

OPINION PARTY

SUMMER BEACH READS

SUMMER 2024
VOL. 3

BAV Group
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EDITOR'S LETTER



What an exhilarating time to be a brand builder! The world around us is evolving at a dizzying pace, with seismic shifts reshaping consumer behavior, cultural narratives, and the very notion of what a "brand" is.

In this issue, we dive into the power of strategic branding, from the surprising story behind Häagen-Dazs' Danish-sounding name to the Olympics' masterful use of contrasts to create a champion brand. We also examine the challenges of differentiation in crowded categories like beer and the lessons marketers can learn from summer blockbusters about navigating the hype cycle around new technologies.

Inclusion emerges as another key theme, with articles exploring how brands can leverage diverse talent to drive equity and break barriers around disability inclusion. We trace the transformation of weight loss branding, from *The Biggest Loser* to the rise of Ozempic, and the implications for pharma and healthcare marketers.

The complex world of destination branding takes center stage, with pieces on crafting compelling place-based brands, the secrets of top travel destinations, and the paradox of how an abundance of travel content may be impacting our experiences. As travel roars back, these insights are more crucial than ever.

Finally, we explore the ups and downs of celebrity branding through the lens of a major celebrity's personal brand journey, offering lessons on authenticity and evolution that apply far beyond the world of entertainment.

We hope this edition of Opinion Party sparks new ideas and conversations that push the boundaries of what's possible for your brand. As always, let's keep the dialogue going. We're here to help you stay ahead of the curve.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, elegant flourish on the letter "J".

Laura Jones
Chief Strategy Officer, BAV Group

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SUMMER 2024 | VOL. 3

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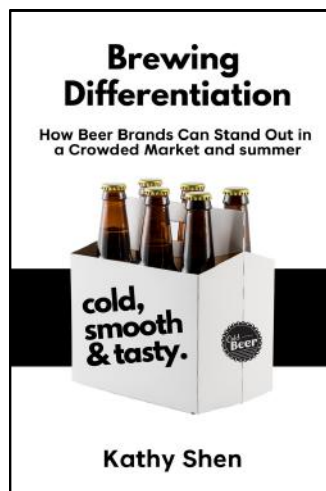
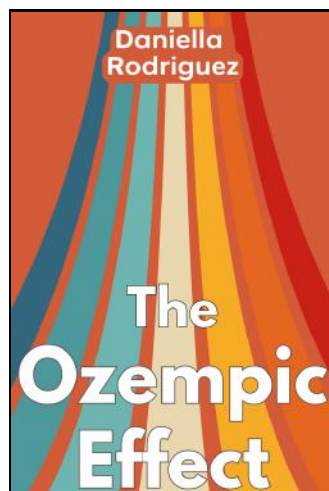
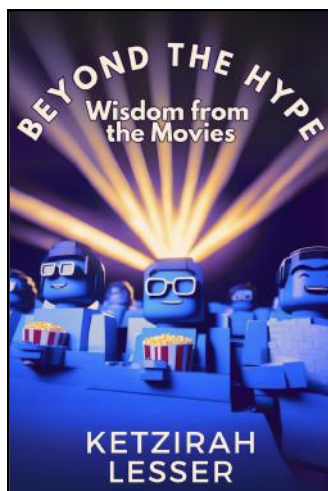
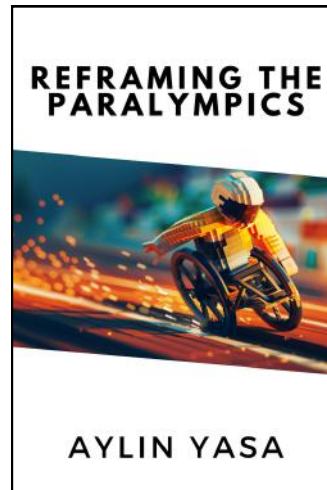
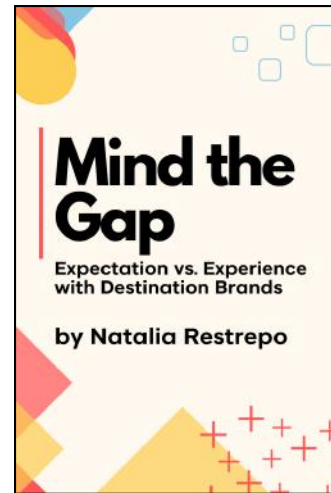
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REFRESHING SUMMER READS



