



This is “Create a Strategy: SS+K Puts Its Research to Use as the Agency Creates the Brief”, chapter 8 from the book [Advertising Campaigns: Start to Finish \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

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Chapter 8

Create a Strategy: SS+K Puts Its Research to Use as the Agency Creates the Brief

Figure 8.1 *Eight Months to Launch!*



We are now eight months prior to the public launch of the msnbc.com campaign. The team at SS+K and Catherine Captain from msnbc.com have studied their customers. They have spent a considerable amount of time breaking down their prospective audience into segments. They have begun to identify where the competition is positioned and where there may be opportunities to serve a segment of customers better.

Now the work *really* begins. We must devise a strategy for this campaign. This will lead us into establishing our overall marketing strategy, and more specifically the strategy to position msnbc.com in this crowded marketplace.

Get ready. We only have eight months to Launch! It's going to be a wild ride!

SS+K Spotlight

No false starts: “If this didn’t go well, there would be no more marketing as msnbc.com.”

When Catherine Captain left her job as *USA Today*’s Director of Marketing Research in April 2006 to become the VP-marketing for msnbc.com, she declared, “I have left the number one print newspaper in the country to join the number one online news site in the country. Who could ask for more?”

The aptly named Captain did ask for more—quickly, for she realized that a rapidly changing online news industry was threatening the market dominance msnbc.com had enjoyed for over a decade. Within less than a year of assuming her new post, Captain had requested and secured a \$7 million marketing budget and had chosen strategic communications firm SS+K to oversee development of the online news giant’s first marketing campaign. *Catherine’s challenge was clear.*

Planning Is Everything. Although it’s tempting to just jump in and create some cool commercials, in reality the advertising you see or hear is just the tip of the iceberg. As Catherine at msnbc.com knows all too well, there are plenty of competitors out there who also can do cool advertising. Devising a strategy requires careful thought about your strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the only thing we can count on is that things change: a company must take stock of its environment and monitor what consumers think of it over time so it can anticipate changes instead of waiting to be surprised by them. By the time changes take place, it’s too late to react to them effectively. So, by **strategy**¹ we mean a detailed plan that specifies overall objectives the client wishes to reach based upon a realistic assessment of its environment and what it is capable of achieving, as well as its general approach to reaching those objectives.

1. A detailed plan that specifies overall objectives the client wishes to reach based upon a realistic assessment of its environment and what it is capable of achieving, as well as its general approach to reaching those objectives.

8.1 The Power of Branding

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. *Define* branding and branding strategy.
2. *Identify* the characteristics of a solid branding strategy.
3. *Explain* the concepts of brand equity and value proposition.
4. *List and discuss* the benefits of branding from the advertiser's and buyer's point of view.

What does your product or service mean to consumers?

Catherine and her team realized that the meaning of msnbc.com in the minds of their customers was not as strong as they desired. In essence, the Web site did not have a brand positioning that was distinctive, or as distinctive as they wanted. This section will discuss the power of brands. We'll learn why creating that distinct positioning of your product or service, and often your entire company, is so vital.

Video Highlight

Rob Frankel on Branding

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Rob Frankel, a branding expert, talks about what it takes for a brand to be successful.

Branding² is a way to distinguish your product or service from others using a trademarked name or logo. Brands have been around for centuries. Early craftsmen put their marks on their wares to identify who made them, and artists have long signed their artwork. Since that time, however, branding has expanded well beyond just differentiation through marks and logos. Modern brands such as Apple, Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, and Wal-Mart now communicate meaning through attributes such as accountability, consistency, and even personality traits that their names have become associated with. These meanings translate to monetary value for the firm because their brand names acquire value—consumers willingly pay a premium to buy a product carrying a respected brand name as opposed to a similar product that carries an unknown brand name.

2. A way to distinguish a particular product or service from others using a trademarked name or logo.

Developing a **branding strategy**³ creates a clear picture of the values your product or service represents. Why is that so important? The answer is simple, yet profound: People don't buy things because of what the things *do*. They buy things because of what they *mean*. There are many MP3 players out there that do just as good a job as an iPod, but they don't convey the same image to consumers. So, one result of a solid branding strategy is to create a **barrier to entry**⁴ so that competitors will find it difficult to persuade loyal consumers to abandon their favorite product for a newcomer.

Figure 8.2



A brand logo is a key component of corporate identity. SS+K's client Delta Airlines relies upon its well-known triangular logo to inspire a feeling of familiarity among consumers.

Characteristics of a Solid Branding Strategy

Accountability

Brands impose a sense of accountability on the maker of a product. If you buy an Acme shoe and it performs poorly, you're unlikely to buy Acme shoes again. On the other hand, if you've had a good experience with Acme, you're likely to buy its shoes again and perhaps its socks, shirts, or golf clubs as well. In this way, the brand is a shorthand way of signaling quality that simplifies decision making for customers. People who know and like a given brand are more likely to buy it again.

Consistency

Brands don't have to be high end to command loyalty; they just need to communicate a consistent meaning to consumers. That might mean projecting an image of quality, but it can also mean being associated with consistently low costs (e.g., Wal-Mart), trendy fashion (e.g., Juicy Couture), or a particular lifestyle (e.g., Whole Foods Market). A brand thus serves to express key properties of the products the company produces.

Brand Personality

Just as people have personalities, so do brands. Personality refers to the traits that a person exhibits. The person may not exhibit those characteristics *all* the time, but they tend to exhibit them regularly. A **brand personality**⁵ is a set of traits that people attribute to a product as if it were a person.

3. Plan that creates a clear picture of the values a particular product or service represents.
4. An obstacle that makes it more difficult for competitors to introduce their product to the marketplace.
5. A set of traits that people attribute to a product as if it were a person.

Dig Deeper

Identify a brand that claims each of these personality traits. How much do you and your classmates agree on each of these choices?

