



MODULE 01

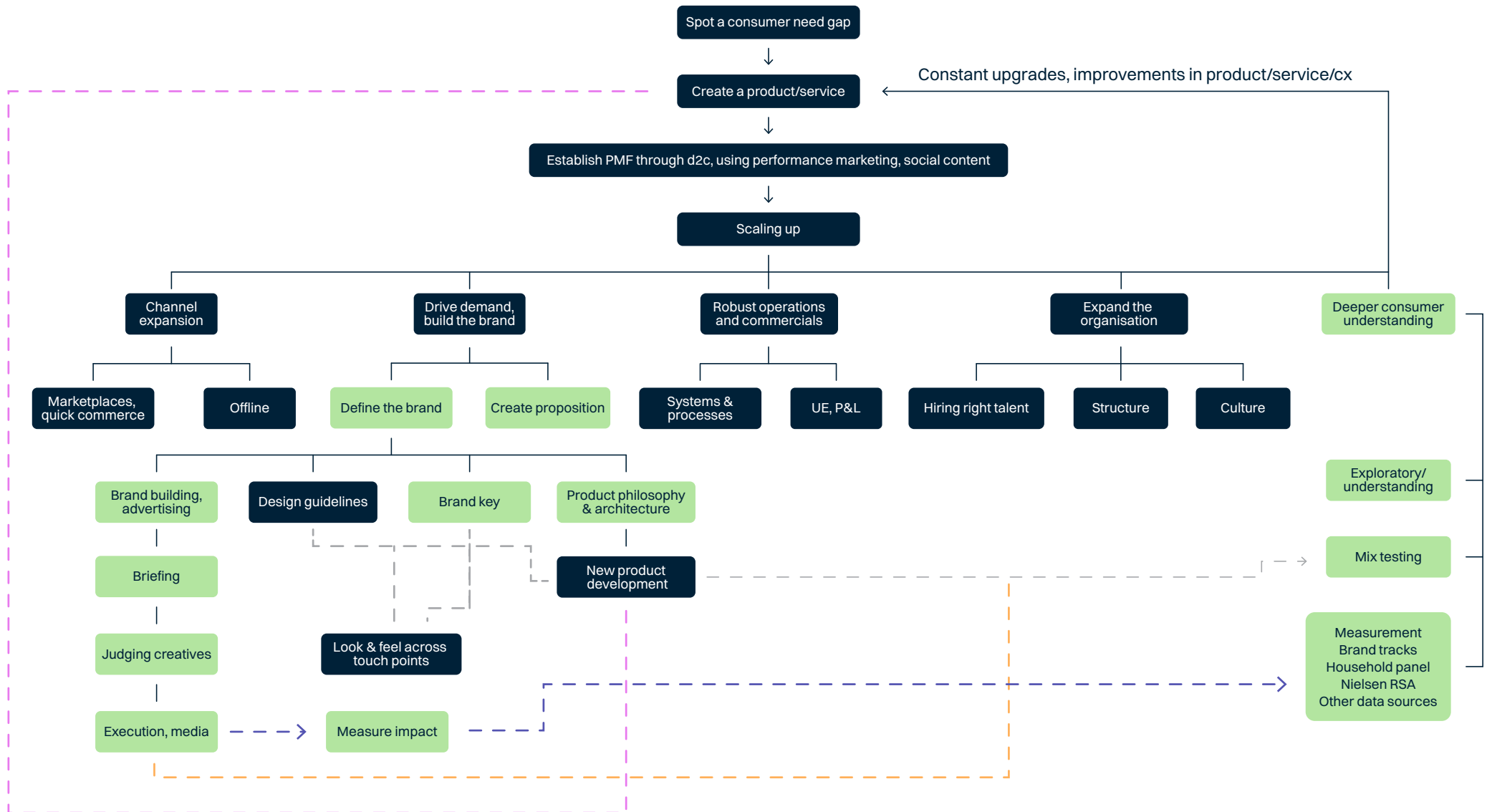
MARKETING PLAYBOOK

Distinctive Brand



firesideventures

The journey from starting up to scaling involves doing many new things



The scaling journey post PMF

★ What changes as you scale?

As the business scales post PMF many new complex challenges & tasks are to be dealt with, but what should remain constant is **keeping the consumer at the heart** and making sure the brand continues to **deliver superior experiences**. In the pre PMF phase, the focus is on making sure consumers love the product and in the scaling phase it is about generating demand for more trial.

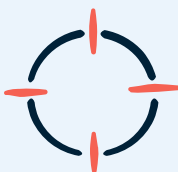
★ What is demand generation?

Performance marketing, a large lever in the pre-PMF stage, helps **fulfil demand** but for scaling one needs to **generate demand** by increasing the **brand's mental and physical availability**. Demand generation ensures a virtuous cycle of growth by getting more consumers to try the brand. For this, there are many **new things** the company needs to build – these are the **green boxes in the previous page**.

So, what should you do now?

At Fireside, we are here to help you successfully scale the business sustainably, profitably and competitively. **One of the key areas to demystify is marketing and brand building.**

This playbook is a crash course on the brand building essentials post PMF



Defining a distinctive brand



Crafting memorable communication



Assessing brand health & consumer insights.