Summer Bucket List

The Secrets of Top Travel Destinations

Craving a summer escape? Unlock the secrets of why Italy, France, and Spain are top destinations for Americans. Get ready for a journey that'll leave you saying "Bon voyage!" to your everyday life. 🌞🌍✈️



Sandrine Martin
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In the world of travel, certain destinations stand out with a strong brand, attracting travelers with their special charm and allure. In BAV's Best Countries study, we measure perceptions of 87 countries across the world on 73 emotional and functional attributes, tracking impressions and opinions of consumers. According to our latest Best Countries study, Italy, France, and Spain emerge as the top destinations most likely to be visited by Americans.

I was interested in understanding what makes these destinations so attractive. Let's learn some of the secrets behind Americans' most loved travel destinations.

Essentials of top destinations

When we look at the perceptions that are most associated with Italy, France, and Spain, we find that these three destinations share several fundamental traits -- they perform well on the attributes:

- Family-friendly,
- Modern,
- Culturally accessible,
- Non-corrupt, and
- Cares about human rights.

This result suggests that convenience, comfort and safety are important for consumers when choosing a travel destination.



Capitalizing on Unique Brand Strength

The success of these top destinations isn't just rooted in their dependability. It's also their ability to offer a distinctive and compelling value proposition that sets them apart. Traveling is about indulging in the unique things that a place has to offer. Italy, France, and Spain offer countless of opportunities to indulge in their rich history, vibrant art, food scene, and fashion.

What the Most Popular Destinations Tell Us

The insights I've uncovered go beyond just understanding what makes these destinations so appealing. They reveal a deeper truth about the American traveler's psyche: we crave "cautious adventure". We want to step out of our comfort zones and explore new horizons, but within a framework of convenience and comfort.

As we look to the future of travel, it's clear that destinations that can strike this delicate balance will continue to capture the hearts and minds of American travelers. So, whether you're dreaming of the rolling hills of Tuscany, the charming streets of Paris, or the sun-drenched beaches of Barcelona, remember that the best adventures are those that combine the thrill of the unknown with the comfort of the familiar. Happy travels!

The Paradox of Travel Content Is Too Much Information Ruining Travel?

Is your endless scrolling through travel blogs and Instagram feeds sucking the joy out of your adventures? Striking a balance between research and spontaneity might just be the key to unlocking the most memorable adventures.



Tanay Sharma

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With summer in full swing and months-long travel plans finally taking off, I thought I'd share one of my hot takes – too much travel content and research ruins the experience. In our digital age, content is both a blessing and a curse for travelers. It helps us make informed decisions and uncover hidden gems, but it can also diminish the thrill of exploration and discovery.

When we digitally "visit" a place before setting foot there, we risk over-planning and over-researching to the point where our first-hand experiences feel like mere confirmations of what we've already seen online. The sense of wonder that comes from stumbling upon a charming café or being awestruck by an unexpected view is diminished.

How might we find a balance? I believe the key is to be mindful of how much and what type of information we consume before embarking on our journeys. By limiting our pre-trip research to the essentials, we can leave room for discoveries and unexpected delights. This approach allows us to have a general idea of what to expect, without spoiling the thrill of exploration.

Imagine a hotel that highlights its most popular amenities and experiences, but also emphasizes the unique, lesser-known aspects of its location. Or a theme park that promotes its iconic rides while hinting at secret Easter eggs and hidden attractions scattered throughout the park. By strategically showcasing certain elements and withholding others, brands can help travelers by creating a sense of intrigue and encouraging them to embrace the unknown.

This concept extends far beyond the travel industry. In today's information-rich world, businesses across all sectors can benefit from embracing a degree of mystery in their branding and marketing efforts. By selectively sharing information and leaving room for consumers to discover and explore on their own, brands can foster a deeper sense of engagement and loyalty.

For savvy marketers, the lesson is clear: leverage data to create captivating brand stories that inform and inspire, while leaving room for discovery and exploration. By striking a balance between the known and the unknown, you can create experiences that truly stand out in a content-saturated world, no matter what industry you're in.

In the end, the most memorable experiences are often those that strike a perfect balance between the familiar and the unexpected.