- self-confident
- sincere
- serious
- wholesome
- hip
- romantic
- rugged
- sophisticated
- athletic

Creating a Corporate Image

Corporations often engage in **image advertising**⁶ to enhance the public perception of the firm in the eyes of its most important constituencies—typically the firm’s customers, employees, and local communities. Although these campaigns aim to promote the company’s public identity rather than sell a specific product, a corporation’s image is intimately tied to its brand personality. The image of the firm reflects on the image of its brands.

In 2007, for example, Dow Chemical Company allocated over \$25 million for a corporate ad campaign it called “the human element.” Rance Crain, “Dow’s Corporate Ads Have Great Chemistry, but Will Respect Follow?” *Advertising Age*, August 6, 2007, 13. The campaign was meant to appeal to local communities (who may or may not welcome Dow into their backyards), as well as legislators, journalists, environmentalists, employees, and shareholders. The idea behind the campaign is to show what the “human element” can do to solve some of the world’s problems, such as countering climate change and providing clean water, decent housing, health, safety, and an affordable and adequate food supply. Dow’s goal for the campaign is “to be acknowledged as the largest, most profitable, and most respected chemical company in the world.” Its CEO, Andrew Liveris, will consider the campaign a success “when a Dow employee in a bar anywhere in the world can tell the guy next to him where he works and get the response, ‘Oh, Dow. That’s good.’”

6. Campaigns aimed at enhancing a corporation’s image and promoting the company’s public identity rather than selling a specific product.

The Holy Grail: Brand Equity

Brand equity⁷ is the extent to which a consumer holds strong, favorable associations with a brand and is willing to pay more for the branded version of a product. Differentiation, accountability, consistency, and personality all support brand equity by creating a clear sense of the brand's **value proposition**⁸: the clearly identifiable benefit it provides relative to competing brands. As Roger Adams, senior vice president–CMO of Home Depot, said, “If you go to a grocery store or department store, there are brands on the shelf that have fundamentally the same function and one is 20 percent more than the other one. But people are paying that because there’s a belief in the brand or there’s an experience with the brand that builds trust, or they know if there’s a problem they can get service, that type of thing. And people do it every day....That’s pretty much what brand marketing is about.”

Dig Deeper

Identify your five favorite brands. What makes them special? How do they differ from other, similar products you might choose instead? Interview a set of friends about their brand preferences and determine how much their preferences agree with each other. How do you explain what you found?

Summary: Benefits of a Brand

The benefit of a brand for advertisers is higher profitability: it is less expensive to attract repeat buyers than to find new customers. Moreover, satisfied buyers may pay a higher price for a trusted brand.

Brands have benefits for the buyer:

- Signals known properties (quality, performance, cost, etc.)
- Simplifies decision making
- Simplifies repeat purchase with a memorable name or logo

Brands have benefits for the manufacturer:

- Offers legal protection (through trademarks)
- Creates a barrier to entry for competitors

7. The value of a brand name over and above the value of a generic product in the same category.

8. The clearly identifiable benefit that a certain brand provides relative to competing brands.

- Translates to financial benefits (both for the company's bottom line and to impress Wall Street)

KEY TAKEAWAY

The power of branding derives from brand differentiation, accountability, consistency, and personality. Utilizing these principles helps to establish valuable brand equity.

EXERCISES

- a. List the common traits that a brand's personality might include. Create an example to illustrate how some of the traits might be included in an ad.
- b. Summarize the benefits of a brand. Create one benefit list for the buyer and one benefit list for the advertiser/maker of the brand.

8.2 Describe Where You Are: A Strategic Framework

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. *Describe* the strategic framework that can be used to solve problems.
2. *Discuss* how to conduct a situation analysis to understand problems and opportunities.
3. *Explain* the function of a brand audit.
4. *Discuss* the SWOTs and *apply* them to the solution of a problem.

Now that we understand the value of brands, it is time to get down to the business of strategy creation. Plan now, or regret it later! Here's what an advertising strategist needs to do:

- *Identify Your Situation.* What are your strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities?
- *Define Where You Want to Go: Set Objectives.* What do you want your marketing and advertising to accomplish?
- *Outline How You Want to Get There: Create a Strategy.* What is your plan to accomplish these objectives?

Fundamentally, our goal is to take a thorough internal look at our product, service, and firm. We must be objective. This is hard. Catherine joined msnbc.com and immediately began to understand the product itself and the brand. She must summarize where the current offering is positioned, identify where she wants it to be positioned, and then create an overall strategy to connect those dots. Getting this part right makes the rest of the challenge (and this book) easy. Getting it wrong...

Video Spotlight

Catherine Captain

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Catherine Captain discusses her arrival at msnbc.com and the importance of establishing the brand in the consumer's eyes.

Situation Analysis

Before you can decide where to go, you need to understand where you are (the current marketing situation or environment). Use secondary and primary research as discussed in [Chapter 7 "Decide What You Can Afford to Say: msnbc.com Sets the Budget"](#) to inform your assessment of the full situation. The **situation analysis**⁹ is an important tool to help you with this process.

Competitive Situation

A situation analysis begins with a review of the client's industry and of the competitors vying for the consumer's attention and dollars. For example, a situation analysis might reveal that some companies in the industry may not actually be competitors; buyers of Hyundais are unlikely to be buyers of BMWs as well. It may also reveal indirect competition in an industry. Southwest Airlines, for example, tries to price its airline tickets low enough to compete with buses and automobiles.

msnbc.com understood its competitors to reach beyond just other online news sites such as CNN.com or NYTimes.com. Its competition also included news aggregators or portals such as Google News as well as broader and new information sources such as Digg and Gawker.