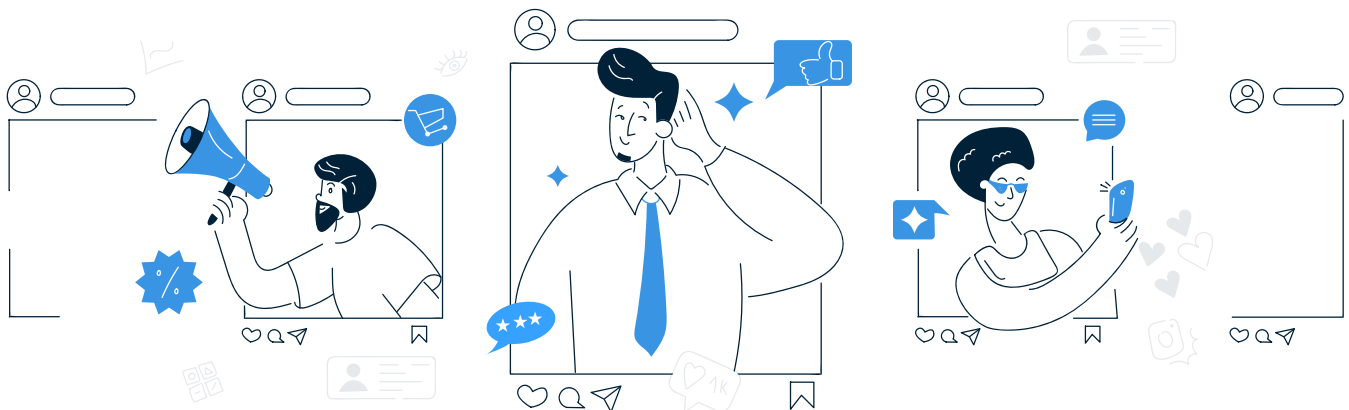
What is marketing, brand and brand building?

What is marketing?

Businesses need to grow and growth needs marketing.

To grow, companies need to solve problems for more consumers, even better than competition, at a better value and in a way that is sustainable and profitable.

Hence, marketing = meeting consumer needs profitably & sustainably.



★ What is a brand?

A brand is a **distinctive symbol** of **trust & quality** in a product/service & **linked memories** in the consumer's mind. It is the difference between a commodity and a value added good/service. People buy products and **buy into brands**. **Brands need to be 'first to mind and first to find' to win in the marketplace. And this needs brand building.**

★ How to build a brand?

Brand building is the art & science of building memories associated with a brand. These memories are built **via experiences** with the product/service and brand related messages across various touch points - advertising being the one with highest reach. Having a **sharply defined brand**, building and deploying distinctive brand assets consistently over time helps keep these memories fresh enabling your brand to be **more mentally available**.

Why is consistent brand building important?

Memory is the primary faculty we rely on to make decisions. Therefore, **mental availability** or **salience** (how quickly a brand comes to mind in a buying situation) is one of the strongest predictors of future sales.

But memories fade with time. So, they need to be constantly refreshed – more so with so many brands fighting for the same memory.

Most ads are missed or **not remembered** even a little while after viewing. So how does one build a brand that **consistently grows** and maintains its **salience**?

This module covers the first step for brand building

writing your **brand key**

★ Other modules

- 2 crafting a memorable communication
- 3 brand health

What is a brand key?

It is a simple framework to **define the brand** that can aid the building of a **coherent and consistent identity** and **product offerings**.

It helps provide clarity to people working on the brand to have an aligned definition of the brand.



★ Why is it important?

Without a **brand key**, the definition of the **brand** is open for interpretation and runs the risk of being **executed inconsistently** or **lacking coherence** across touch points or markets. It should be the guiding document for **many decisions** on **brand building**.

★ How will it be used?

It is used as a guide for all **brand communications**, **product standards**, **architecture**, and the **brand's personality** across all touchpoints.





The Target consumer

It describes the people who will **love the brand** or need it most.



The Human truth

The core insight the brand is based on. It should capture a deep, rooted tension or desire in the life of the target consumer.



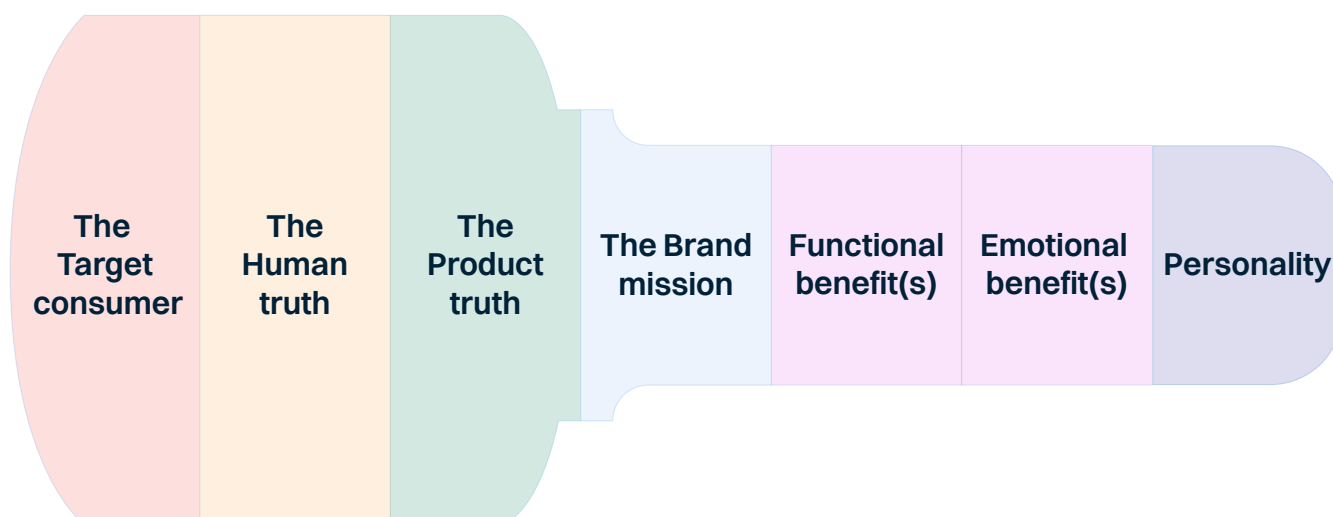
The Product truth

The core characteristic of the product or service. It should bring to life **the standard** the brand intends to **live up to** every time a consumer buys the product/service. It must help differentiate the product/service from competition



