Research Paper Management

Product and Brand Association Mapping Using Projective Technique: Study of Tata Nano in Ahmedabad

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ABSTRACT

A little over three years after it was first introduced, the Tata Nano is being widely touted as a flop. The car which was supposed to cause traffic jams all over India is not selling as much as it was expected to. Tata's Nano which is also taken as an example of a failed disruptive innovation has been discussed at many instances all around B-schools as case studies. Nano was essentially branded as the world's cheapest car…the truth is that no one wants to own a car that is thought of as cheap or taken for granted by their friends and relatives. The society in which Indians live, people want to show off how amazing their car is and how it is better than their friends or cousin's car.

In order to find out the reasons behind lack of people's interest in Tata Nano, a study was carried out in Ahmedabad region with the help of projective technique.

The opinions of the Staff associated with Dealers of Tata Motors and prospective customers were collected via Projective Technique Questionnaire which consisted of brand and product association maps, sentence correct tests and a story line.

KEYWORDS Tata Nano, disruptive innovation, brand association map, product association map

Introduction

Tata's Nano which is taken as an example of a failed disruptive innovation has been discussed at many instances all around B-schools as case studies. Nano was essentially branded as the world's cheapest car…the truth is that no one wants to own a car that is thought of as cheap or taken for granted by their friends and relatives. The society in which Indians live, people want to show off how amazing their car is and how it is better than their friends or cousin's car.

Nano is what innovation experts call a disruptive innovation. This term was coined by Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen. "An innovation that transforms an existing market or creates a new one by introducing simplicity, convenience, accessibility and affordability."

In order to find out the reasons behind lack of people's interest in Tata Nano, researcher carried out the said study in October 2013

Objectives of the study

- To find the brand associations of Tata Nano from the perspective of the employees associated with dealers of Tata Motors in Gujarat.
- To find product attributes which are closely, partially or least associated with the Nano from the perspective of prospective buyers/general public.
- To find any deviation between the product and brand attributes between the opinion of the general public and the Tata Motors employees.
- To check if low pricing had a negative impact on the consumer.

Data collection

The opinions of the Staff associated with Dealers of Tata Motors was collected via Projective Technique Questionnaire which consisted of brand and product association maps, sentence correct tests and a story line.

Sources of Responses to the Projective Technique Questionnaire

The questionnaire was filled by employees who were related to the sales of various motor cars in the passenger car segment of Tata Motors. Initially the plan was to get the questionnaires filled from employees who were directly related to the sale of the Tata Nano but on account of a slowdown in sales the number of employees assigned this task were limited to only 5. One in each of the five showrooms of Tata Motors. The breakdown of the responses received from the various showrooms as mentioned in Table 1

Table 1:

Address of Dealers dealing with Tata Cars	No. of Respondents
Active Automobiles-Fatehwadi Plot no 398/1, Fatehwadi, Near flyover, Sarkhej Bavla road, Sarkhej, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 382213.	2
ASPI Cars Private Limited Plot 582/2, near Vishala hotel, Sarkhej Narol road,Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 380052.	2
Aspi cars pvt ltd Municipal Market,near mid, behind Bevanballubhai School, Paldi, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 380007.	6
Cargo Motors Opp. Rajpath club, Sarkhej Gandhinagar Highway,Bodakdev, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 380015.	10
Cargo Motors Nr. Radhe Commercial - Residential complex, Opp. Khokhara bus stop, Khokhara circle, Maninagar (east), Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 380008.	10

The Responses to the Projective Questionnaire were as follows:

A map was prepared on the basis of the following attributes. The respondents had to place a number to the attributes in the zone they deemed fit. Green indicated close association, yellow associated medium association and red indicated least association. The responses were as below:

Attributes	Green	Yellow	Red
Alto 800	6	13	11
Bajaj RE60	6	5	19
Hyundai EON	0	13	17

Santro	2	6	22
Quality	24	6	0
Pricing	22	4	0
Unique colors	25	3	2
Performance	10	20	0
Low Maintenance	20	7	3
Youthful	5	24	1
Family car	21	9	0
Comfortable	23	7	0
Bring home happiness	17	8	5
Khushiyon ki chabi	25	5	0
Now you can	20	3	7
Different	6	18	6

Brand Association Maps

Brand association is anything which is deep seated in customer's mind about the brand. Brand should be associated with something positive so that the customers relate a brand to being positive. Brand associations are the attributes of brand which come into consumers mind when the brand is talked about. It is related with the implicit and explicit meanings which a consumer relates/ associates with a specific brand name. Brand association can also be defined as the degree to which a specific product/service is recognized within its product / service class / category.

