

# The Better the Context ...

## Successful brands through context research

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It is becoming increasingly difficult for brands to find their way into the memory banks of the consumer. Without significant brand recognition or easily decodable brand assets, it is not possible to establish a market-effective storytelling for a brand. The right strategy is needed so that customers remember your brand as the best possible alternative in everyday situations and buy it. Context thinking helps with this.

Marketing geared to everyday contexts puts consumers at the centre of attention: it is not the evaluation of brands in terms of likeability, status, attitude - completely detached from the everyday context - that is relevant for a purchase decision, but the concrete occasions. And these should also be the focus of communication. Even for local brands, the appropriate contextual approach offers new opportunities to generate success in regions or specific target group segments.

### Why Context Thinking helps brands

The reason for the loss of relevance of brands among consumers is that they do not "mark" sufficiently, are not anchored in the memory. No amount of loud drumming for attention will help. As the Nobel Prize winner in economics Daniel Kahneman has shown in his latest book, this is only perceived as "noise".

Byron Sharp and Jenni Romaniuk, on the other hand, show how brands can be mentally anchored: they should have about four to five brand assets, i.e. brand signals, which are known to the category users. These brand assets should be clearly assigned to a brand by the consumer and thus be "distinguished" from the competition.

Decision-making - i.e. directly at the POS or online - as well as planning or imagining a later usage situation, such as a cosy, shared Netflix evening with the family. Contexts are the key to attention and action. In a fraction of a second, our brain's System 1 autopilot decides which options are the best for us in a given situation.

brand with the context, the greater the relevance of a brand in everyday life.

Contexts are spaces of perception in which different facts have an effect and form an overall picture. In accordance with the context principle in philosophy, concepts and signs only attain meaning "in connection with something".



Only a few brands succeed in this nowadays. According to Sharp, unspecific communication or a me-too product are usually assigned to the market leaders, category players or opinion leaders (with higher advertising pressure), the effort is thus wasted.

It is empirically demonstrable that consumers' engagement with brands - regardless of category and industry - depends on situations. This applies to both the

and fulfil our needs under the prevailing conditions (Kahneman 2011) - availability, experience, expectations - in a certain situation or in a situation anticipated for the future. We call this mechanism System 1 laziness.

What this means for brands is that consumers associate the brand as the best possible solution for a particular context as quickly as possible and with a clear lead over the alternatives. The stronger the link between the

Meaning only becomes apparent when the context is known and understood. The findings of Behavioural Economics remind us again and again: symbols, messages and brand signals only unfold their effectiveness when the prevailing contextual conditions sharpen the senses for them. People are always looking for an efficient solution to cope with the demands of everyday life - ideally with the help of a suitable brand.

In this way, the context conditions become the "gatekeeper" for later behaviour. Since we are usually not aware of this, "context thinkers" are needed. These should observe target groups in certain contexts and understand which decision-making behaviour can be established in favour of the brand. At K&A BrandResearch, we have years of experience with the application of psychodrama techniques to make everyday situations tangible for consumers - both analogue and digital and thus designable for marketers

### Context Research as Gate Keeper

Conscious context thinking in brand management is primarily about brands "becoming stronger" in relevant contexts. Since the context creates the framework for late behaviour, the brand can only really gain the attention of the consumer if there is a suitable stage for taking in information. If information is given at the wrong time (beer in the morning) under the influence of emotions (hunger pangs, tiredness, etc.) or in an inappropriate environment (conveying lifelong loyalty in a swingers' club), it will bounce off us.

The intuitive assessment of the relevance of brands in everyday situations also takes into account motivational psychological factors such as needs, motives or previous behavioural patterns. According to the findings of scientifically oriented psychologists, so-called "motivational factors" are the most important. The "deeper motive structures", but also higher-ranking purpose and attitude arguments, clearly lag behind the decision in the respective situation. Even though the "search for the inner life of the soul" is a source of great fascination for many marketing managers,

Human behaviour is usually much more mundane. Situational contexts are made up of different facets. From childhood, we have learned how to decode certain events for ourselves and how to behave or act in contexts. If the conditions change, we can change our behaviour very quickly and intuitively.

Key scenes (cues) and key stimuli/key images (codes) play a central role for a recasting of everyday situations or for a positioning of brands in certain contexts.

In our opinion, a successful staging of brands in everyday contexts will only succeed if the following questions are clearly clarified:

- *What relevance does the brand play* in a context, taking into account situational alternatives?
- *Which contextual advantage* can cause a mental association of a brand with certain contexts more quickly?
- *How should the brand - and with it the brand assets - be textualised* so that it is automatically associated with this context in the future?

K&A Psychodrama® makes everyday situations tangible for consumers, but also for marketers, through the use of role-play technologies and other projective methods. This makes behavioural patterns comprehensible.

"Schizophrenic consumers" who say A in surveys (e.g. more climate neutrality) but then buy according to B in decision-making situations (e.g. cheaper price) become understandable. In this way, psychodramatic backgrounds and motivational structures are adjusted to a realistic level with a behaviourist view, taking into account the contextual role behaviour.

Context Thinking searches for

Indications for an occasion-



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positioning of brands or the relaunch of entire categories. In particular, "forgotten categories" such as rollmops, aquavit, sherry, fondant eggs, canned fruit, mouthwash, stationery, garden dwarfs, rear spoilers and many more have fallen out of sight and out of mind for many people. A target-orientated contextualisation via differentiating key stimuli is therefore an essential task of psychodramatic context research.

### Ignition power for brand success

A particularly striking example of the power with which contexts virtually automate consumer behaviour can be seen in vegan products. Practically all successful vegan products are optical and name imitations of the familiar originals. The vegan schnitzel is next to the vegan sausages and the meat-free hamburgers. People have internalised meal contexts and it is easier to buy a vegan clone for these contexts than to learn new contexts of use. And that's why most of the independent vegan product categories have also failed - but Rügenwalder with its vegan copies

of its classic products more and more successful.

It is also possible to penetrate new contexts with existing products with new packaging. For years, we have observed the typical contexts associated with sparkling wine: a milestone birthday with good sparkling wine, the big deal with champagne, of course, and even the seemingly more erotic contexts start with the partner's appreciation of a more expensive sparkling wine.

The Mumm brand was looking for new ways to establish sparkling wine in other contexts. Jules Mumm became a successful sub-brand through the guiding principle of the exuberant round of best friends. Cheerful yet high-quality packaging design and fruity flavours ensured an independent position in the market. The brand's many years of growth show that users know how to use this beloved product in more than just girls' parties.

Brand managers particularly enjoy working with us in workshops to look for ideas with which their brands can conquer new contexts. There is creative playfulness when you move into practical contexts and design product solutions that offer real benefits for the target groups. Life is complicated enough in the overabundance of impressions. Better solutions are a promising way to get into the customers' automatic repertoire.

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