The Brand mission

The **reason** for the **brand's existence** and reflects the point of view that the brand offers. It can be the contribution the brand intends to bring to the world or to its target consumer.



Functional benefit(s)

The **differentiating benefit** of the product /service that improves the life of the consumer. It is the so what to the product truth.



Emotional benefit(s)

How usage of the brand makes the **consumer feel**. The feeling that is evoked because of the functional benefit.



Personality

A description of the brand's key traits. If the **brand were a person**, how would it come across to other people? It helps to define the **communication style**.

The Target consumer

The people who will love the brand or need it most.

It is not about defining a demographic of age, gender or affluence. The description must **characterise** their **psychographics, values** in an angular & evocative way.

It should not be universal; and hence **must imply who it excludes**. It can be stated as the **reality** of the consumer today **or the aspirational identity** of the consumer – both are okay. This **does not restrict** who finally buys the brand or the media audience but serves as a reminder on who you are designing the brand for.



Tips, killer questions

- ✓ Make it angular, even polarising is fine
- ✓ Write it as a **singular person**, makes it more evocative
- ✓ Ask: Do you know someone like this?
- ✓ Ask: Who won't fit into this group? Who will it exclude?
- ✓ Give it a **shorthand** headline (2-6 words) and a longer explanation (20 words max)



Examples

MAGNUM

Pleasure seekers

Those who believe a moment without pleasure is a moment lost.

 Ad Reference

Knorr

Hopeless chefs

For those who struggle in the kitchen but still crave delicious meals.

 Ad Reference

**ELLE
18**

Masti-Loving Little women

Cash-strapped young girls who want to have unrestrained fun before adulthood descends on them.

📺 The Human truth

The core insight the brand is based on. It should capture a deep-rooted tension or desire in the life of the target consumer.



It should be something you can **tangibly feel** in society. It should be a space in which the brand can **credibly have a point of view on**. It is not just an observation. You must dig deeper to find a true and competitive insight, not settle for an obvious truth or fact. **A good insight** will be **pithy, have tension**, or contain an **inherent contradiction**. The product truth must be able to answer the insight credibly.

Tips, killer questions

- ✓ Great insights are **obvious on hindsight**.
- ✓ Ask: Is the insight fleeting or very niche?
- ✓ Ask: Is it credibly linked to the brand product truth?
- ✓ Ask: **Keep asking why** to move from observations to a deep-rooted human truth.
- ✓ Write it in a pithy way. **Carefully select words** to make it **evocative**.



Examples

Dove

For many women, beauty is a source of anxiety not confidence

▶ Ad Reference

LUX

Beauty is a female instinct that shouldn't be denied

MAGNUM

In a world full of social pressure & responsibilities, adults need more pleasure for themselves

The Product truth

The core characteristic of the product or service.

It should bring to life **the standard** the brand intends to **live up to** every time a consumer buys the product/service. It must help differentiate it from the competition. It should be **sharp** enough to serve as the basis for an **overarching product philosophy**. If the brand is present in **multiple categories** – there must ideally be one **unifying product truth**.



Tips, killer questions

- ✓ Ask: Is it clear enough to guide your future offering?
- ✓ Ask: Does it help to define a strong, compelling benefit for the brand?
- ✓ Try phrasing '**We put the X in Y**' as an inspiration/thought starter. E.g 'we take the drudgery out of laundry'
- ✓ Product truths are **not a numerical claim or the RTB** – it is the aspiration, high bar to live up to
- ✓ It serves as a good check for what not to do on product extensions or quality parameters



Examples


MAGNUM

Ice creams that deliver
100% indulgent pleasure in
every bite


Dove

Beauty with
real care



Create vehicles that are
luxurious & powerful to deliver
more pleasure & less emissions

 Ad Reference

🕒 The Brand mission

The reason for the brand's existence and reflects the point of view that the brand offers.



It can be a higher **purpose**, or the contribution the brand intends to bring to the world or its target consumer. Purpose is not a must unless the brand was **borne from** it. Do not force-fit a purpose. It needs to **ring true** and **be authentic**. It should be a point of view which someone can disagree with.

Tips, killer questions

- ✓ Ask: what would our **t-shirt slogan** say if we were protesting for a cause?
- ✓ Ask (for purpose): in what way will it **impact** the **world** **"positively"**? It doesn't always have to be about world peace/poverty" or a crisis like issue. It can be fun too, the world needs more joy
- ✓ Ask: is it **rooted in the product truth** or functional benefit? If the link is weak - then the mission is not something your brand can credibly pull off
- ✓ Purpose: try to write in a way that the same statement would ring true for the product or the cause (dove example below)



Examples



Make a positive experience of beauty universally accessible to women.

TESLA

Accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy.



