

CASE ELEVEN

Mr Bean: The Brand with a Big Heart

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Case Objectives

- To understand the concept and importance of branding
- To explore the various marketing process involved in branding

Case Synopsis

- While many food and beverage industry players aim to expand by setting up more and more outlets at prime locations, Super Bean International Pte Ltd, the company behind Mr Bean, prefers a more targeted approach in their business strategy, choosing to focus on communicating their brand to consumers.
- Mr Bean offers a variety of soya bean drinks and snacks. Faced with many similar product offerings, Mr Bean embarked on a comprehensive branding exercise that includes a new brand identity based on 'life's simple pleasures', a new vibrant logo portraying a smiling bean and consistent communication of the brand to its customers through its staff, product display and packaging.
- The success of Mr Bean's branding has won it recognition of several awards and encouraged positive emotional response from its customers. It has shown companies that branding is not only for big companies as it is about what the company does differently to stand out from the crowd and reach out to its targeted audience.

Case Questions and Answers

Question 1

What are the roles and benefits of branding to sellers and buyers in the food and beverage business? Is branding only for big companies? Why or why not?

- Branding is when an organization uses a name, phrase, design, symbols, or a combination of these to identify its products and distinguish them from those of its competitors. Successful and established brands take on a brand personality and acquire brand equity—the added value a given brand name gives to a product beyond the functional benefits provided.
- In the food and beverage industry characterized by a saturated market and endless substitutes, branding is important for easy identification, creating top-of-the-mind awareness and differentiating a product from its competitors.

Customers will be better able to identify with the brand and relate to it, building a relationship between the seller and its customers that translates into customer loyalty.

- Acquiring brand equity gives a company a competitive advantage. For example, consumers will associate Mr Bean with healthy soya bean products and any future products by Mr Bean will enjoy the benefit of this established brand image. Also, it will allow a company to price higher than its competitors – especially beneficial in the highly price competitive food and beverage industry.
- Branding is not about how big the advertising and media spending is, but about what you do differently to reach out to your target audience. Thus, is not only for big companies as small companies can also build brands by taking alternative low cost approaches to reach out to the customers.

Question 2

What constitutes the brand identity of Mr Bean? What is your evaluation of the Mr Bean brand identity? What will you add and what will you subtract from this identity?

- The brand identity of Mr Bean includes the brand name ‘Mr Bean’, the logo of a smiling bean, the tag line ‘life’s simple pleasures’ and the product packaging and display. All these elements combine to create a healthy, trendy and vibrant and happy image to form its brand identity.
- Mr Bean’s brand identity has managed to successfully portray a distinct image that resonates with many people and brought about the change in mindsets of the traditional soya bean products as something that is not only restricted to hawker centers and the older generation.
- Going through the four steps of creating brand equity, Mr Bean has successfully carried out the first three steps of creating brand awareness, communicating brand meaning and eliciting proper consumer responses. The fourth step of consumer-brand resonance however, has not been achieved and Mr Bean has to further develop its brand to work towards it.
- The additional image of love between family and friends could be added to Mr Bean’s brand image to evoke stronger emotional response and connection with its customers to build brand loyalty and equity. It is in line with Mr Bean’s philosophy of ‘life’s simple pleasures’ and reminds people of the simple pleasures of the company of their families and friends. It also reinforces the message of healthy living through healthy food to continue to enjoy life for many years to come. This additional dimension will make the Mr Bean brand stronger and closer to building brand equity rather than just triggering a happy emotional response from its customers.

Question 3

How can brand loyalty be built? What is your evaluation of the steps undertaken by the company to build customer loyalty to the Mr Bean brand? What other

recommendations would you propose to strengthen brand loyalty?

- Brand loyalty can be built through the constant communication of a brand identity that people can identify with and customer involvement to build a stronger relationship with the customer. Also, continuous provision of quality products and services is critical to establishing brand loyalty.
- Mr Bean focused on enhancing emotional links with customers by constant communication of its brand through product packaging and display. This helps to constantly remind the customers of the brand and build an emotional attachment to the brand. The company also ensures that its staffs, who are its first contact point of the Mr Bean experience, support the company philosophy so that they can better communicate the brand to customers. This is important as the staff also represents the brand and forms the moment of truth for the customer-company interaction. Mr Bean also manufactures its products at individual retail outlets to provide the freshest products to its customers and carry out constant product research and innovation. This ensures quality products and customer satisfaction, which will translate to brand loyalty.
- While these steps are well on the way to building brand loyalty, customer involvement is lacking. Mr Bean's current efforts are only interacting with customers at the surface level and have yet to connect deep within the customers' heart. Public relations events like a donation drive to support cancer patients in line with the notion of healthy living or an event for children's day to support the notion of life's simple pleasures will gather customer involvement and allow the brand to be deeply etched within the customers' hearts and minds.