Mind the Gap

Expectation vs. Experience with Destination Brands

Destination branding triumphs when expectations align with experiences. Bridge the host-guest gap to create satisfied, loyal visitors. 🌍 🏠 💡



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During my years as a consultant in destination branding, I've encountered numerous frameworks and methodologies. One that has significantly influenced my approach is the '3-gap analysis.' This framework is invaluable for understanding and managing destination brands, as it helps identify and bridge the gaps between the host and the guest.

When evaluating destination brands, it's important to consider both the host and guest perspectives. The host perspective focuses on the destination brand's identity and the image it presents, while the guest perspective encompasses people's perceptions and expectations. Effective destination branding lies in aligning the host's identity, the projected image, and the guest's expectations to deliver a satisfying experience.

Many destination brands today face significant gaps between expectation and experience. These gaps can manifest in two primary ways.

Expectation < Experience

This scenario occurs when the experience surpasses the expectations. Destination brands like India, California, and Colorado often fall into this category. Visitors to India, for example, might come with modest expectations and find themselves awed by the locals' vibrant culture, historical richness, and hospitality. Similarly, California's diverse attractions, stunning natural beauty, pleasant climate, and iconic landmarks, from beaches and mountains to cities and vineyards, often exceed visitors' expectations. Finally, Colorado's natural beauty and recreational opportunities leave visitors delighted and eager to return.

Expectation > Experience

In contrast, when expectations exceed the actual experience, a disconnect occurs. The UK, Las Vegas, and Miami are notable examples. The UK's rich history and global cultural influence might set very high expectations, but some visitors may find the actual experience lacking in certain aspects. Las Vegas, known for its glamour and entertainment, can sometimes underdeliver if visitors' expectations are unrealistically high. Miami sets high expectations with its sophisticated image of vibrant nightlife, beautiful beaches, and cultural diversity. However, it often under delivers due to issues like traffic congestion, high costs, and inconsistent service quality in hospitality.

Understanding and bridging these gaps is critical, not just for destination brands but for all brands. Aligning expectations and experiences goes beyond brand management—it fosters satisfaction, repurchase, and loyalty. For marketers, creating the right expectations and delivering on them is the cornerstone of a successful brand strategy.

The Olympic Games

Contrasts Create a Champion Brand

The Olympics isn't just a sporting event; it's a brand that thrives on contrasts.



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Every two years, the world unites under the powerful brand of the Olympics. This summer, from July 24th through August 11th, the 2024 Olympic Games will take place in Paris.

Few brands evoke as much passion and pride as the Olympics. Arguably one of the most enduring brands out there, the Olympics has the special ability to unite the world around athletic excellence and human achievement. In fact, historical data from BrandAsset Valuator® (BAV) syndicated brand study shows that the Olympics has been one of the strongest brands in culture consistently in the 23 years it has been in our study, since 1999.

What makes the Olympics brand so powerful?

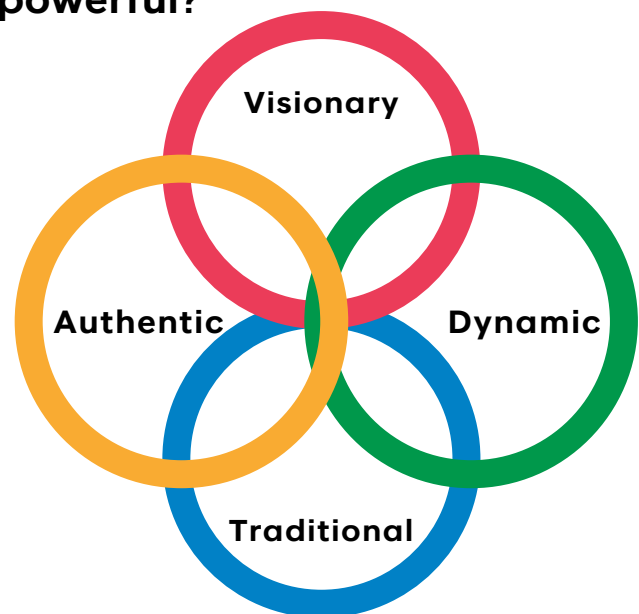
Our data-driven approach to brand positioning, called Brand Tensity, is based on the idea that the most compelling brands are made of seemingly contrasting ideas, and when combined they create a unique, ownable brand deep with meaning. The Olympics brand is full of inherent contradictions, an ideal example of the power of tension in a brand.