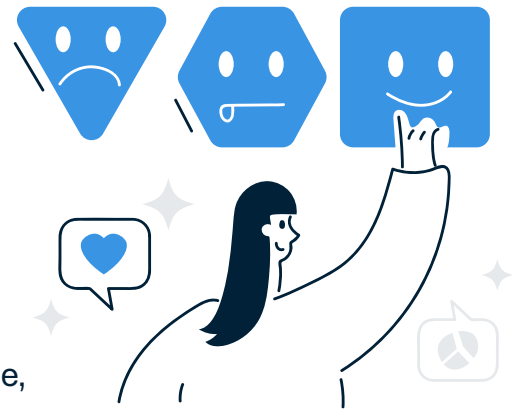
Swiggy

Elevate the quality of life for urban Indians by offering unparalleled convenience.

⚙️ Functional & emotional benefit(s)

Functional benefit: The differentiating benefit of the product/service that improves the life of the consumer.

It is an outcome of the product truth. It can be more than one, especially if the brand operates across multiple categories but limit it to 3-4.



Emotional benefit: how the brand **makes the consumer feel**. The feeling that is evoked because of the functional benefit. The functional and/or emotional benefits should ideally feature in all the corecommunication and advertising.

Tips, killer questions

- ✓ Ask: How does the product/service make the life of the consumer better?
- ✓ Ask: What is the emotion users feel after using the product/service?
- ✓ The benefits could sound generic (which is fine), but combined with the rest of the key it should be differentiated
- ✓ The benefits must be **tangible/real or easy to feel**



Examples



Wetness & odour control to keep you feeling fresh

▶ Ad Reference



The brew that bonds, giving you the warm feeling of hospitality

▶ Ad Reference



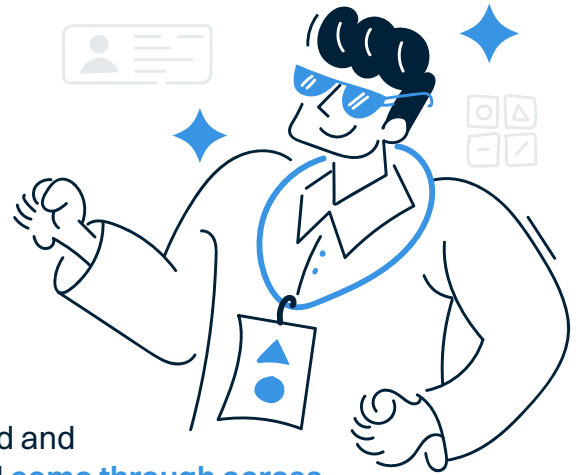
Vehicles that are pure pleasure to drive for unparalleled joy

▶ Ad Reference

Personality

If the brand were a person, how would it come across to other people? It helps define the style of communication.

Carefully select 3-5 words that sharply define the brand and make them **mutually exclusive**. The personality should **come through across touch points** – packaging, website, social, advertising et al.



Tips, killer questions

- ✓ This is an exercise in **word smithing** – so **select them** with **care**. E.g. Premium and luxurious are different.
- ✓ Having seemingly contradictory words are fine if they come through in different ways/moments.
- ✓ All traits may not be evident in all touch points – that is okay.
- ✓ Ask: Is there a famous person/film character that people will understand? E.g. For swiggy the personality defined was Imran (Farhan Akhtar's character) from the movie ZNMD
- ✓ You **can add words** that the **brand is not** too for greater clarity



Examples



Active, ambitious,
and inspirational

 Ad Reference



Outspoken, risk
taker, joyful

 Ad Reference



Swiggy

Witty, spontaneous,
thoughtful

 Ad Reference

Brand archetypes: anchor for the brand personality



Humans take decisions largely based on emotion. and brand decisions are mostly made subconsciously. The rationale is usually a justification post facto.

Which is why brands are a **shorthand** for **memories** associated with them, making it easy to retrieve from subconscious memory during buying situations.

Hence, the need for **archetypes** – the anchor **for a brand personality**. Brands that consistently adhere to a chosen archetype deliver better results.

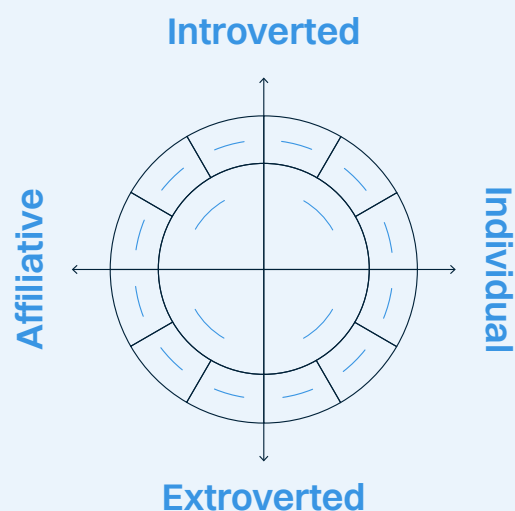
Brand archetypes are based on the work of Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung (pronounced as young) about instinctive/unconscious patterns of emotional behaviour that drive us.

