

Diversity as a reason to buy?

For many brands, diversity has become part of their DNA and their communication. However, diversity makes everyday life more complex. Companies must therefore carefully examine how they integrate the topic into their brand management.

For years, it has been common practice among advertisers that the marketing of products does not have to be should come first. Sometimes there are even voices that demand that attitude and purpose must come before advertising and sales. Diversity is another variety of this type of market communication. In marketing and communication, it is no longer just a matter of showing how brand users distinguish themselves from others and, if necessary, exclude them. Rather, diversity-oriented brand communication sees itself as an integrating component of a diverse and open society. Diversity is then less a topic of a society (or brand communication) that disintegrates into sub-target groups and thus excludes them, but rather a positive statement for an open, discrimination-free society.

Who is diverse?

A diverse society allows for different individual behaviour patterns. However, the definition of a value- and norm-based centre of society is also difficult for those involved. In this context, the social philosopher Bourdieu (1979) speaks of "distinction gains" that supplement or replace social norms with specific lifestyles in a society that is becoming more individualised. The sociologist Beck also regarded ongoing individualisation as a "risk society", since a dissolution of social and behavioural rules could lead to fear of loss, a lack of orientation and also to reactionism.

The model of the 'Four Layers of Diversity' distinguishes four levels of diversity, which can cause social and structural inclusion and exclusion processes in the most diverse areas of life. Core dimensions of a personality (age, gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion, etc.),

sexual orientation) are represented as an internal dimension. According to the concept, it is easier to influence external, organisational structures than internal dimensions. If diversity and variety are perpetuated, this results in a constantly developing individualisation with maximisation of uniqueness, reduction of norms and patterns of action and thus a disproportionate increase in everyday complexity. Routine behaviour becomes more difficult with constant change in attitudes, patterns of thought and action and, according to Kahneman, the necessary simplification of everyday life is less easy to achieve on autopilot.

Distinctiveness always, diversity perhaps

Uniqueness in personality is not only desired for people. Brands with clear distinctiveness and unsupported decoration of individual distinctive brand assets also find it easier to be mentally available and storytelling. The more unclear brand signals are mentally anchored in the perception of consumers, the more diffuse brands mark for use situations, the less they offer orientation in the too-many or promote purchase decisions.

Purchasing decisions and brand selection take place with minimal mental effort. Researchers in behavioural economics have been able to empirically prove that only simplifications of decisions lead to changes in behaviour. This is precisely why situational shortcuts are formative for our decisions, because we can then rely particularly efficiently on the relief provided by our system1 autopilot in the brain. Attitudes, values, attitude and purpose play a psychologically subordinate role in many everyday situations.

In order to capture the attention of our brains, clear brand assets help a brand to be

support the Distinctiveness called for by Byron Sharp and remind us in concrete situational contexts to be a more suitable solution than alternatives in precisely this context.

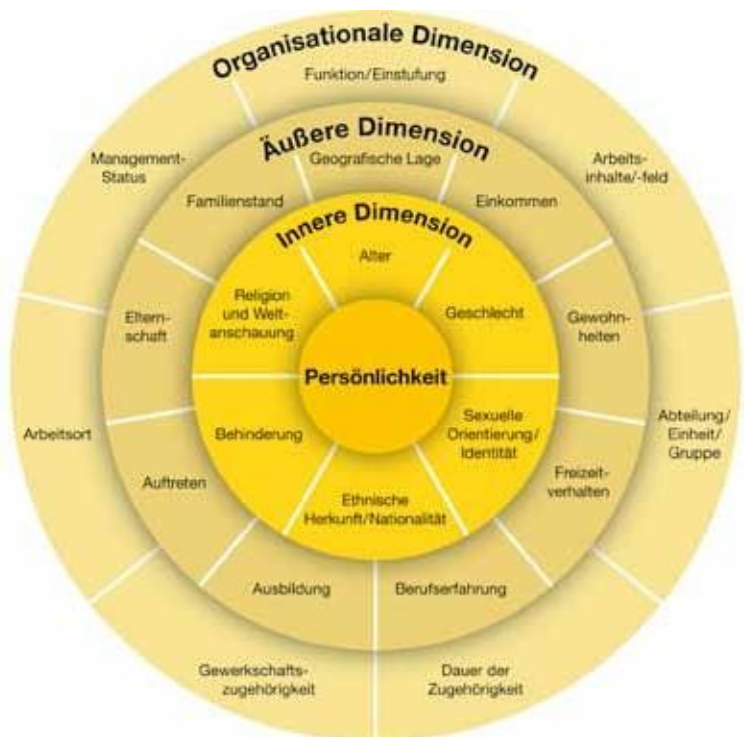
Unfortunately, few brands have distinctive brand assets such as logos, colour codes, typefaces, visuals, audio signals or specific rituals and contexts of use. Purpose and diversity can be attitude assets specifically assigned to a brand, but they do not have to be. The Hamburg beer brand Astra is one of the examples of brands with long market stability and a consistent communication culture in which Distinctiveness and Diversity are part of the brand DNA: St. Pauli, the neighbourhood and the authentic character of the milieu are central to the communication - and the integration of diverse, polarising lifestyles and thus diversity is automatically (System 1) a given.