Customer Situation

The situation analysis also evaluates the potential customers (prospects) for your product. This might include estimating the potential population of customers, demographic changes (such as aging Baby Boomers), potential sales per customer, trends in willingness to pay, and so on. Note that for consumer goods companies, the "customer" may be either the end consumer or the retailer. Thus, Wal-Mart is a major customer for consumer goods companies like Procter & Gamble.

As we learned in the section in [Chapter 6 "Segment, Target, and Position Your Audience: SS+K Identifies the Most Valuable News Consumer"](#) on segmenting the audience, msnbc.com started understanding its audience as a broader group of online news users. As the research progressed, it learned about msnbc.com lovers and news junkies—users who need more and more stimulation from what they read in order to be satisfied—ultimately leading to the definition of the *News Explorer* as the most valuable audience for the upcoming branding campaign.

9. An assessment of where the brand currently is, including the competitive situation, customer situation, and economic and cultural trends.

SS+K Spotlight

Target identification: “What was it about explorers and addicts and junkies that sets them apart from the rest of us?”

In order to develop authentic, relevant communication with a target audience, you need to understand who they are. Think about trying to categorize the vast numbers and types of people who might prefer msnbc.com. Then overlay that image with all the different regular uses for the site—news, entertainment, research, passing time—and the task of defining a target consumer can seem mind-boggling. Demographics alone don’t sketch an adequate picture of the intended audience. As discussed in [Chapter 6 "Segment, Target, and Position Your Audience: SS+K Identifies the Most Valuable News Consumer"](#), instead of targeting a group bounded by readily identifiable markers such as socioeconomic class, age, or gender, SS+K wanted to discover how its audience might be unified by a mindset.

Economic and Cultural Trends

Finally, the situation analysis examines overall economic and environmental trends that may affect a company’s marketplace situation. Economic growth or recession affects total demand for a product. Fewer people buy expensive houses when companies are downsizing. Foreign exchange rates may change the costs or make the company more competitive in foreign markets because the dollar may be worth less in another country—as a result it costs more dollars to manufacture the product elsewhere. Changes in costs can affect both prices and profits. For example, a drop in technology costs might cause a company to lower the prices on the goods it produces, possibly reducing profits. By contrast, a rise in fuel costs might force a company like Delta Airlines to raise its prices; if the company can’t increase prices enough to make up for the additional costs, its profits will decline. Changes in the cultural environment also exert a huge impact on a company’s fortunes. For a news Web site like msnbc.com, for example, the number and types of people who visit the site is influenced by the penetration of Internet access in different areas, the lure of alternative online platforms like virtual worlds or even Twitter, and the number of people who begin to use their cell phones as their primary “screen.”

Video Spotlight

Michelle Rowley

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Michelle Rowley discusses the competitive and consumer situation faced by msnbc.com.

Brand Audit

A **brand audit**¹⁰ helps a company understand the health of its brand, identify areas of additional value, and improve brand equity. A firm should conduct brand audits regularly—at least yearly—to ensure that the brand stays relevant, unique, and strong.

The story of Nortel, a telecommunications equipment maker, offers an example of the importance of a regular brand audit. Nortel was struggling during an industry downturn and an accounting scandal. Its chief competitor, Cisco Systems, had an advertising budget almost six times the size of Nortel's. Nortel's new chief marketing officer, Lauren Flaherty, decided it was time to undertake a global brand audit to get a feel for how customers, employees, and shareholders perceived Nortel and what the company needed to do to reshape its brand.

Before the audit, Flaherty met with marketing executives throughout the company to assess Nortel's marketing communications capabilities, as well as the capabilities of its ad agency and public relations firm. "The first priority is to understand, by target audience, what is the communications challenge with each constituency," she said. "We will create a very systematic blueprint for who we communicate with, how we communicate, and the whole marketing mix." Kate Maddox, "Nortel CMO Begins Global Brand" *B to B*, May 8, 2006, 3. Nortel's audit allowed the company to get a more realistic feel for its market position so that its advertising could more precisely communicate its value proposition.

10. Assessment that examines the health of a brand and identifies areas of additional value and ways to improve brand equity.

SS+K Spotlight

msnbc.com's brand audit highlights:

On the surface, the marriage of Microsoft's technology with NBC's content looked like a happy one, but beneath the surface there was confusion. Many of msnbc.com's people defined the brand based on their role at the organization. As discussed in the [Chapter 5 "Know Your Audience: SS+K Learns All About msnbc.com, Inside and Out"](#) section on research and the msnbc.com stakeholder interviews, the technology side of the organization (the people who make the site function) identified more heavily with Microsoft, while employees who worked on the news side identified more with the NBC brand. By defining the brand based on their roles at msnbc.com, they lacked a cohesive umbrella definition, and as a result the organization wasn't yet able to articulate its meaning to the outside world. Additional points contributed to the lack of clarity:

- msnbc.com is laden with brands: MSNBC cable TV, specific NBC TV program brands like *The Today Show*, branded personalities like Brian Williams, and brands they do not own but host on the site, such as *Newsweek*. Add to this mix the connection to MSN, and there was plenty of complexity and confusion regarding just what msnbc.com consists of.
- MSNBC cable has run a distant third in the twenty-four-hour news channel race. As a result, it hasn't endowed msnbc.com with the brand equity afforded its rivals like CNN and the *New York Times*, which have strong cross-channel representation.
- The association with NBC News lends an important credibility and character to the site, but broadcast news channels in general have failed to attract users in large numbers to their Web versions. The success of msnbc.com hadn't depended on drawing users to TV news online, and its future did not lie in repurposing broadcast news.

SS+K Spotlight

SS+K conducted a situation analysis for its client, msnbc.com. It was vital for the agency to understand how people thought about the news service—especially compared to its major competitors. What products did it deliver well? What kind of personality did it have? The documents below reflect some of the agency’s findings.