★ Brand archetypes are created on 2 dimensions

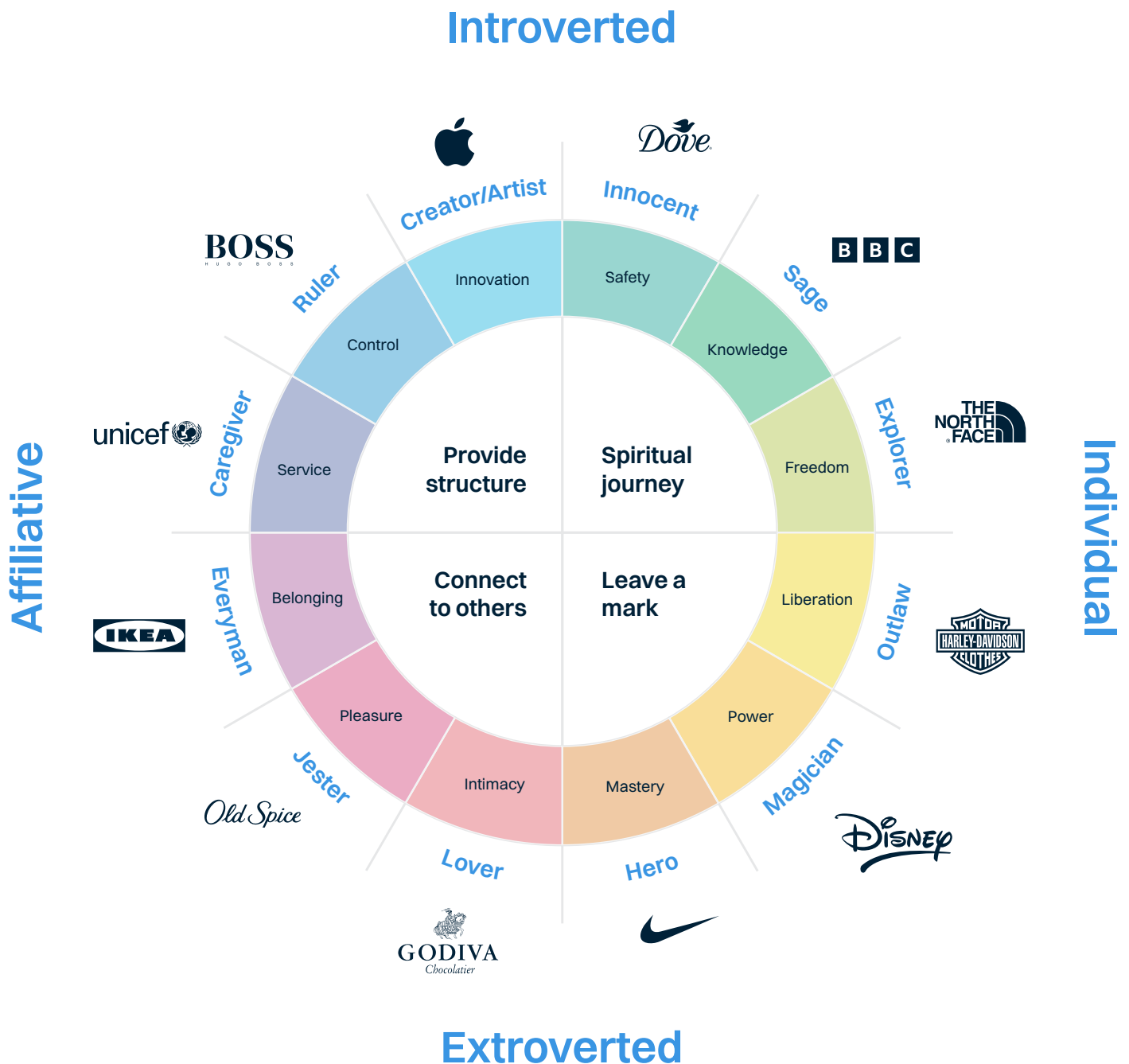
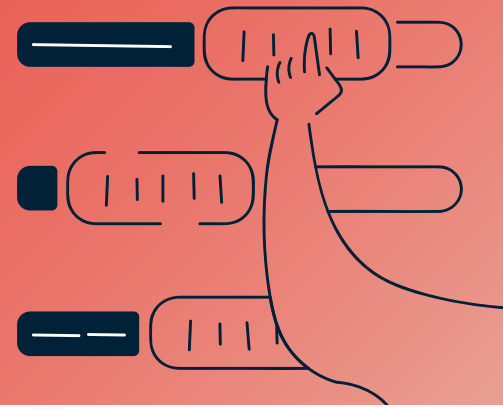
| **Introversion to extroversion**

| **Individualistic to affiliative**

There are 12 brand archetypes
(refer next page)



Example of brands across archetypes



Each archetype has distinct traits that characterise them.
Brands should be anchored in one archetype which must stay consistent across touchpoints and over time.

Source: marchbranding.com creator/artist are used interchangeably

Other elements of a brand key

There are few other elements in a brand key that are optional. Please add these elements if you see the utility of them for your brand.

Root strengths

This is an element **to be written** for brands **after 15-20 years of existence**. This captures what made the brand **distinctive and famous**, on which its future will be built. Root strengths need to be respected and nurtured, but it doesn't mean all 'baggage' of the past has to be carried forward.

Write this as **3-5 key traits** - values, symbols, benefits/features or what consumers associated most with this brand. **Do not overload** with many items making it an ankle weight for the future.

Reason to believe

This is the reason **why consumers should believe the brand's claim**. It underpins the brand's benefits. It can be based on trust/expert recommendation or the brand's unique heritage too.

The reason to believe (RTB) is a **critical element** of the **brand proposition** and hence not a must have for the brand key, especially if the brand has multiple product lines across different categories. But it doesn't hurt to put a unifying RTB philosophy if the brand has one. E.g science-based formulas.

Discriminator

This is the **brand's competitive edge**, the most compelling reason for the consumer to choose the brand. It is the **point of difference** that will make the consumer want to buy it.