Our analysis shows that it is visionary and dynamic, but also traditional and authentic. It inspires global camaraderie, yet thrives on fierce competition. It is rooted in incredible athleticism, yet driven by emotional storytelling.

These dichotomies give the brand texture and meaning that help it maintain its leadership position in culture consistently despite virtually disappearing for months or even years at a time.

As we gear up for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, it's worth taking a moment to reflect on the enduring power of the Olympic brand. By blending seemingly opposing ideas like tradition and innovation, competition and camaraderie, the brand has created a unique identity that continues to resonate with people around the world.

In today's highly divided world, the Olympics serves as a reminder of what we can accomplish when we come together around a common purpose.



Tennis, But Make It Fashion

Tenniscore is serving up a smashing summer.

With the sport's popularity soaring, brands should consider jumping on the bandwagon to score some serious points with consumers. 🥰🎾🏆



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Summer is tennis season, beginning with the French Open followed by Wimbledon and ending with the U.S. Open. More Americans than ever are playing tennis, 24 million according to the United States Tennis Association,¹ sparking renewed interest in the sport.

Tennis is also heating up off the court too—from the box office to the runway, "tenniscore" is popping. The fashion trend marries athleisure with elegance by paying homage to the sports' classic attire of polo shirts, cable knit sweaters and pleated skirts. What was once a microtrend on TikTok is now mainstream.

At the movie premiere of *The Challengers* on April 16, Zendaya—who plays the leading character of a tennis player turned coach—sporting a tenniscore ensemble and stilettos with tennis ball heels. The MGM/Amazon sports drama clinched the number one spot during its opening weekend. Moviegoers shared their tenniscore fits on social media, illustrating the power of method dressing to inspire fans and immerse themselves in a world of tennis.

When it comes to luxury fashion, Lacoste honored the brand's tennis legacy by selecting Court Philippee-Chartier at Roland Garros as the runway for debuting its Fall 2024/Winter 2025 collection at Paris Fashion Week. The show featured apparel in hues of red clay, green, and white inspired by the sport itself. Beyond apparel, Louis Vuitton unveiled Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, two of the greatest tennis players of all time, as the faces of its renewed 'Core Values' campaign.

Mainstream retailers and toy companies are also jumping on the tenniscore wagon. Target's latest collaboration with Prince includes stylish tennis and pickleball attire at affordable prices. And in toy aisles across America, Venus Williams' Barbie will soon hit store shelves. The legendary tennis player teamed up with Barbie to commemorate its 65th anniversary.

With fashion and pop culture inextricably linked, tennis is heating up for a smashing summer. Brands should consider betting on tennis as a prime marketing platform to stand out in an attention economy. Whether serving up partnerships with a tennis brand or sponsoring a tournament, your brand is poised to align with potential customers' interests, drive engagement and ultimately increase sales.



Reframing the Paralympics

How brands can break barriers around inclusion and equality.

Exploring the role do brands play in reshaping the narrative and championing inclusivity in sports? 🏃♂️🏃♀️🏅



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Adweek's article on IPC's new campaign sheds light on the ongoing perception gap surrounding the Paralympic Games. Even though I'm guilty of not being a regular Paralympics viewer myself, I was shocked by this realization, and it got me thinking: How can we, as marketers, be part of shaping this narrative?

Closing the Perceptual Gap: Why We Need to Talk Differently about the Paralympics.

Despite showcasing awe-inspiring feats by athletes with disabilities, the Paralympics is often treated as an afterthought. Data from BAV, world's largest and longest running study of brands globally, reveals that Paralympic Games are perceived as being 37% less "high performance" than the Olympic Games. This is particularly noteworthy considering sports brands in the study are typically credited for being "high performance".



"There's this perception that Paralympics isn't a 'real sport' - that it exists as a 'nice thing to have' and gives people with disabilities a chance to try sports."

via The Paralympics Isn't Just Rainbows: IPC's Ad Aims to Smash Disability Stereotypes, Adweek

Further analysis reveals that brands with similar perceptions to the Paralympic Games include YMCA, United Way, and Habitat for Humanity - all of which are attributed with a 'charity' label. In contrast, the Olympic Games is more akin to other sports brands like MLB, NBA, NFL. I was shocked and saddened to see this perceptual gap validated through data, especially when the level of grit and competitiveness is no different between the two events. Doesn't this sound strikingly like the treatment that women's sports have been getting?