Identifying a competitive opportunity. The picture was a bit muddy: although the marriage between Microsoft and NBC made the news service unique, there was confusion about the best way to tell the client’s story to consumers. Was the site about cutting-edge technology or unique content? Should it focus on breaking news or on in-depth feature stories?

Further probing with consumer focus groups, however, revealed an opening. When asked to compare the client’s personality to other news Web sites, people described msnbc.com as more friendly, colorful, and younger—if the site came to life, they thought it would be the characteristics that popular news anchor Katie Couric represented. This was a more positive personality description than the groups gave for the serious demeanor of CNN.com (who would have characteristics of an Englishman) or of the nondescript Yahoo! + Google News (whose traits would be like a traffic cop!). As a result, msnbc.com saw an opportunity to position itself as *entertaining news*.

Further probing revealed that people regarded msnbc.com as less biased than other news sites—either to the left (CNN.com) or to the right (Fox News). Compared to CNN.com, people felt that msnbc.com offered more variety, emotion, and potential to discover interesting things. In other words, the competition provided plenty of information, but not content that excited the imagination. At last, here was an advantage SS+K could run with: let’s think of the core customer as a News Explorer who enjoys the experience of discovering and unearthing new pieces of news and information from what he or she reads.

11. Assessment that organizes internal and external factors affecting the product or business into separate categories (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) for study.

SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Agencies typically synthesize the results of situation analyses and brand audits into a **SWOT analysis**¹¹, which organizes internal and external factors affecting the

product or business into separate categories for study. A SWOT analysis gives a company a quick overview of its competitive situation and helps it decide which actions to take that will address trends in the environment in ways that are consistent with its capabilities.

Internal Situation: Strengths and Weaknesses

This refers to strengths and weaknesses inherent to the product or business itself. A financial firm’s **strengths**¹² might include a stable financial position or its strength or expertise at operating overseas. **Weaknesses**¹³ could include bureaucratic inertia or slowness to develop new products.

External Situation: Opportunities and Threats

In contrast, **opportunities**¹⁴ and **threats**¹⁵ describe factors that lie outside the product or business. For example, aging Baby Boomers could be an opportunity to the makers of Tempur-Pedic mattresses that promise a more comfortable night’s sleep. For a bicycle firm like Schwinn, on the other hand, aging Boomers might be a threat, since people are likely to bicycle less as they grow older.

Figure 8.3 Step 3: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Elements – can be controlled • Technologies • Physical facilities • Financial stability • Corporate reputation • Quality of products • Strength of brands • Quality of employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Elements – can be controlled • Technologies • Physical facilities • Financial stability • Corporate reputation • Quality of products • Strength of brands • Quality of employees
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Elements – can respond to and anticipate • The consumer • The economy • Competition • Technology • Law • Ethics • Sociocultural trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Elements – can respond to and anticipate • The consumer • The economy • Competition • Technology • Law • Ethics • Sociocultural trends

12. Internal factors (attributes of a product or brand itself) that the company can build on.

13. Internal factors (attributes of a product or brand itself) that are detrimental to a product or brand.

14. External factors (conditions outside of a product or brand itself) that can be used to build or promote the brand or product.

15. External factors (conditions outside of a product or brand itself) that challenge the ability to build or promote the brand or product.

A SWOT analysis identifies internal elements (strengths and weaknesses) and external elements (opportunities and threats).

Figure 8.4 Example of a SWOT analysis for Ikea

Strengths (Internal Elements)	Weaknesses (Internal Elements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• World-class product styling• Extremely compelling pricing• Large stores provide space to showcase products in vignettes and carry supporting inventory• Broad product assortment including both hard lines and soft lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some items are poor quality• Some items may be too involved for the average customer to assemble• As store count expands to smaller markets, business model may need to adapt to ensure profitability
Opportunities (External Elements)	Threats (External Elements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soft economy makes low-price furniture even more appealing to consumers• Many “traditional” furniture retailers have gone out of business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not all consumers are willing or able to pick up, transport, and assemble the furniture (especially true as population ages)• Competitors such as Target may expand furniture offerings and/or open furniture stores, which could provide head-on competition

Video Spotlight

Michelle Rowley

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Michelle Rowley discusses an external factor that affects msnbc.com—would you define it as a threat or an opportunity?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Know where you are before you decide where you’re going. Conduct an honest SWOT analysis to identify good and bad aspects of your situation.

EXERCISES

- a. Describe what happens during situation analysis. Explain each of the various situations that are investigated.
- b. Discuss each stage of the SWOTs process. How do you identify a competitive opportunity?

8.3 Define Where You Want to Go: Set Objectives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. *Distinguish* between marketing objectives and advertising objectives in a strategy.
2. *Explain* the DAGMAR model for setting objectives.

Marketing Objectives

Objectives state *what* outcomes will be achieved, while strategy defines *how* each objective will be achieved. Once you understand the marketing environment, the next step is to develop specific marketing objectives. **Marketing objectives**¹⁶ state what the marketing function must do so that the company can achieve its overall business objectives (such as growth, expanding its market share, or increasing profits). Marketing-related objectives are specific to the firm's brands, customer segments, and product features. These might include "Grow sales of product X by 30 percent over the next twelve months" or "Increase market share among affluent consumers aged forty-five to sixty-five." Samsung, for example, sells fourteen product categories in more than two hundred countries, which yields 476 category-country combinations. Samsung collects data systematically on each combination and uses that brand data to set better marketing objectives by country and product. Thomas Davenport and Jeanne Harris, "Competing with Multichannel Marketing Analytics," *Advertising Age*, April 2, 2007, 16.

16. Statements of what the marketing function must do so that the company can achieve its overall business objectives (such as growth, expansion of its market share, or increasing profits).