The discriminator must be important to the consumer, credible from this brand and different from competition. Theory suggests this is useful for communication development - so articulating it can be useful.

Summarise your brand in a line

Why is It needed?

Investors, friends & family and customers are likely to ask you to **explain your brand** to them in one line. And you should have it handy! It should be a **simple, succinct yet powerful explanation** of your brand. While it won't clarify everything, it will certainly help **distil the core of your brand** to be easily understood.

The format

We offer/provide [**The functional benefit/product truth**]

To [**Target consumer**]

To [**The mission or emotional benefit**]

★ Examples



Swiggy

We offer unparalleled convenience to urban Indians to elevate the quality of their lives

closeup

We provide the best freshness for young-at-heart romantics to help them get the confidence to get closer

THE SLEEP COMPANY

We offer the most comfortable mattresses to industrious Indians to help them sleep peacefully every night

terractive

We offer active wear in the most comfortable fabrics to help active experience seekers focus on the sport and not their clothing.

**Sweet
Karam
Coffee**

We offer the most authentic, clean label south indian packaged foods for real foodies to experience the south indian tradition

Brand key FAQs

★ When should one craft a brand key?

It's never too early to do it but a good time would be once PMF is established and before you enter the hypergrowth phase in the journey. This is the time when investments in brand building increase, there's more social media content being put out, touchpoints for consumer interactions are expanding, and you're also thinking about what other category opportunities the brand can pursue.

Once written and executed do check if it resonates with consumers (empirically in market, i.e. Is your packaging liked? Is your communication liked? Does it help internal stakeholders understand the brand and motivate them. E.g. If a piece of advertising made on the key ends up being very memorable for consumers, then you know it's working. Then start codifying the working elements.

If things aren't working out, do pivot but remember that too many iterations/changes can lead to confusion.

★ Who should be involved in the crafting of the brand key?

All the senior people who are involved in the design of the brand - marketing, growth/product lead, R&D, consumer insights lead, the creative team/agency. Don't involve more than 10-12 people as it makes it harder to arrive at a consensus.

★ How should one go about it?

It is ideal to do it as a 1-2 day workshop. The prepare for this workshop should include

1

Collecting ads/content of your brand and competitors

2

Read up on the trends in the category/your target consumer

3

Every participant should have formally done 1-1 conversations with at least 3-4 consumers to understand them deeply

Step 3: This is the most critical building block especially for articulating the human truth

Get someone to facilitate the workshop. Someone who can be a neutral party, a voice to guide the team through the process and ask the tough questions.

More details on how to run it can be discussed on request. There are agency partners who do these exercises with brands.

★ Which parts of the brand key impacts advertising and how?

The brand key is your guiding document for all decisions on the brand (barring P&L) – whether it's your product /service experience, packaging, advertising, content – anything consumers will interface with.

Advertising/content is the place where the key comes to life most – since it is the highest reach touchpoint. The way each element should be brought to life in advertising, especially video content is detailed below

Functional benefit – this should ideally be the single main message for the brand advertising. But if the task requires it, the message can be other claims or claims specific to sub-range/variant.

Emotional benefit – the advertising must depict this emotion and evoke it.

Personality – this must come through in the advertising tonality, music, casting, setting, style of storytelling.

Mission – relevant for campaigns that are designed to talk about the mission or to substantiate the work done towards fulfilling the mission

★ Are brand archetypes same across categories?

The underlying construct and names are the same. However different categories tend to have differing footprints across archetypes – i.e. Some categories serve some emotional need states more than others. E.g. Tea in India tends to be more of a social beverage, whereas makeup tends to service expression of individualism more.

So, the nuances vary across categories and must be understood specifically for your category. The kind of benefits associated with various archetypes may be different across categories

★ Does every consumer buy brands mostly of one archetype?

No they do not. In fact even within a category different archetypes might appeal to the same person on different occasions. E.g. I want a beverage that wakes me up (individual) in the morning but helps me socialize in the evening at work (affiliative). People are inherently full of contradictions.

So don't assume that a consumer's emotional need in one category or even one occasion applies to other categories or occasions.

★ How should one choose which archetype to anchor our brand in?

This is a decision to be made basis a few factors

1

Where you see a gap in the market

2

A position that you feel would be most true to your functional benefit/offering

3

Serendipitously based on a campaign idea you cracked for a brief

If in the early days of social content led commerce, or if it is founder-led content which has had a certain tone of voice and personality which has resonated with your audience, that's a good starting point for defining your archetype.

★ Can the brand archetype change over time?

Ideally not. Exceptions occur when the brand undergoes a complete overhaul because it's broken, irrelevant, or the market context necessitates it. Other changes if any should be evolutionary and not revolutionary. Overhauling consumer perception from past associations takes time and significant investment.

★ How can one understand consumers perception of all the category brands relative positions?

This can be done through primary researches. Different agencies have proprietary models to measure and understand the position of various brands on the archetype wheel. It tends to be a high time and cost exercise – so do it only if needed for understanding or after significant investment in brand building to measure its impact

★ Is it okay for any content to be off the chosen brand archetype?

Ideally no. All elements of the brand should be on the same brand archetype. However, some pieces of content which have a specific context/task can be different provided

1

You're convinced you cannot activate the occasion successfully within your chosen archetype

2

It is an exception and the content will not have much reach, won't be recurring

3

It's a rare opportunity for a partnership that could help generate a lot of buzz or business

★ Further detailed material on brand archetypes is available online

[Read more](#)[Read more](#)

Defining a brand scope

The problem statement

When faced with **new business opportunities** in adjacent benefit spaces or categories or some times altogether new categories, the question that arises is **can the current brand can extend** into that space/ category or does it **merit a new brand**. So how does one decide this?