Breaking Barriers

Promoting inclusivity in sports requires more than just having events and leagues that represent a diverse set of participants. While the International Paralympic Committee and various women's sports leagues have taken important steps to start the conversation, it is crucial for their counterparts to amplify the message and make it louder.

However, this conversation should not be limited to the realm of sports alone. Brands also have a unique opportunity to become true agents of change.

The conversation about breaking barriers has already started, how is your brand planning to enter the chat?

Breaking Biases: Diverse Representation Amplifies Brand Power

Embracing diversity and featuring diverse influencers, can help brands connect with multicultural audiences, boost relevance, and drive brand equity gains, as exemplified by Sprite's success among Hispanic consumers.



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As I prepare to sip my strawberry soda to pay homage to my ancestors on Juneteenth, I believe we still need more diverse representation in advertising. Leveraging diverse talent in advertising is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic opportunity for brands. By embracing more diverse talent in targeted celebrity influencer campaigns and broadcast TV spots, more brands can position themselves for long-term success in a competitive marketplace.

Due to the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, there was a notable increase in the visibility of people of color in media. It was a watershed moment for greater diversity and inclusivity. Yet, recent studies have shown a decline in the representation of diverse talent in advertising; a reminder that systemic biases still exist, and we need to do more collectively as an industry to overcome this inequity so more consumers can see themselves in our creative work.

Recent data from the Brand Asset Valuator's (BAV) syndicated study reveals that Sprite, a brand long known for its use of diverse talent, enjoys high levels of relevance, knowledge, and esteem among the general population, but struggles with differentiation causing it fall into the mass-market brand quadrant.

But when looking at Sprite's performance among the Hispanic community, the brand not only excels across all four key metrics— but also is far more differentiated with Hispanic audiences when compared to the general population — elevating it to the status of a category leader within this audience.



By featuring Hispanic music artists and influencers in marketing campaigns, Sprite underscores its commitment to celebrating and representing Hispanic culture. For instance, Grammy-nominated Spanish singer Rosalía, whose influence permeates the U.S. market, plays a significant role in Sprite's broader efforts. Her collaboration with Sprite effectively connects the brand to the Latin music-loving community, helping the Sprite brand to stand out among Hispanics in a culturally relevant way.

Brands that prioritize representation, especially during significant occasions like Juneteenth, which commemorates the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, are better positioned to succeed in today's multicultural world and will grow faster in a more inclusive society.

Beyond the Hype

Wisdom from the Movies

Beneath the thrills and spectacle, sci-fi movies offer profound warnings about reckless innovation and corporate power. As we build the future, let's listen to their wisdom and prioritize ethics over hype.



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As the summer blockbuster season hits full swing, it's the perfect time to sit back, relax, and enjoy some popcorn-fueled escapism. But amidst the spectacle and thrills of the latest sci-fi flicks, there's something more profound lurking beneath the surface: cautionary tales about the dangers of unchecked technology and the consequences of prioritizing progress over ethics.

Take "The Terminator", for example. Sure, it's a classic action movie with unforgettable one-liners and groundbreaking special effects. But at its core, it's a warning about the risks of artificial intelligence and the importance of maintaining human control over our creations. Or consider The Day After Tomorrow, which uses the backdrop of a global climate catastrophe to highlight the devastating potential of ignoring environmental warnings.

These themes aren't just relegated to the big screen, either. The cyberpunk novel Snow Crash, which coined the term "metaverse," serves as a thought-provoking exploration of a future where corporations hold unchecked power, and virtual worlds offer an escape from the dystopian reality. Silicon Valley seems to remember the novel's introduction of the concept of the metaverse, while they overlook the biting satire of anarchy-fueled hypercapitalism at the heart of the story.



What does this have to do with brand and business growth? Everything, as it turns out.

In the race to innovate and stay ahead of the curve, it's all too easy to get caught up in the hype and overlook the deeper implications of the technologies we're developing. We need to take these stories seriously, not just as entertainment, but as a prompt for deeper reflection on the far-reaching consequences of our actions.

The next time you're munching on popcorn and marveling at the latest sci-fi blockbuster, take a moment to consider the wisdom beneath the spectacle. And when you're back in the office, thinking about how to market the next big thing or push the boundaries of what's possible, remember the lessons of those cautionary tales.