17. The specific communication tasks that an advertisement seeks to achieve.

18. Informing the consumer about a product.

19. Reminding the consumer of the product.

20. Persuading the customer to change from one brand to another.

Advertising Objectives

Advertising objectives¹⁷ are the specific communication tasks that an advertisement seeks to achieve. These tasks include **trial**¹⁸ (informing the consumer about a product), **continuity**¹⁹ (reminding the consumer of the product), and **brand switching**²⁰ (persuading the customer to change from one brand to another). Often, the advertising objectives are tied to the product's life cycle. For example, trial is usually employed at the start of a product's life cycle to encourage customers to try the product. A firm pursues continuity objectives when a product is mature in order to remind current customers to continue buying the product. Brand switching, or *switchback*, occurs at later stages of the life cycle—particularly the rejuvenation phase, when the company highlights new product features or lowers the price of the product.

DAGMAR Objectives

The **DAGMAR model**²¹ (*Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results*), developed by Russell Colley, is a way to set objectives and measure the results of advertising. Colley stated that the process of achieving an advertising objective can be broken down into four phases:

- *Awareness*. Consumers must first be made aware that a particular brand or offering exists (“I’ve heard of it”).
- *Comprehension*. Consumers must understand what the offering is and how it will benefit them (“I know what it is”).
- *Conviction*. Consumers must decide to want to buy the product (“I want it”).
- *Action*. Consumers must actually buy the product (“I’ve bought it”).

Communications Objectives

The DAGMAR model states that *advertising objectives must be concrete and measurable*. That is, you want to have a precise statement of the message to communicate to the target audience and have a way to measure whether the intended message has been communicated properly. The measurement can be straightforward. For example, if your objective is that people perceive your product as the healthy alternative, you can measure the objective by asking shoppers whether they think your product is healthier than the competition.

Creative Objectives

The **creative objectives**²² deal with the form and content of the advertising. They define key elements of the message (what you want to say), emotional tone (how you say it), and production objectives (what the ad looks like). For example, the creative objective might specify that the advertising will reinforce existing aspects of the brand personality, modify old perceptions of the brand, or instill new brand characteristics.

Media Objectives

Media objectives²³ define the who, where, and when of the target audience in the context of an overall marketing plan and budget. Note that media objectives don’t state *which* media will be used, because how you reach the audience is part of setting a media strategy. Elements of media objectives can include:

- *Who*: target audience objectives

21. *Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results*: a way to set objectives and measure the results of advertising, developed by Russell Colley, involving four steps: awareness, comprehension, conviction, and action.

22. Plans that define the form and content of the advertising, including the message, emotional tone, and production objectives.

23. Plans that define the who, where, and when of the target audience in the context of an overall marketing plan and budget.

- *Where*: geographic objectives
- *When*: timing, scheduling, reach, and frequency objectives
- *Marketing coordination*: sales promotion objectives
- *Money*: media budget objectives

You'll learn more about how these objectives are put into motion in [Chapter 9 "Choose Your Communication Weapons: SS+K Decides Upon a Creative Strategy and Media Tactics"](#) and [Chapter 10 "Plan and Buy Media: SS+K Chooses the Right Media for the Client's New Branding Message"](#).

Dig Deeper

Identify a TV commercial you've seen in the last month. Conduct an unofficial DAGMAR analysis for it: to what extent does it meet the criteria of creating awareness, comprehension, conviction, or action?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Now that you have read this section, you should be able to understand the power of branding and how to construct a strategic framework for solving problems:

- You have *reviewed* the power of branding and its relationship to brand differentiation, accountability, consistency, and personality.
- You can *explain* the concept of brand equity.
- You can *recognize* the benefits of branding for advertisers and buyers.
- You can *describe* the strategic framework for solving problems.
- You can *explain* the function of a brand audit.
- You can *apply* SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to a marketing situation.
- You can *construct* advertising and marketing objectives that can be applied to your plans and strategies.
- You can *create* advertising and marketing strategies that provide direction to creative teams.
- You can *create* a creative brief that describes the intricacies of the proposed advertising strategies and how those strategies can be implemented by the creative team.

EXERCISES

- a. Describe the differences between marketing objectives and advertising objectives in formulating a marketing and promotion plan.
- b. List and discuss the four phases of the DAGMAR model.
- c. Compare and contrast creative objectives and media objectives.

8.4 Decide How You'll Get There: Create a Strategy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. Create a marketing strategy that *demonstrates* correct usage of the marketing mix.
2. Create an advertising strategy that *demonstrates* how creative and media strategy are combined to solve an advertising problem.

Marketing Strategy

A **marketing strategy**²⁴ consists of the activities a company must take to achieve its marketing objectives. For example, one step it must take is to decide on the appropriate mix of the Four Ps:

24. The activities a company must take to achieve its marketing objectives, including the Four Ps (product definition, pricing strategies, promotion strategy, place [distribution] strategies).
25. One of the Four Ps: description of the features a product should have, its packaging, and any support services.
26. One of the Four Ps: description of how much retail and wholesale customers will pay for the product.
27. One of the Four Ps: description of the methods to reach the target market, and the goal of each promotion.
28. One of the Four Ps: description of how the product will be sold—directly to consumers or through retailers or wholesalers.

- **Product definition**²⁵. What features should the product have? What should the product packaging look like? Should there be accompanying support services, such as maintenance?
- **Pricing strategies**²⁶. How much are customers willing to pay for the product? What should be the selling price for retailers and wholesalers?
- **Promotion strategy**²⁷. What methods will the company use (e.g., advertising, PR, direct sales) to reach the target market? What is the goal of each promotion—to entice new customers, to boost repeat sales, to increase sales volumes?
- **Place (distribution) strategies**²⁸. Will the product be sold directly to consumers (such as via the Web) or through retailers and wholesalers? For decades, airlines sold tickets through travel agencies, but now most of them sell e-tickets over the Web. This distribution strategy saves the airlines money (by eliminating commissions to travel agents) and lets customers buy tickets any time of the day or night.