The approach

Consistency and coherence are essentials for brands to succeed in the long run. So brands must be choiceful on what categories, benefit spaces they extend to. Hence, in order to be prepared for such opportunities, it is useful to create a **brand scope document**. The brand scope depends on **multiple factors** - the **business/category portfolio strategy** (if it is part of a larger category with multiple brands), brands strengths/core equities, the **market or competitive context**, and the **internal business context**. It's important to take all these into consideration before defining the brand scope.

★ Some general thumb rules

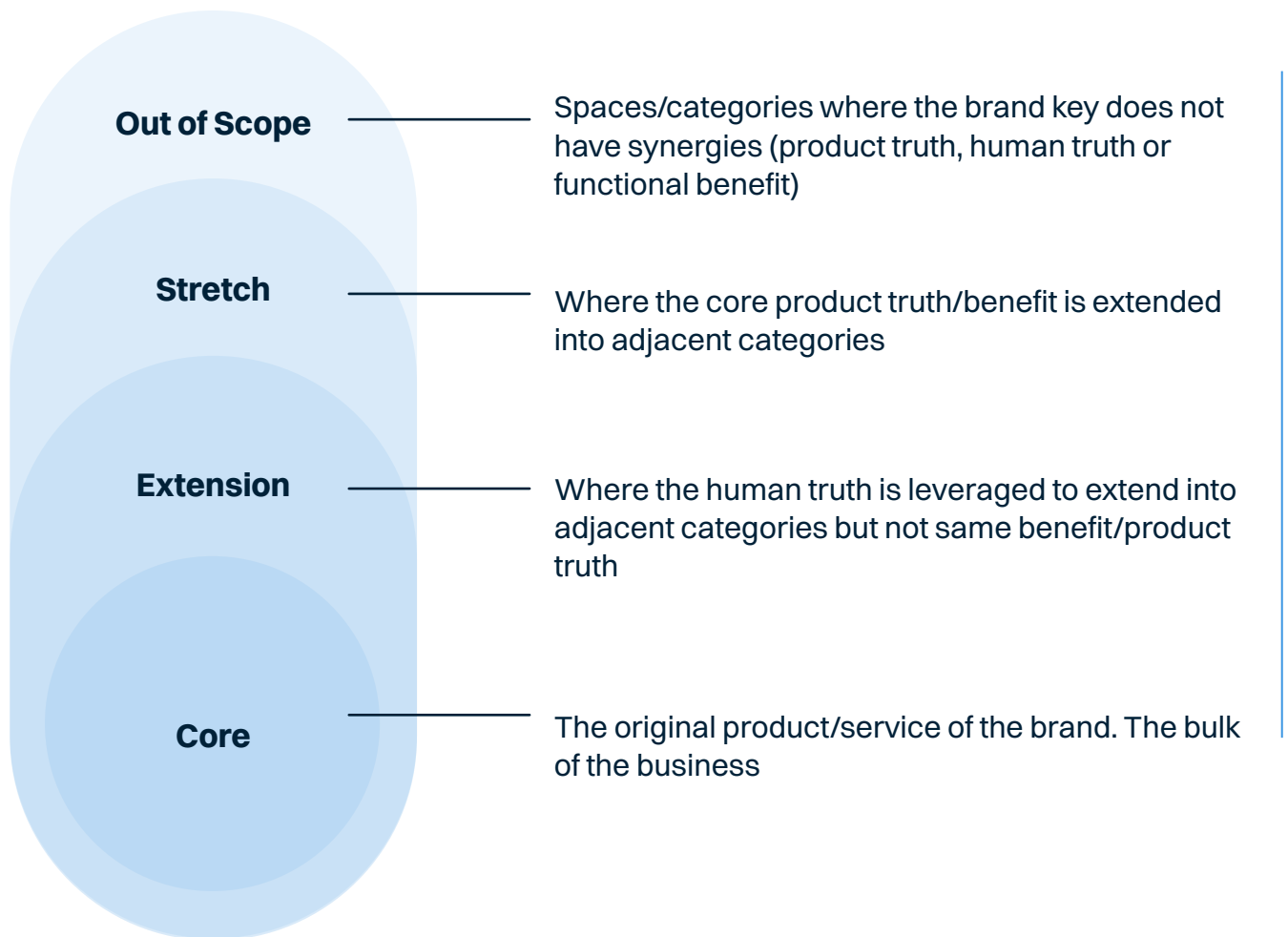
Focus on the core - there will be lot of headroom to grow here before you extend to adjacent spaces. Hence, innovate on the core first - by going after new segments, markets, channels, consumer insights.

Variants rarely succeed in FMCG. They mostly take focus and support away from the core and add complexity. Variants work if they help **tackle penetration barriers** for the core among **specific cohorts of consumers** or usage occasions (e.g. Coke vs diet coke). **Premium brands are better than premium variants**.

Hence, a portfolio of brands based on different **benefits x price points x archetypes** is a cleaner approach in the long term.

Brands are like a rubber band - there's **only so much stretch** they can take without breaking

Brand scoping framework explained



★ **Brand strength:** questions to ask

Will the opportunity help build on the brand key/equity?

What will it borrow from the key - same product truth or functional benefit (extension) or human truth (stretch)?

