bedtime story from a mobile phone in his Hong Kong hotel room, I may start to scream and break things. It's trying so hard to say something to everybody which ensures that this kind of globaldegook says nothing to anybody. People don't like it because it's a blunt instrument. Really good advertising, on the other hand, is distinguished by its *sharpness*: it speaks your culture as well as your language.'

Vivid observations such as this are fuelled by the author's firmly held belief that 'what is actually happening all over the world is *not* the creeping spread of American-dominated cultural imperialism, but a general process of omnilateral, polycultural *mixing*, and this can only be a good thing'.

Chapter 3 ('Global Brand or Global Bland?') and Chapter 4 ('The Trouble with Creativity') focus on specific branding issues such as positioning across different cultures and the need to communicate brand essence effectively within the company before you can hope to communicate externally. A simple but interesting hierarchical model from neurolinguistic programming is given in order to illustrate how brands can analyse themselves before venturing into global markets. Self-analysis of this kind is deemed crucial in that it allows the brand to remain true to its essence while varying the emphasis on different facets of brand identity according to the market it has chosen to enter.

In the second half of the book, Chapters 5–9, Anholt sets out his vision of the structures and concepts that in his view are required in order to create successful international advertising for globalising companies. As he has himself worked for a major international advertising agency network, Anholt is in an excellent position to

portray the weaknesses of the agency network model. He does so gleefully:

'Most clients are reasonably indulgent about the cavorting of the advertising agencies and their frantic attempts to appear innovative: clients appear to see this as a necessary ritual dance which helps them to distinguish a little more easily between otherwise rather similar businesses. But when it comes to talking about new ways of operating internationally, the advertising industry, despite reinventing itself with tiresome regularity, has absolutely nothing new to offer.'

The international advertising agency network model is criticised for being bloated, expensive, anglocentric, unresponsive and generally guilty of consistently purveying mediocrity. Based on his experience in one such international network, the author admits that 'it rapidly became apparent to me that a psychopath in his worst nightmares could not have invented a worse way to do international advertising campaigns than an international advertising agency network'. The solution to the challenge lies in 'smart centralisation', a concept which is introduced in Chapter 5 and elaborated upon in Chapters 6 and 7.

Accusing his old multinational agency of being 'structurally incapable of listening to the other markets: it only knew how to impose, and the energy only flowed in one direction', Anholt concludes that a drastic centralisation of the entire international process is the only way forward. This does not mean a heavy-handed standardisation of global campaigns, however. On the contrary, it entails centralising in one agency a staff line-up drawn from those countries into which companies wish to launch

advertising campaigns. The rationale for this is that it is far better to involve a native of the target country from the beginning of the creative process rather than later on down the line, when it is either too late to make the necessary changes to meet the unique demands of those markets or a cosmetic change to the preordained execution is clumsily bolted on at the last minute:

'The *smart centralization* model eliminates the "lead agency-local agency" split, and simply takes agency-trained individuals from each foreign market and relocates them to a single, central agency, which is in one office, sometimes but not necessarily located in the lead market. Here, they are able to "cluster around" the brand, and inform its actions and behaviours at source, rather than modifying them at target.'

It would be interesting to hear someone from one of the international agency networks so denigrated by the author contest the apparently irrefutable logic of Anholt's argument.

In his conclusions, the writer reiterates that the main challenge is to create the ideal balance between sensitivity to the culture of the brand, and sensitivity to the culture of the consumer. That is a fascinating and fertile area, and one that few people could be as well equipped to cover as Anholt. Not many books on branding make you laugh out loud, but Anholt manages to do that on several occasions in the course of this witty and erudite exposé of the bland idiocy of much of what passes for global brand communications.

Keith Dinnie
Book Review Editor