

Increasing the Odds of Success:

Measuring Your Brand to Make Confident Decisions on Brand Extensions

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Branding Issues with New Product Launches

Brand measurement is an essential component when it comes to considering possible brand extensions and their viability. General Mills has developed a diagnostic database to help measure the meaning of a parent brand, its relative strength, and the extent to which possible brand extensions are in line with the parent brand's meaning. All of these can help predict the success or failure of each of the many brand extensions that come up for consideration.

When creating a new product, using an established brand equity does not guarantee success. Important branding questions to be answered early in the development process include:

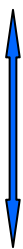
- Will an established brand increase the strength of a new product?
- Will the new product help or erode the existing brand?
- Is an external brand cost justified?
- How can we maximize the fit of the new product with the established brand?

Concept Testing

General Mills uses a monadic concept test format that is standardized by category. Primary grocery shoppers briefly view a concept which typically includes a package shot, headline, support statements, flavor varieties, purchase information, and an option to see the nutrition panel and/or preparation instructions. They are then asked to rate the concept on a broad variety of diagnostic rating scales. There are 54 standards statements across all product categories, which cover attributes such as taste, convenience, nutrition, brand trust, product image, appeal, and value. Additionally, there are 25 to 50 other category-specific attributes. In general, the statements range from product attributes to emotional benefits. Emotional statements are used less frequently because they are more difficult to quantify. See Figure 1 for an illustration of the range of attributes.