Brand associations are formed on the following basis:

- Customers contact with the organization and its employees;
- Advertisements;
- Word of mouth publicity;
- Price at which the brand is sold;
- Celebrity/big entity association;
- Quality of the product;
- Products and schemes offered by competitors;
- Product class/category to which the brand belongs;
- POP (Point of purchase) displays; etc

The objective was to create maps from the point of view of the general public and the employees associated with sales of Tata Cars. A list of brand associations was further compiled as follows:

- Relevancy
- Consistency
- Proper positioning
- Sustainable
- Credibility
- Inspirational
- Uniqueness
- Appealing

A total of 30 respondents were approached and their opinions were registered on a map just as the one shown below in Figure 1, the red region indicated that the association was distant or there was little association with the attribute and the brand, yellow indicated medium association and green symbolised very close association with the brand and it would be considered to be an element which would be defining as to what the brand would be.

Respondents' opinion were collected and compiled in such a manner that the attributes which were placed in the region by the majority of the respondents was considered to be the deciding factor while placing the attribute in the required region. The responses reaped the following results

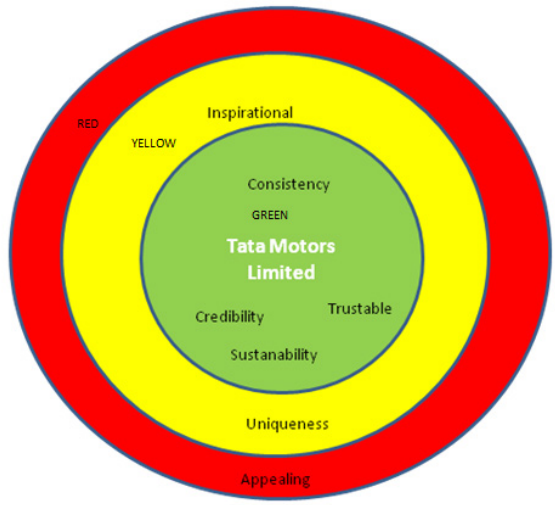


Figure 1: Brand Association map (Employees with Tata Dealers)

Same methodology was adopted to collect response from prospective customers which indicated results as mentioned in Figure 2.

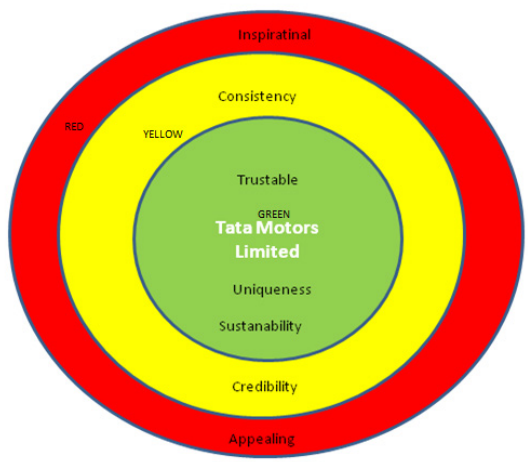


Figure 2: Brand Association Map (Consumers)

Further, as mentioned in Figure 3, both figure 1 and figure 2 were compared to find out the similarities/dissimilarities that arose by collecting the opinions of both the groups.

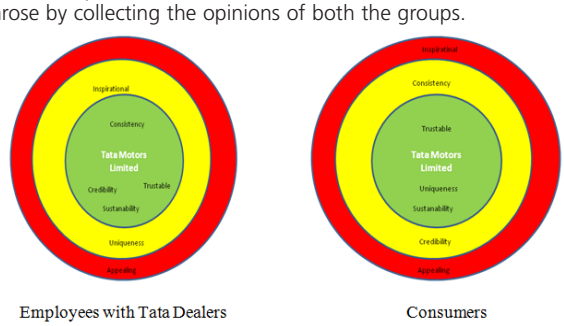


Figure 3: Comparing the brand association maps

There was no drastic variation of opinion or no major deviation from the opinions of the respondents and the employees of Tata motors. An agreement on the placements of the attributes is a good sign for Tata motors in the case of being trustable and sustainable the two groups of respondents also agreed on the brand being appealing and placed it in the least association region. Uniqueness was considered to a direct association in the minds of the general public the employees of

Tata did not think so. The attribute of being 'inspirational' was considered to be least associated to the brand where as the employees felt that there was medium association. 'Credibility' and 'Consistency' which are the attributes which were directly related to the performance of the brand.

The Product Association Map

A methodology known as association analysis which is useful for discovering interesting relationships hidden in large data sets. The uncovered relationships can be represented in the form of association rules or frequent items. Besides market basket data, association analysis is also applicable to other application domains such as bioinformatics, medical diagnosis, Web mining, and scientific data analysis.

Researcher took the task of selecting the product attributes based on the Association Map created by Nike for their brand which took into consideration the competition, the tag lines, the various attributes associated with the product in a generalized manner.

The colours associated with the map was based on Green- symbolising excellent and very good, Yellow- symbolising medium/average and Red symbolising poor/very poor.