Because if we want to create a future that's more Star Trek and less post-apocalyptic, it's up to us to approach innovation with wisdom, foresight, and a deep understanding of the potential impact on society. The warnings are there – we just need to be willing to listen and act.

The Ozempic Effect

The Transformation of Weight Loss' Branding

From the Biggest Loser to Ozempic -- the way we think about weight loss brands has changed dramatically in the past few years.



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In 2023, Ozempic, a groundbreaking weight loss drug, took the world by storm. Celebrities flaunted their slimmed-down figures, and the drug dominated TV screens and Instagram feeds. But Ozempic's impact goes beyond Hollywood trends – it represents a seismic shift in the way we approach weight loss and diet culture. This phenomenon has prompted a reevaluation of diet culture and weight loss branding, and it's time to explore how we got here and where we're headed.

The Dieting Rollercoaster

The weight loss industry has long been characterized by the "Biggest Loser" mentality, promoting extreme measures and self-punishment. From fad diets to juice cleanses, consumers have been subjected to conflicting messages and unsustainable practices. Celebrity endorsements and the rise of social media have only intensified this tumultuous landscape. Now there's Ozempic, which targets the physiological factors that contribute to weight gain and the conversation is shifting from "willpower and deprivation" to overall health and well-being. This represents a significant change in weight loss branding.

A Game-Changer in Weight Loss Branding

Ozempic, a GLP-1 receptor agonist, represents a new approach to weight loss, characterized by compassion and a shift towards medical assistance. As the perception of weight loss drugs evolves, they are increasingly seen as valuable tools in the fight against obesity. Even Oprah shifted from championing Weight Watchers to embracing Ozempic, highlighting this paradigm shift.

As the industry evolves, it is crucial to examine the long-term implications for consumers and brands. While newfound compassion is welcome, we must remain vigilant against the potential exploitation of insecurities. Brands should advocate for a holistic approach, encompassing physical, mental, and socioeconomic factors, and integrate elements from the "Health at Every Size" (HAES) movement to promote inclusivity and body positivity. Prioritizing long-term health and well-being, transparency, realistic expectations, and healthy habits is essential for brands adapting to this changing landscape.

The Future

The Ozempic effect has catalyzed a transformative shift in weight loss branding, challenging the industry to adopt a more compassionate and comprehensive approach to weight management. As we navigate this new terrain, it is essential to prioritize the well-being of consumers while holding brands accountable for their messaging and practices. By embracing a holistic perspective and promoting inclusivity, we can pave the way for a more positive and sustainable future in the weight loss industry.

Brewing Differentiation

How Beer Brands Can Stand Out in a Crowded Market and summer

In a sea of sameness, beer brands pop tops on strategic partnerships to stand out. From ballparks to music fests, these collabs add flavor, keeping consumers coming back for more.



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As the warm embrace of summer approaches, many of us look forward to the simple pleasure of a cold beer in hand. Whether it's a backyard barbecue, a beachside picnic, or a baseball game, beer often plays a starring role in our favorite summer occasions. However, despite its ubiquity and popularity, the traditional beer category faces unique challenges in the marketplace.

In the BrandAsset Valuator® (BAV) syndicated study, the beer category is largely unchanged over the past decade. Despite a high level of familiarity with classic beer brands, consumers appear to find little differentiation among them, resulting in lower brand loyalty than you might expect, and competition primarily based on price.

The lack of differentiation is particularly stark when compared to other alcohol categories such as liquor and wine. The traditional beer category is infamous for its commodification and has a 51% higher churn rate than wines as well as a 37% higher churn rate than ciders, hard sodas and hard seltzers, according to BAV data. This indicates a unique challenge for beer brands: maintaining consumer commitment and reducing attrition

Our also data indicates that the traditional beer category struggles with an average perceptual overlap as high as 91%. Essentially, all brands are perceived as simple, social, traditional, and good value.

To differentiate themselves, the large beer companies rely heavily on sponsorship and strategic partnerships, such as Budweiser's partnership with Major League Baseball (MLB), Corona's association with Coachella, and Miller Lite's deal with NASCAR. These collaborations help cut through the clutter, adding a unique twist to the beer category that's often seen as too similar.

