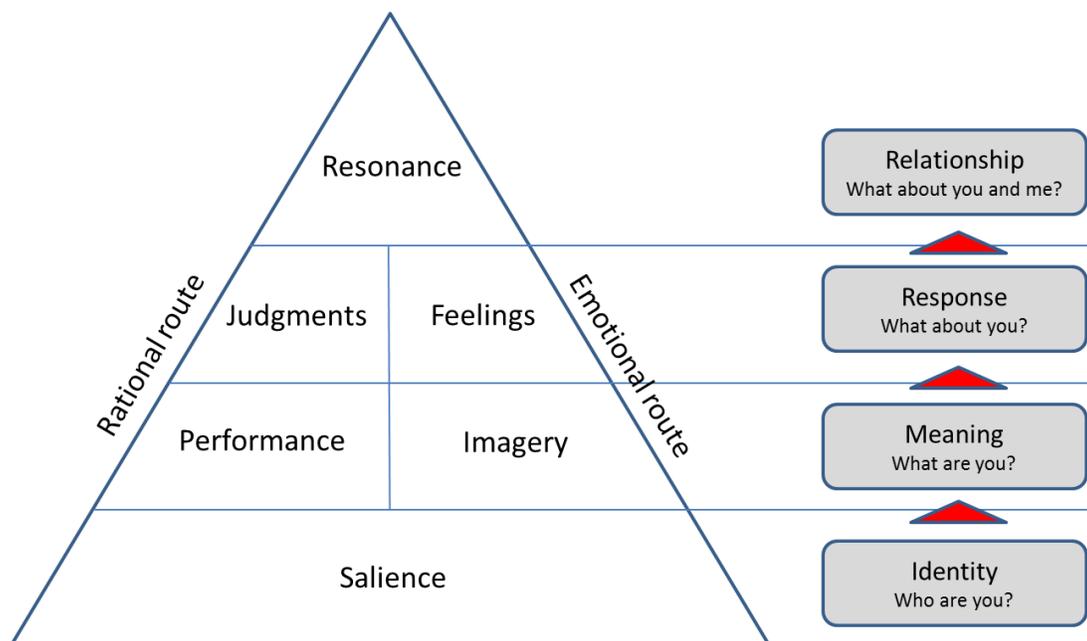


## Creating personal connection with consumers through Keller's Customer's based brand equity

When talking about brands, a lot of people still have a misperception and think that brands are just logos or in other cases, brandings are just irrelevant and having only good products is sufficient. In the modern market place, being the first to launch or offer the best quality products will not necessarily guarantee survival or securing majority of market share. Numerous examples can be referenced such as Apple's iPods becoming the market leader in portable digital listening devices while Creative was the first one to launch the MP3 players, or Starbucks offering lower quality coffee than many local cafes yet still securing top of mind recollection amongst consumers.

Brand is what differentiates similar products from one another by adding value on top of function and create a personal relationship between the brand and their target consumers. According to Keller, the author of many leading Brand Strategic Management books, who has published several marketing books with the famous marketing guru, Philip Kotler, Brand Equity is the ultimate goal that brand strategist should aim for. It represents the value of the brand, both tangible and intangible that customers perceive which leads to brand loyalty. For example, Coca-Cola, not only does it serve functional and emotional needs but also is a trusted brand while other in-house brands such as Tesco or Tops only put logos on their cola drinks no personality of the brand for consumers to relate to.

In developing a brand, there are many elements of products that can be used to communicate to consumers whether it's the product itself or its direct benefits. On the other hand, in order to develop an effective brand, brand strategists should translate the value of what consumers would receive from their consumption as it would create bonding experience between the brand and its consumers. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid can be simplified into 4 laddering questions, which represents both rationale and emotional aspects of the brand.



**Salience** - is the identity of the product and brand such as product features or brand attributes (logos, color codes, tagline, or other brand identities). This step is the fundamental level of brand building, aiming to generate awareness and recognition but not yet influential enough to make the brand considered in consumers' top of mind. To create a strong brand salience, marketers usually rely on consistent communication and exposure until the visuals are registered in consumers' mind. Leading examples that have strong brand salience are Heineken with their signature green bottle and red star or Nike's swoosh logo, or the famous lingerie from Victoria's Secret.

**Performance** – is what the product offers to meet the functional needs of consumers or the functional benefits the consumers will get from consuming the product. For example, Ikea offers low-price and functional furniture, Victoria Secret offers premium lingerie and female wear at affordable price, with distinctive designs.