The attributes being used to plot the Product Association Map were as follows:

1. Performance
2. Design
3. Quality
4. Mileage
5. Features
6. Comfort
7. Different
8. Maintenance
9. Youthful

Searching for a new car brings an information overload that can often be a little much to take in at one time. Survey respondents listed these top 5 factors as most-important when making a new car purchasing decision, in this order

1. Price 2.Fuel Efficiency 3. Safety 4. Quality 5. Value

Less important to consumers were the car's brand, environmental concerns, design/styling, manufacturer stability and technology/ innovation. As far as manufacturer incentives, car shoppers find a long warranty, low interest rate and a discounted price to be more important than special programs like job-loss protection or free gas. Here five basic factors were added four more attributes were linked to them to take into consideration the Indian context and certain factors which are considered to be crucial for Nano. Opinions of employees of Tata Motors were collected and compiled in such a manner that the attribute which was placed in the region by the majority of the respondents was considered to be the deciding factor while placing the attribute in the coloured region region. The responses reaped the following results:

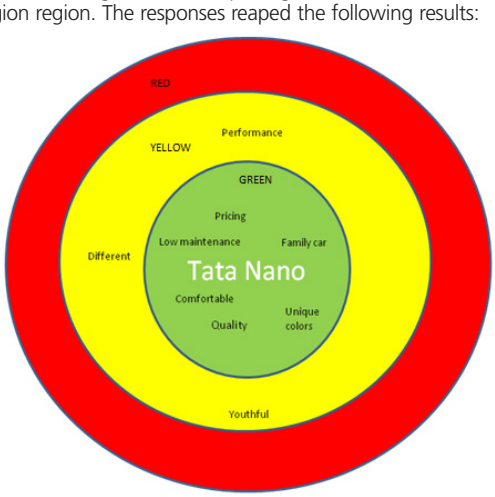


Figure 4: Product Association Map (Employees with Tata Dealers)

Figure 4 represents Product Association Map which was designed based on the responses of the employees associated with dealers of Tata Motors. Pricing,Low maintenance family car, comfortable, quality and unique colors were attributed to the Green Region. Yellow region indicated performance, different and youthful. Surprisingly, no attribute was placed in the red region. From the association map it can be concluded that Tata Nano is a car which is a family car which incurs low maintenance, is comfortable and is a good quality product with unique color offerings at a very competitive price.

Same methodology used to collected opinions of prospective customers/general public revealed the following as mentioned in Figure 5.

Green region which denotes the attributes which the respondents directly associated with the product indicated pricing, design, family car and unique colors. Yellow indicated the attributes such as quality, features, comfort and youthfulness and the performance of the car . Here too, no attribute was placed in Red region by the respondents.

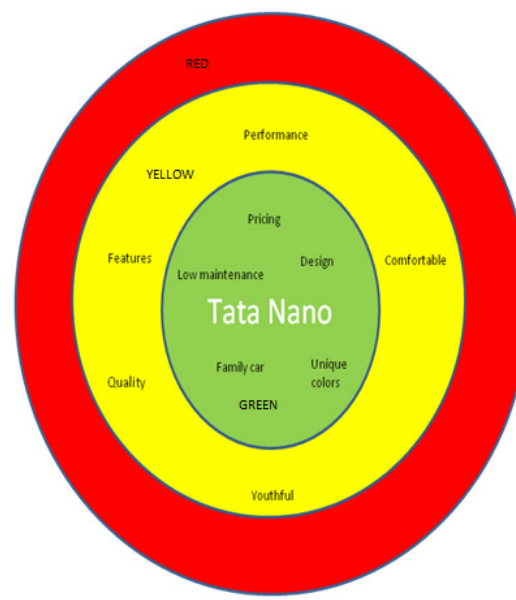


Figure 5: Product Association Map (Consumers)

CONCLUSION:

In order to make a product work there needs to be a perfect fit between what the public thinks and what the company is trying to portray. The case with the Tata Nano is that the project was not held in stages the product was introduced country wide. This has its pros and cons. Nano seems to have suffered the cons, the general public does want a car but keeping the Indian mentality in mind they feel that a car is a show of pride something used as a status symbol not just as a mode of transport.

The major differences in opinion lie in the attributes of inspirational, consistency, uniqueness and credibility while studying the Brand Association Map plotted after considering the responses of both the group of respondents. Prospective customers felt that inspiration was least associated with Tata while the employees working at dealer's place felt that there was medium association. Just the contradiction that can be highlighted here was the case with uniqueness. Prospects felt that uniqueness was closely associated with the brand while employees felt medium association. Tata would have to prove its consistency as prospective rate it average as per the study.

In terms of usage and it being a family car the respondents and the employees had equal opinions. The car can still suc-

ceed in the market as it is still in the tinkering stages were changes made can help turn matters in their favour. The Tata brand is trusted and needs no introduction just radical changes and keeping in mind the requirements of the customer, brand Nano can be relaunched to a resounding success.

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