Fig. 1 Range of Attributes in Concept Tests

Higher Order

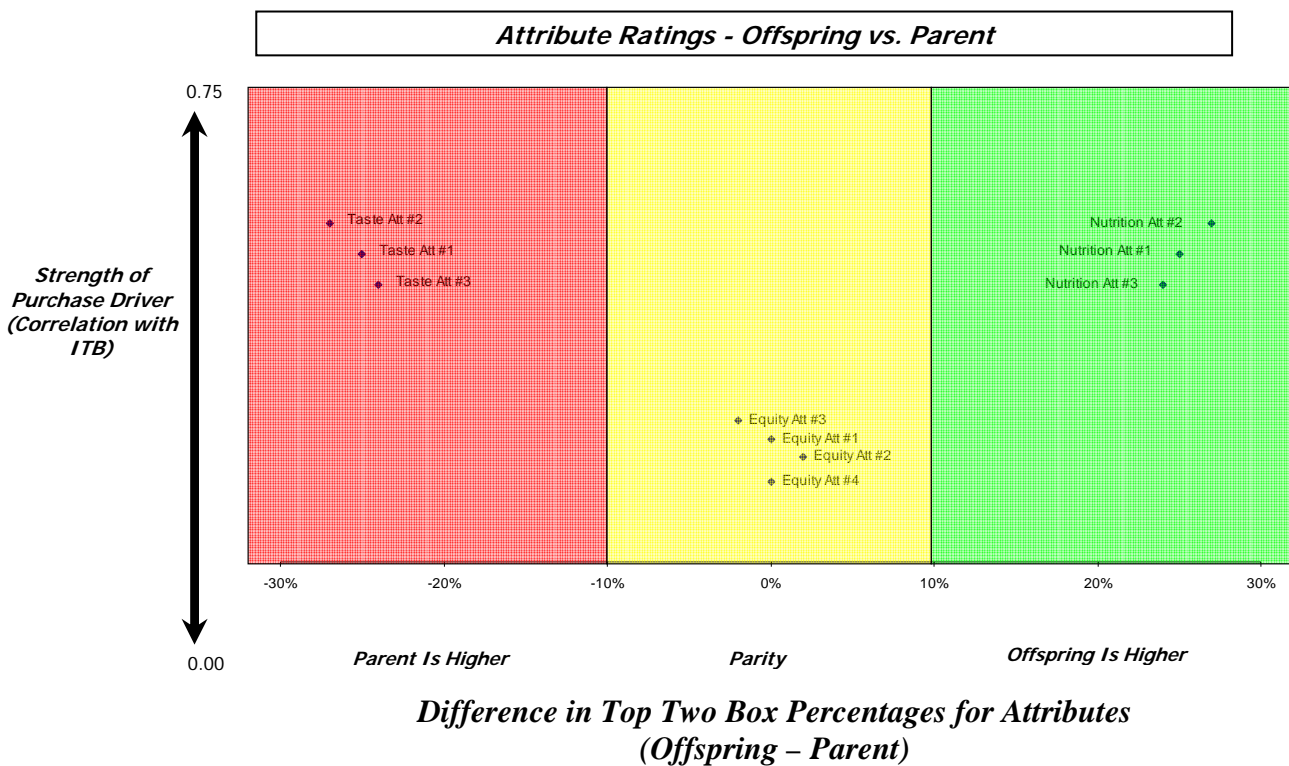


Factual

- Emotional benefits: I feel good about giving to my family, I feel good about eating it, helps me take care of myself
- Functional benefits: Is more nutritious than similar products, helps me moderate my carbohydrate intake, contributes to a balanced diet
- Product attributes: Low in carbohydrates, low in calories, high in fiber

A database has been built of both existing products and test concepts that are all evaluated in the same way. By comparing consumers' reactions to a concept, it is possible to determine what a concept is communicating to a consumer and whether it is bringing anything new to the category. Points of difference for offspring vs. parent are assessed based on pairwise comparisons of attribute ratings. Correlations with intent to buy help determine the importance of the attribute to the consumers. See Figure 2 for an illustration. In this figure, the center panel identifies parity attributes, where the parent brand and new concept were scored identically by consumers. The left panel contains attributes for which the parent brand scored higher, while the right panel contains attributes for which the new concept was scored higher than the parent brand.

Fig. 2 Assessing Points of Difference between Parent Brand and New Product Concept



Examples

There are many instances in which General Mills has utilized concept testing. Three examples of concept tests in practice include:

- Extending Pillsbury Freezer to Oven Dinner Rolls
- Branding a new child-targeted yogurt
- Branding a nutritious cereal

Extending Pillsbury Freezer to Oven Dinner Rolls

Pillsbury Freezer to Oven Dinner Rolls exist in the “Functional Bread Domain” and have unique social and emotional strengths within that group. Pillsbury’s goal was to maintain these social and emotional strengths while taking the brand in a healthier direction by co-branding it with

Fiber One to create “Fiber One Dinner Rolls.” Concept maps, similar to the one in Figure 2, indicate that the social and emotional associations remained high for this new product. There were also other, new, positive associations related to health. This is important because there are often tradeoffs between attributes whereby raising health benefits lowers social benefit and lowers taste ratings. In this case, however, using two strong brand equities to co-brand the product works well.

Branding a new child-targeted yogurt

In branding a new child-targeted yogurt, two options were to either use the Yoplait Go-Gurt brand, or to use a new, largely descriptive brand. Concept tests revealed that while liking was similar for the two concepts, the combined brand increased purchase interest. Co-branding also provided a slight improvement in the perceived value of the product. Also, comparing the new Yoplait Go-Gurt equity subline to the original Yoplait Go-Gurt shows that the new product would enhance the Go-Gurt equity by reinforcing the fun aspect of the Go-Gurt brand.

Branding a new Nutritious Cereal

Two options were considered in branding a new nutritious cereal. One option was a new brand with a name that connoted, among other things, satiety. The second was an established brand from outside General Mills that had no food heritage. Concept tests showed that the new brand communicated satiety and, therefore, supported the fiber claim better than the established brand. The stretch of the established brand to a food product caused consumers to have difficulty associating it with quality food. However, the consumers with brand experience had positive attitudes toward the concept and would act as product champions.

Conclusions

At General Mills, branding is explicitly considered during the new product development process. The method described here (Concept Creator) provides a holistic picture of the strengths and weaknesses of a new product idea. Decision making is guided by brand considerations, as opposed to slavish reliance on single ratings.

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