Advertising Strategy

Creative Strategy

Creative strategy²⁹ defines what the advertiser’s message will say and how it will say it. Being creative does not mean simply being clever or unique—the advertisement must communicate the intended message to the target audience.

Media Strategy

Media strategy³⁰ matches the potential customers of a product with users of specific media. For example, a media strategy might attempt to find out if members of the target market prefer to watch TV, listen to the radio, or read magazines. It may also try to determine which TV programs, radio broadcasts, or magazines the target market prefers.

The media strategy must be well timed to ensure that ads are produced or commercials are filmed in time for their airing. Other important timing decisions include determining how long the advertising campaign will run and how many times to expose the audience to the ad during the product-purchase cycle.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Determine where you are with respect to the situation facing the company (internal analysis) by constructing a situation analysis, a brand audit, and a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

Decide where you want to go (your desired positioning) by establishing advertising and marketing objectives that can be applied to your plans and strategies.

Create advertising and marketing strategies that provide direction to the creative team. The creative team is assembled to bring the product or service’s message to the target markets.

EXERCISES

- a. Briefly discuss each of the four variables (Four Ps) that must be considered when constructing a marketing strategy.
- b. Compare and contrast creative strategies and media strategies.

29. Description of what the advertiser’s message will say and how it will say it.

30. Plan that matches the potential customers of a product with users of specific media.

8.5 The Creative Brief

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. *Create* a creative brief that *demonstrates* the Big Idea and is applied to an advertising opportunity.
2. *Describe* and *evaluate* the asymmetric communications brief.

How do you communicate your strategy to your creative team?

The fruits of your labor are now turning into a real plan and a real document. After learning about the Four Ps and branding, and after identifying your current positioning and more desired positioning, you are ready to put words and actions into motion.

In this final section of this chapter, you will learn about SS+K's and msnbc.com's official plan: the *creative brief*. Preparing a creative brief is a collaborative process between the client (msnbc.com) and the agency (SS+K). Of course, a creative brief is never truly finalized; it is a living document that needs to be constantly reexamined for overall market appropriateness.

The Brief

The **creative brief**³¹ is a document that outlines the information and objectives to inspire the creative idea. Creative briefs may take different forms and include a variety of elements, including describing what the advertising is trying to achieve, identifying the main idea to be communicated, and outlining the target audience for that idea.

Video Highlight

The Creative Brief

[\(click to see video\)](#)

This video shows how a creative brief is used within an agency.

31. Document that outlines the information and objectives to inspire the creative idea, including what the advertising is trying to achieve, the main idea to be communicated, and the target audience.

Proposing the Big Idea requires client agreement that the idea is right. Thus, both the advertising agency and the client must agree upon the final brief. The best briefs are written by account planners collaboratively with input from the client, account team, and creative director. One of the key functions of the SS+K brief is to come up with a single essential thought that summarizes the idea that will convince consumers to do what it is that the communication aims to do. Every agency has a proprietary brief template it uses to spell out the types of content it will need to include, such as specifying the audience, the product features, media placement ideas, and key point.

Figure 8.5 Anatomy of a Creative Brief

Date:	Date the brief is created; updates should be noted as appropriate.
Submitted by:	Name of person preparing the brief.
Contact Information:	Contact information for the person preparing the brief.
Product/Brand/Service:	Name of the product/brand/service for which the advertising is being created.
Key Fact:	A concise statement of the situation.
Problem the Advertising Must Solve:	A short statement of the problem the advertising should be designed to solve.
Advertising Objective:	A summary of the measurable result of the advertising.
Target Audience:	This section may also include a concise statement of the effect the ad should have on consumers. Typically expressed as an action and frequently focused on what you want them to think, to feel, or to do. The more precise and detailed the better. This section should go beyond age and gender to include demographics and psychographics. It should include how the audience currently thinks or feels about the product category, the brand, or the specific service as well as how they currently behave.
Key Competitors:	Names of the 3-4 key competitors.
Key Promise – The Single Most Important Message to be Communicated:	What is the most persuasive or most important thing you can say to achieve the objective? This should be a simple sentence. No more than a few sentences if absolutely necessary. Generalities should be avoided because they result in ambiguous communications.
Reason Why – Supporting Rational and Emotional Reasons to Believe:	List the rational and emotional reasons for the target market to believe the key promise. Include all the major copy points, in order of relative importance to the consumer. In other words, "What else can you say to achieve the objective?"
Call to Action:	What action do you want the consumer to take when he or she sees/hears/reads the advertising?
Mandatories:	This should include all other information that must be included in the ad such as the logo, address, phone number, url, trademark information, etc.

Briefs provide a foundation that allows all decision makers to provide initial input and subsequently gauge how well the chosen communication ideas, from advertising to media and PR, stay true to the strategic plan. In this way, clients rely on creative briefs as much as copywriters and art directors do.

SS+K uses only one brief, and the creative director has input on that brief. Other agencies may use different briefs for different purposes depending on the needs of the client. For example, a retailer may have a brief for its national campaign, and other briefs for local ads that may have different emphases. It is important to

remember that there is no standard brief across the advertising industry, but most of the information found on briefs is fairly similar.

The first step in the SS+K brief is to use consumer and brand truths to establish the client's noble purpose. The **noble purpose**³² expresses the brand's "true north," its reason for being on the earth. It is single-minded, concise, and written in such a way as to excite the imagination of the reader.

SS+K Spotlight

Marty Cooke is a partner and chief creative officer of New York-based SS+K. When he joined the agency, he'd already had substantial creative experience in some of the most influential advertising agencies in the world. He brought with him a defining vision for how creative solutions would be different at SS+K.

Video Spotlight

Marty Cooke

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Marty Cooke describes the importance and elements of the noble purpose.

32. Expression of the brand's "true north," its reason for being; a single-minded, concise statement, written to excite the imagination.