Diversity does not have to be a guarantee of success

Diversity always has to do with differentiation. In common parlance, the majority of the population understands this to mean deviations from the average, from the middle of society. That which largely corresponds to the middle is perceived as normal. On the one hand, the middle wants to stay up to date and be sure not to lose touch with newer social trends and behaviour patterns. The megatrend FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) can also be classified in this context. If the centre of society is overrun by changes and possible risks (digitalisation, automation, pandemic, recession, etc.), the fear of missing out or no longer being able to keep up grows, and the striving for security gains momentum. The Prospect Theory of the behavioural economists Kahneman and Tversky, that uncertainty before loss outweighs the chance of gain due to far-reaching change, thus takes on an overall social dimension.

Individualisation makes life more free, more diverse, more colourful, but also more risky and liberated from norms. Too multifaceted, too diverse does not necessarily make life easier, but even more difficult in punk- to everyday routines. For example, in colloquial language, it is no longer possible to speak affectively and from the gut, but because of increasing political correctness, care must be taken as to how and in what context which words and terms may and may not be used.

Four-layer model of diversity



Source: K&A Brand Research

For brand communication, a stronger focus on diversity issues can lead to a loss of sales if the brand essence is no longer clearly recognisable for consumers, diversity campaigns are perceived as overbearing and polarising, and in the end many category buyers no longer feel that they are being met contextually. The best-known example of a failed diversity communication is certainly the brand Benetton, which denounced grievances in society with its "inclusive", attention-grabbing shock advertising and wanted to differentiate itself from a good-mood soundbite of classic advertising.

Successful despite diversity communication

The performance of the cosmetics brand Dove was already quite different a few years after Toscani's Benetton advertising art: Since 2004, the brand has been advertising with "Real Beauty" in order to encourage women without model measurements to develop a positive feeling of body and self-worth. Since the campaign was launched in the UK, women of different skin colours were integrated from the beginning, which implies a broadening of the "no racism" message for consumers.

Successful diversity communication from Tony's



Source: STI Group

Explicitly makes it seem credible. Unlike Benetton, this approach was less disruptive and psychologically lifts (somewhat) overweight women naturally towards the centre of society.

Although overweight people do not correspond to the beauty ideal in Germany and Europe, they are much more common in the population than normal and underweight people. Other diversities such as people in poverty (unemployed and homeless), the very old and demented, the disabled and the chronically ill receive far less encouragement from brand-name companies. The LGBTQ environment is significantly lower in terms of population share, but all the more attention-grabbing for it. The strong connections in the fashion, TV and advertising world help to create additional awareness and stronger penetration. The more alternative, strongly individualised and



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The outdoor scene took diversity and sustainability issues into account relatively early on in their brand presentations. Patagonia, Vaude and many other suppliers follow a nature- and freedom-loving image simply because of the lifestyle of the category users. Other positive examples can be found in many start-up companies that defined their purpose or diversity at the beginning of their market penetration. The chocolate manufacturer Tony's Choco- lonely wants to convince its consumers to pay higher prices right from the start - freely according to the motto "slave-free but crazy" and in all rainbow colours. Fritz-Kola, too, had positioned itself as an under- statement brand vis-à-vis the cola giants from the USA as a product that leads to maximum wakefulness in a double sense: Not only awake due to the maximum permissible dose of caffeine, but always awake to take a courageous, positive and inclusive stance on social issues. Katjes also positioned itself early on as a confectionery manufacturer via pink colour codes on young women and later consistently on veggies: This orientation then also makes the inclusion of Muslim population groups (without pork ~~gore~~) inevitably credible.

Diversity is, in a way, part and parcel of democratic societies has become the new normal. Different ways of life are increasingly part of everyday life in Germany. However, diversity does not make everyday life easier, but more complex. Too many options in lifestyle and self-discovery, too many possibilities in behavioural patterns and too many dissolutions of social routines sometimes give rise to new diversities. A complicating factor in the future may be that we will have to deal with completely different diverse groups that experience a different stereotyping: religious people, priests, smokers, people of normal weight, lovers of meat and blood sausages, social media refugees, classic nuclear families and many others.

It's exciting to see how this will be taken up by brands in the future and have an inclusive effect on behaviour. ■

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Reading tip

Lebok/Ginzburg, in: Terstige, M. (ed.): Diversity in Marketing & Sales, Springer-Gabler 2022.