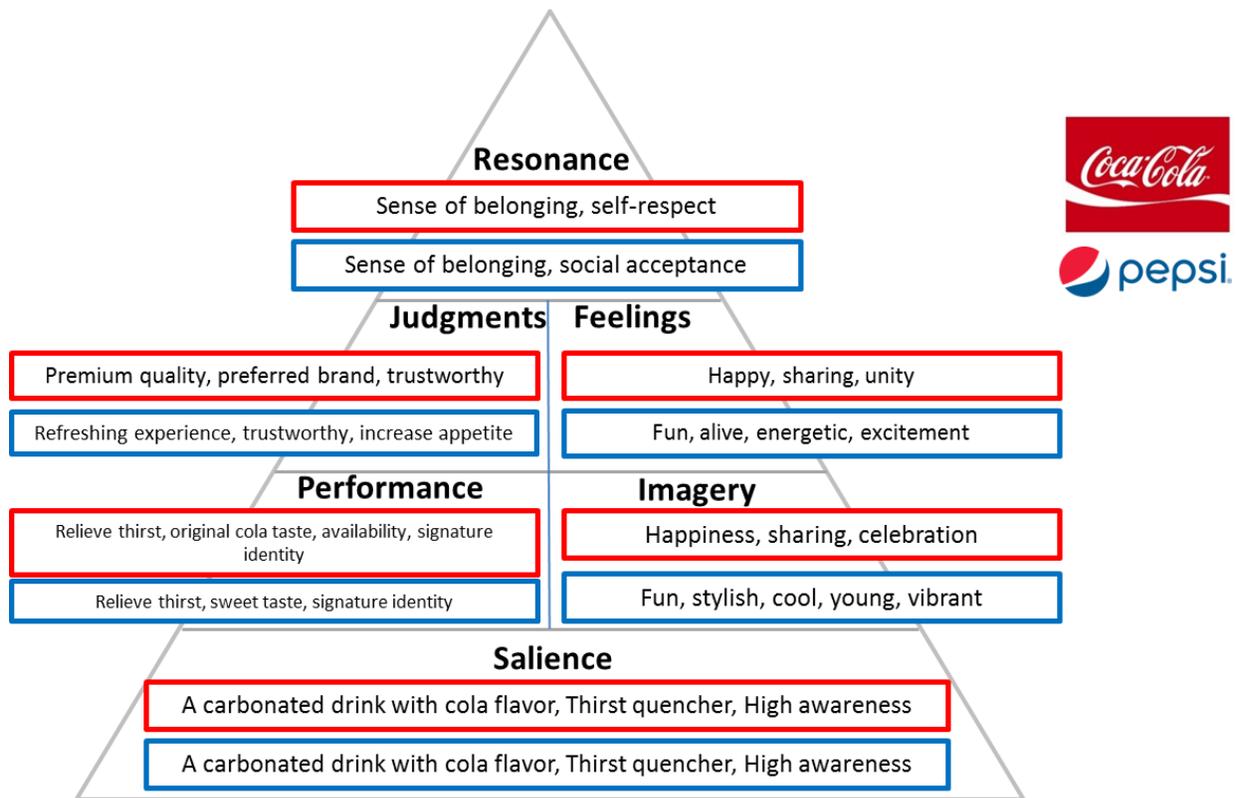
**Judgments** – is how the consumers respond to what the product offers on the functional aspects or judgments toward performance. Referring to the Ikea example, consumers' judgments would be getting good deals and satisfaction toward variety of the products, while Victoria Secret is one of the most trusted lingerie brands and most likely to be selected in international lingerie market place.

**Imagery** – is what the brand offers to meet the psychological needs of consumers or the emotional benefits such as Victoria's Secret is known for being feminine, sexy, and glamorous.

**Feelings** – is how the consumers responds to what the brand offers on the emotional aspects or responses toward Imagery such as wearing Victoria's Secret lingerie makes their customers feel sexy, confident and bold.

**Resonance** – the ultimate goal of brand building. It's the psychological connection the consumers have with the brand. Once a brand reaches this level of brand building, it usually reflects in forms of 1) repeat purchases 2) special occasion purchases 3) referrals and 4) active engagement. For example, Victoria Secret's customers tend to repeat purchase and VS products are often considered to be purchased as presents for special occasions.

Effective Brand Equity not only communicates to consumers and drive purchases, but also makes similar products register differently in consumers' minds. One of most common examples used to explain the application of the framework are the leading cola brands that both offer similar functional benefits, yet distinguish itself from one another and capture different target groups, such as Coca Cola and Pepsi.



From this analysis, it visualizes how Coca Cola and Pepsi brands are developed to reach their different brand objectives by starting from the most common features and laddering up to the different personal connections each brand has with their target consumers.

Even though to a lot of people, branding may appear to fall into the expense category than an investment, and might not reflect directly as a sales increase, but effective branding strategy will add value to ordinary products and keep them relevant and competitive in the market.

For new brands that wish to enter the market with effective branding strategy, first step required from the brand strategists is to identify the unique selling proposition whether it's the functional or emotional benefits, build on those strengths and ladder up to offering unique consumption experiences that each brand's target consumers will share differently from its competitors'. Once the brands are able to create personal connections with their target consumers, it opens the gateway to achieving loyalty and securing a spot in consumers' minds.

About Author:



Ms.Chanyapat is a Consultant at Sasin Management Consulting. She received a Master's Degree in Executive MBA from Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration of Chulalongkorn University. She has an expertise in the field of marketing, communications, and branding, and has served several leading global brands by glocalizing their strategies to ensure its effectiveness in local market. She had also taken parts in setting business directions as well as developing operation strategies for leading organizations in Thailand.