Figure 8.6 Noble Purpose Worksheet

NOBLE PURPOSE WORKSHEET CLIENT : Client

SS+K

A great Noble Purpose states why a brand has a right to exist. It raises a brand from being a slave to the competition to being the champion of a cause.

DATE : Date
APPROVED [internal] : Approved [internal]
APPROVED [by client] : Approved [by client]

THE BRAND: Brand _____

BRAND TRUTH
What single fact is + always has been unique + central to this brand?

CONSUMER TRUTH
What experience, behavior, belief or problem do consumers have that relates to the brand or category?

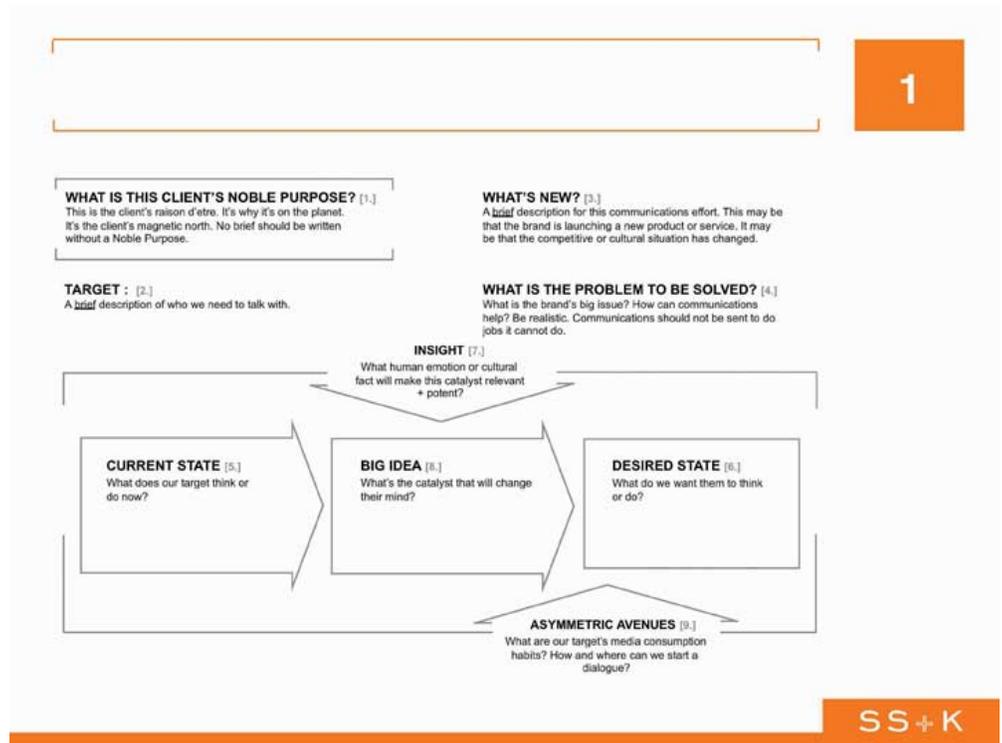
To create a magnetic north for everyone involved with the brand.

NOBLE PURPOSE

Is it rational + emotional, just like a human being?
 Is it polarizing? (this is good but not necessary)
 Is it capable of creating intense loyalty inside + outside the company?

The noble purpose worksheet is the first step in synthesizing the client's purpose for existing.

Figure 8.7 *The Communications Brief*



Once SS+K identifies the noble purpose, the agency develops what it calls an “**asymmetric communications brief**”³³. This document summarizes the consumer’s current state and spells out what the agency needs to do to show him or her how the client’s product or service will improve upon this state.

Video Spotlight

Catherine Captain

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Catherine Captain recalls the process of refining the brief from the client’s perspective.

Video Spotlight

Michelle Rowley

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Michelle Rowley explains the full msnbc.com brief from Consumer Truth to Big Idea.

33. Document summarizing the consumer’s current state and what the agency needs to do to show how the product or service will improve upon this state.

SS+K Spotlight

The *manifesto*: “Catching lightning in a bottle.”

Agency creative teams typically develop creative executions immediately after receiving the brief. SS+K, however, takes an interim step between the development of the brief and the execution of the campaign. SS+K copywriter Sam Mazur was asked to capture the essence of the branding in a conceptual piece of work that is not an advertisement. This is a tricky proposition. If it is effective, the manifesto is a useful tool for explaining the thinking of the marketing team. On the other hand, if the piece generates too much enthusiasm, the agency may find itself in the position of trying to explain the difference between an expression of the brand and an advertisement for the brand.

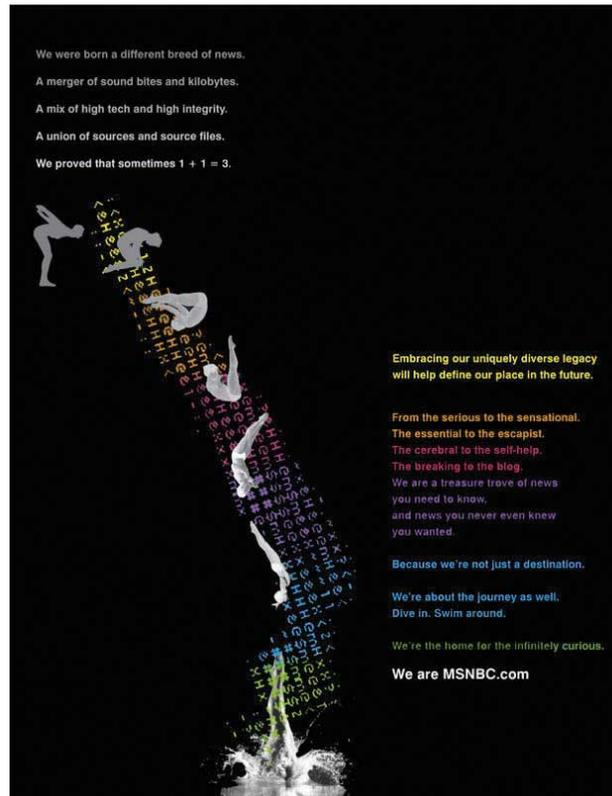
Video Spotlight

Russell Stevens

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Russell Stevens discusses the articulation of the brief with creative contribution and the manifesto video interview.