★ **Market context:** questions to ask

Will you be able to create a product that can be as good as competition on key attributes (point of parity)? And beat competition on the core promise of your brand (point of difference)?

Is the core benefit attribute relevant in the new category?

★ **Business context:** questions to ask

Is the opportunity large enough? Is the profit profile better than the core?

What level of support/investment will be required to succeed in this category? Can you afford it at the moment or is there need to focus on growing the core?

Does the company have the capabilities to execute the new category? Both from a supply chain and sales & distribution perspective

Brand architecture FAQs

★ **Some examples of brands that have extended successfully even on seemingly incoherent opportunities?**

Corporate or umbrella brands like Tata, Godrej, that gone into many businesses all unified by their personality.

Luxury or lifestyle brands have often operated across multiple categories, E.g. Armani, Gucci, Prada

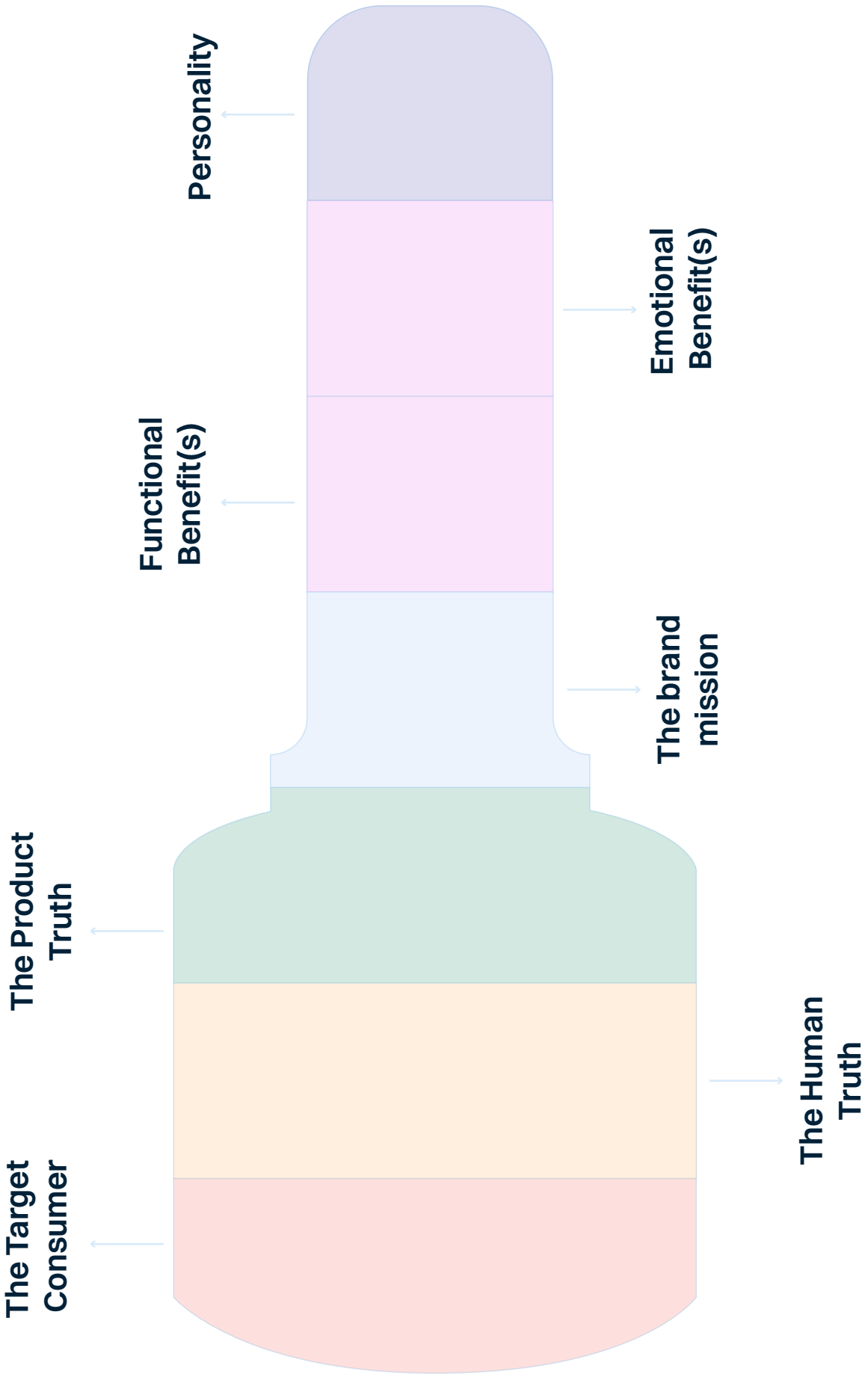
★ **What about sub brands or variants? When do they work or not work?**

In FMCG, while variants seem attractive, they generally tend to be a small proportion of the brands sales (<10-15%). The challenges has always been the right balance between federation to the core (how aligned will it look, feel) vs differentiated to the core (how different will the benefit, pricing, look & feel be). More federated leads to more rub off on core but incrementality tends to be low. More differentiation can lead to more incrementality but then has low brand building investment synergies.

However, if the variant is adequately different on product experience, benefit and price within the same category, with the right investment model it can work. E.g. Colgate in oral care, tata in tea, ponds in skincare

Brand Key: Template

Print and keep as a reference





Brands Archetypes: Resource page

Print and keep as a reference

Introverted

Affiliative



Individual

Extroverted

Summarize your brand in a line

The format

We offer/provide _____

To _____
To _____