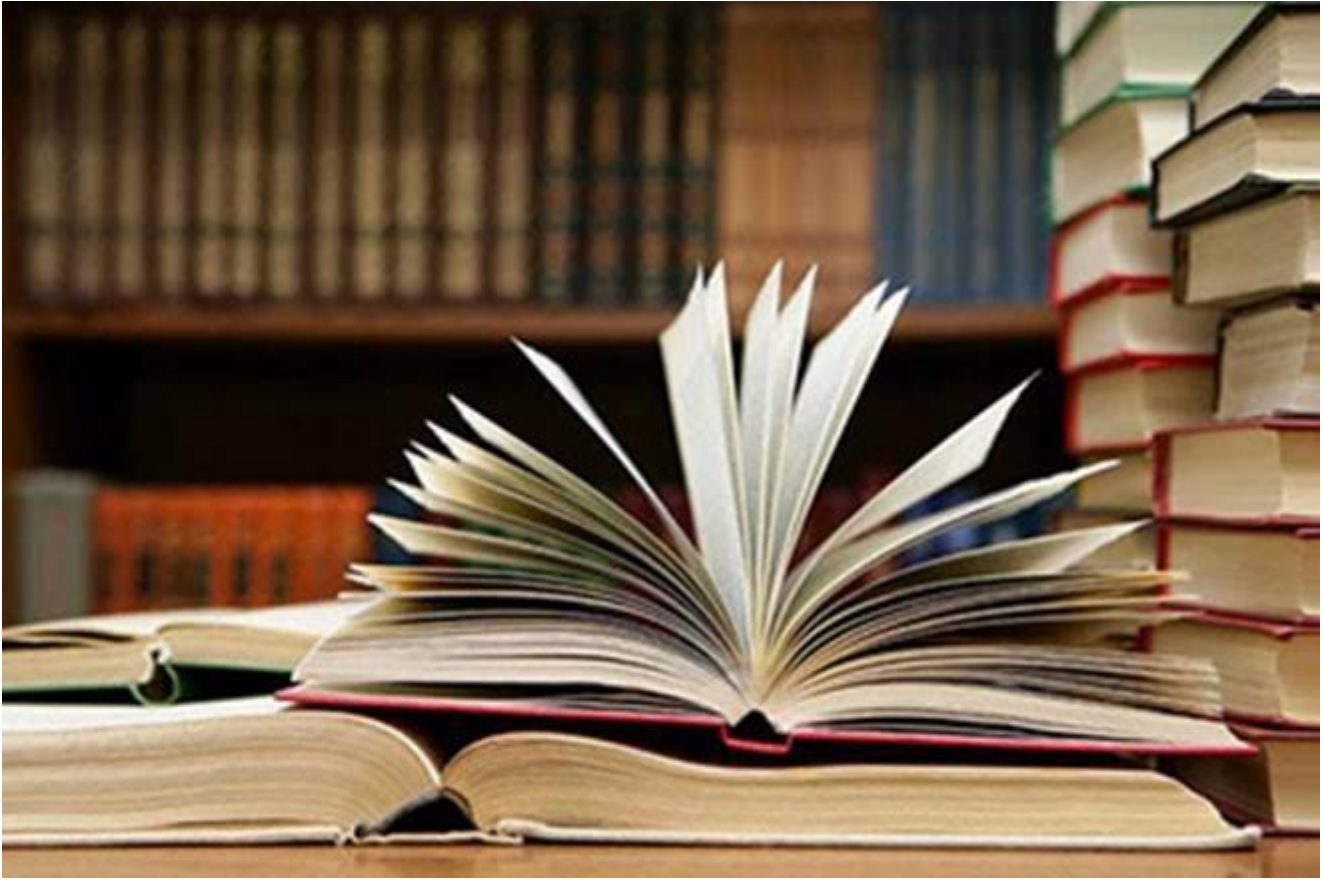


Fusion: How companies should align their purpose of business with the brand

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Madan
Sabnavis



This book is definitely a very useful one for companies that want to identify what they really stand for because, once this is decided, the fusion can take place with the brand and vice-versa.

Fusion could read like another book on how to conceptualise a company's brand and keep it in consonance with the culture or values of the organisation. This is what fusion is all about as Denise Yohn takes us through how companies should align their purpose of business with that of the brand. And more importantly, which is often missed by companies, the perception should be interpreted from the point of view of the outside world and not their judgment. Companies always like to say that they stand for everything that is right, like being ethical, innovative, dynamic and so on. But this does not get reflected in the way in which the firm operates, which is revealed when the internal culture is studied in detail.

While a lot of chapters in the book explain how to go about bringing in this alignment or

fusion, the most interesting chapter is the one on assessing the brand and culture in any organisation. Here, the author talks of broadly nine kinds of brands which exist: disruptive (Virgin Atlantic), conscious (SoulCycle), service (Ritz Carlton), innovative (Apple, Nike, Amazon), value (Walmart, IKEA), performance (BMW), luxury (Mercedes-Benz), style (Target, JetBlue) and experience (Disney). Almost all companies can be classified under these headings.

Next, the author maps the set of core values, which go with these brands and identifies three main qualities that go with every kind of brand. For example, a disruptive brand would be competitive, stand out and take risks. A service brand will have values such as caring, humility and empathy. Therefore, hotels and airlines would be looking for people with such traits that can help them to mingle with the culture of their business. An innovative brand will emphasise inventiveness, experimentation and continuous improvement. An experience brand will stand for entertainment, enjoyment and originality.

Therefore, one needs to look at both the brand and culture simultaneously and then work towards bringing about the necessary alignment. Interestingly, once the brand culture fusion takes place, the same gets reflected in things like communication within the organisation, employee policies, compensation, etc. In fact, the author also highlights office location as symbolising the brand being projected.

Simple things like rituals pursued or artefacts on display also tell the same story. Awards given internally, which stand as artefacts displayed, is an important part of the culture seen in the company. Even anthems recited or simple gestures like seniors saying good morning to juniors reflects the brand culture. Therefore, this aspect needs to be assessed and implemented to make the fusion work. We definitely can't have a disruptive brand having a culture of conservativeness where, say, compensation is based on age and tenure. It has to be more dynamic.

The author stresses a lot on not just the customer experience, but also employee experience. Here, the responsibility is with the company to ensure that there is personal engagement with the brand and the strategy is understood by all. It is only when the employee is told, for example, that the customer is first will she work that way. Otherwise, one may tend to use personal logic in interpretation when dealing with customers, which may be against what the brand is supposed to be.

The second part of the book is more on how to go about bringing in this fusion and has some broad textbook-like guidelines. First is that one should operationalise the company based on the image that one wants to portray. The second involves culture-changing employee experience, which is linked to customer experience.

The third is what is called ‘sweat the small stuff’ where we get into details. Rituals, artefacts, procedures, policies reinforce the core values and have to be reinforced all the time. Artefacts are called memory triggers, which constantly remind you of what the company stands for. Fourth is what the author calls ‘igniting the transformation’. When employees are engaged with the brand continuously, the culture gets entwined.

The last step is what is called ‘building the brand from inside out’. To define the brand distinctively, one has to live out the purpose through substantive actions and clearly connect—with customers and other stakeholders—the dots between motivations and actions.

This book is definitely a very useful one for companies that want to identify what they really stand for because, once this is decided, the fusion can take place with the brand and vice-versa. More importantly, what is written in vision and mission statements by companies does not really matter if it’s not implemented well within the organisation. There would then be a disconnection between the two.

Madan Sabnavis is chief economist, [CARE Ratings](#)



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