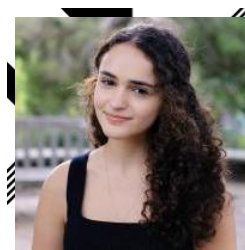
However, not all collaborations yield positive results. A recent example is Bud Light's collaboration with Dylan Mulvaney, which faced high-profile problems and backlash. Such instances serve as reminders that while partnerships can bring uniqueness, they must be carefully considered and strategically implemented.

As we raise our glasses to toast the summer, it's worth keeping an eye out for new and unexpected collaborations. These partnerships could potentially redefine how we perceive and engage with our favorite beer brands, for better or worse.



The Surprising Scoop on Häagen-Dazs Ice Cream

Häagen-Dazs: The ice cream that's as Danish as apple pie. Uncover the scoop behind this iconic brand's name and its secret recipe for success.



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With summer in full swing, ice cream is on everyone's minds. But have you ever stopped to think where your frozen scoops come from?

Häagen-Dazs -- the beloved, Danish-sounding ice cream brand -- has absolutely no connection to Denmark. You read that right. The name was invented by founders Reuben and Rose Mattus in 1961. The company, founded in the Bronx, New York, was named as a tribute to Denmark's support of Jews during WW2.

Studies show that foreign-sounding or "exotic" brand names can significantly influence consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior. Brands with foreign-sounding names are often associated with attributes like high quality, prestige, and authenticity.

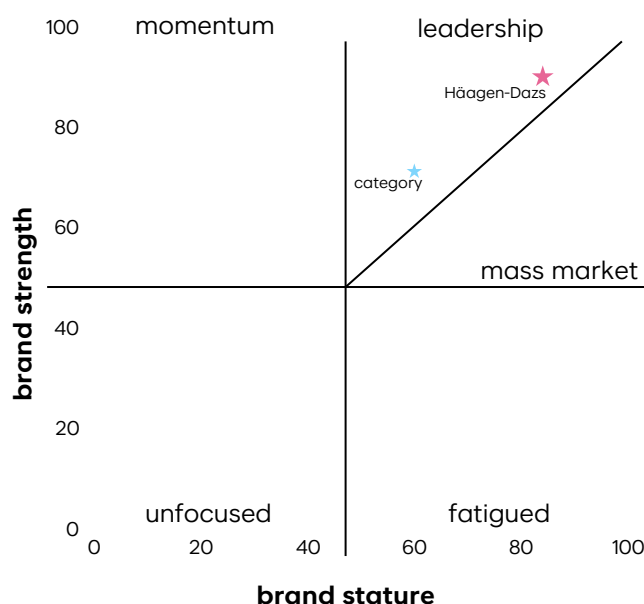
But American brand names have their place too. They tend to be associated with different qualities like reliability, trustworthiness, and down-to-earth values. "Betty Crocker" and "Kraft" feel wholesome and dependable compared to exotic imports. Just look at some other famous examples:

- "Apple" sounds simple, fresh and innovative compared to the cold, corporate "IBM".
- "Virgin" airlines feels fun and cheeky next to stuffy competitors.
- "Coca-Cola" has a catchy rhythm and those hard "k" sounds that make it pop.

Data shows that the Häagen-Dazs brand remains as iconic as its name.

The brand has maintained a leadership position in the BrandAsset Valuator® (BAV) study for the past thirty years in the US, which is something few brands can say. While it is not as differentiated as it was in 1993, it still far out paces the category on brand equity.

So the next time you dig into a pint of Haagen-Dazs, remember: You're not just tasting ice cream. You're buying into a carefully crafted brand identity -- even if it's not actually Danish.



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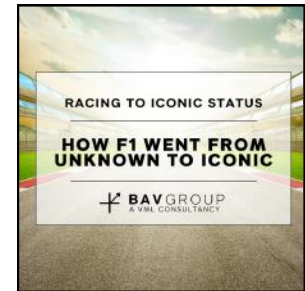
Just a few of the thought provoking pieces written by the BAV Group team. Find them all at bavgroup.com, or click on the images below.



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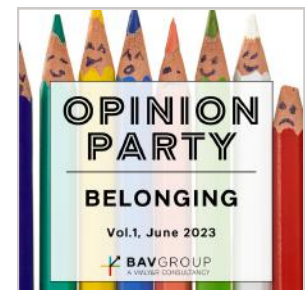
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