Figure 8.8



*The Manifesto. The communications brief in turn inspires what SS+K calls its “**brand manifesto**”³⁴. It is often both a written and a visual statement used to help internal and external audiences understand what the brand stands for. It is not a marketing campaign or a reflection of what the final advertising material will look like.*

Video Spotlight

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Sam Mazur and Amit Nizan discuss the creation of the manifesto.

Video Spotlight

The msnbc.com Manifesto

[\(click to see video\)](#)

34. Both a written and a visual statement used to help internal and external audiences understand what the brand stands for; it is not a marketing campaign or a reflection of the final advertising material.

Video Spotlight

Catherine Captain

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Catherine Captain discusses the internal reaction to the manifesto.

KEY TAKEAWAY

This section described how to devise a creative brief that more fully describes the intricacies of the proposed advertising strategies and how the creative team can implement those strategies.

EXERCISES

- a. Describe the components and purpose of a creative brief. What are the differences between the creative brief and the creative director's brief?
- b. Use a step-by-step or model approach to characterize the asymmetric communications brief. Explain the difference between the noble purpose and the asymmetric communications brief. What is the main advantage of using this form?

8.6 Exercises

TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you have read this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- You can *define* branding and brand strategy.
- You can *identify* the characteristics of a solid branding strategy.
- You can *explain* the concepts of brand equity and value proposition.
- You can *list* and *discuss* the benefits of branding from the advertiser's and buyer's points of view.
- You can *describe* the strategic framework that can be used to solve problems.
- You can *discuss* how to conduct a situation analysis to understand problems and opportunities.
- You can *explain* the function of a brand audit.
- You can *discuss* the SWOTs and *apply* them to the solution of a problem.
- You can *distinguish* between marketing objectives and advertising objectives in a strategy.
- You can *explain* the DAGMAR model for setting objectives.
- You can *create* a marketing strategy that *demonstrates* correct usage of the marketing mix.
- You can *create* an advertising strategy that *demonstrates* how creative and media strategy are combined to solve an advertising problem.
- You can *create* a creative brief that *demonstrates* the Big Idea and is applied to an advertising opportunity.
- You can *describe* and *evaluate* the asymmetric communications brief.

USE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Have you seen the new Smart car? If you have, you are probably part of the buzz that has been heard recently about this new concept car that has made it to the streets. The car seats two, is available in three different models, and costs between about \$12,500 and \$17,000. The most significant fact about the Smart car is that it gets about forty-five miles per gallon. That fact alone has become central to Smart car's initial introduction to the driving public. Has "small" finally become better than "large, extralarge, and supersize"? The manufacturer of the Smart car is betting on it. Investigate the Smart car. Once this is done, construct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis for the Smart car. Evaluate the car's likelihood of success.
2. Is there a Chick-fil-A in your neighborhood? If there is, you've probably eaten at one of the fastest-growing food franchises in the southern United States (see <http://www.chickfila.com>). Chick-fil-A has a unique approach to running their business. Using the company's Web site and search engines, your task is to investigate the Chick-fil-A organization in order to conduct a situation analysis. During your investigation be sure to comment on the perceived competitive situation, customer situation, and economics and costs that impact or affect the company and its industry. Once you have completed your situation analysis, conduct a brief brand audit of Chick-fil-A. What are your conclusions about Chick-fil-A and its business model? Discuss your audit and opinions with peers.

DIGITAL NATIVES

Most young adults have had some experience with MySpace or other Web communication sites. Security issues aside, millions of people are communicating in previously unheard-of ways via the Internet. One area of concern, however, is how to protect younger communicators from the dangers of an open Internet. Many parents of preteens have banned them from popular more adult social networking Web sites. A relatively new social networking Web site, however, has been designed with the preteen in mind. Stardoll (<http://www.stardoll.com>) provides a mechanism for preteens to communicate and chat with other preteens via a “MeDoll” that can be dressed and accessorized from a long list of celebrity avatars.

Go to the Stardoll Web site and familiarize yourself with its components. Your challenge is create a *short creative brief* to promote this Web site. The objective of the communication is to attract more viewers and participants. Present your brief in class if time permits.

AD-VICE

1. Describe the role that Catherine Captain plays in the SS+K Spotlight feature in this chapter. Assess her communication skills. Illustrate a positive skill and a negative skill that she seems to possess.
2. Pick one of your favorite brands and summarize its history in the marketplace. As you research your favorite brand, comment on any brand strategies that you notice. Comment on your brand’s perceived brand personality, brand equity, and viability.
3. Pick any brand and apply the summary benefits of branding to your choice. Remember to discuss the benefits of branding to both the buyer and the advertiser or maker of your brand.
4. Pick any company and create a new product for them to manufacture. Following the guidelines in the chapter, create a situation analysis of the firm and of your new creation. Examine the differences between the two “situations.” Should the company make your product? Explain.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

According to information presented in the Digital Natives section, preteens and teens can go to a monitored Web site and participate in a communication community that is structured just for them. The Web site (<http://www.stardoll.com>) advocates protection for its viewers and participants from controversial topics, visuals, and conversations that plague more adult-oriented Web sites.

One of the purposes of this Web site appears to be the protection of its young participants from more adult-oriented content and exploitation. Examine the Web site and its policies. From an ethical point of view, assess the Web site and its capabilities for protecting its visitors. Can the organization's implied protection promise be delivered? Summarize your thoughts.