Identifying Brand Values and Staging Them Multisensually

6

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Abstract

The optimal design of the message, elements, signals and assessment (MESA) of the brand is central to brand success. Starting from a clearly defined, distinct message (identity) of the brand, which is determined on the basis of the CORE criteria and converted into a brand profile, suitable primary and secondary brand elements can then be selected and (further) developed over time. The different brand elements can be combined into four types of multisensual brand signals: products, environments, media and people (PEMP). Based on this, brand awareness and the brand image anchored in the minds of customers must be continuously recorded. As a result, the four-stage MESA approach ensures that companies identify high-profile brand values for their brands and effectively stage them multi-sensually in order to inspire employees and customers alike and get them interested in the brand(s).

6.1 Brand Values as a Basis

Central brand strategy issues are the profiling and positioning of a company's brand(s). The resulting value system serves as an important framework for the further development of the corporate strategy and the business model. It reduces the risk of a company making the wrong strategic decisions, as it provides a fixed framework within which the company can and should develop in an agile manner (Kilian 2018a, p. 57).

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G. Mau et al. (eds.), *Multisensory in Stationary Retail*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-38227-8_6

Fig. 6.1 Basic structure of Kilian's MESA branding approach

Subsequently, the brand values with a strong profile must be translated into brand elements or, in the case of existing brands, regularly checked for coherence among each other and in relation to the brand values and, if necessary, supplemented by additional brand elements. Frequently, we also speak of design elements. Key brand elements include key images and characters as well as colors and shapes, sounds and materials, all of which should express what the brand stands for. Of particular importance are the brand name and the brand logo, as they can be trademarked relatively easily for the long term. Together, they become a knowledge memory that unites all experiences with the brand. On the Internet, brand name also becomes a central search criterion for employees and customers as domain address, fan page and hashtag.

Several brand elements are almost always used simultaneously and combined to form complex multisensual brand signals. Four types of brand signals can be distinguished: products, environments, media and people (PEMP). Together, they shape the customer experience at the touchpoints with the brand, which, when systematically coordinated, result in effective customer journeys. The customer experiences need to be assessed appropriately, especially with regard to the status quo and changes in comparison to competition and over time.

The four central components of message, elements, signals and assessment together form the brand management framework and are abbreviated with MESA, as shown in Fig. 6.1.

The starting point for the development and management of a brand is the brand identity, which can be described more figuratively as the brand message. The first step is to define a meaningful message for the brand and then to communicate it internally and externally. Figure 6.2 shows the central components as well as the CORE criteria for selecting suitable brand values, which are explained in more detail later.

6.1.1 Avoidance of Interchangeable Brand Values

When identifying brand values, generic and often interchangeable, commoditized values such as quality, innovation and customer orientation should be avoided as far as possible. Instead, it is important to identify unique brand values that grasp "the core". This is not to say that quality, innovation and customer focus are not significant to a brand's identity. They are! It is just that the abstract "umbrella terms" themselves do not help, since they are valid for many companies and thus do not contribute to differentiation, as the results of four studies in Table 6.1 make clear.

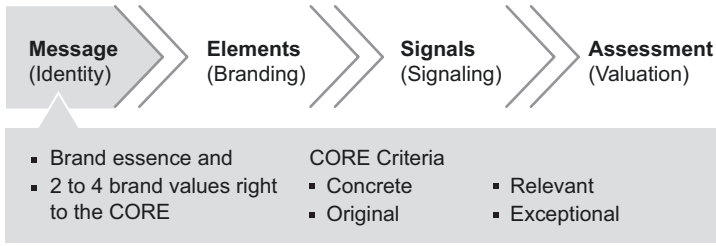

Fig. 6.2 The message as part of the MESA of branding approach

Table 6.1 Popular and thus arbitrary brand values (figures in percent)

Kleiner and Bold (2011) German Mittelstands-U.		Kilian (2012b) German high-tech U.		Ecco (2013) International companies		Kilian and Keysser (2017) German Stock Exchange U.	
Quality	40	Quality	39	Innovation	34	Integrity	44
Reliability	29	Innovation	30	Quality	30	Quality	36
Innovation	27	German workmanship	23	Customer satisfaction	28	Innovation	28
Customer orientation	20	Tradition	18	Integrity	20	Responsibility	27
Sustainability	11	Precision	18	Environment	17	Trust	19
Technology leader	9	Reliability	18	Know-how	16	Respect	19
Environmental awareness	9	Customer orientation	7	Responsibility	14	Customer orientation	18
Competence	7	Know-how	7	Team spirit	12	Openness	16
Trust	7	High quality	7	Respect	12	Entrepreneurial	15
Respect	7	Technology leader	7	Ambition	11	Reliability	15

Source: Kleiner and Bold (2011, p. 15); Kilian (2012b, p. 65); Ecco (2013, p. 4); Kleiner and Bold surveyed German SMEs across industries (n = 55), Kilian surveyed managers from the German high-tech industry (n = 44), Ecco analysed companies from 11 European countries, Australia and the USA (n = 4348) and Kilian and Keysser (Kilian 2018b, p. 37) studied 110 listed companies in Germany (DAX, M-DAX and TEC-DAX), with no data available in 25 cases (n = 85)

On average across all four studies, quality is used as brand value by 36% of all companies and innovation by 30%, which is why both can be regarded as generic brand values. They are usually not suitable for differentiating the brand from competition and for generating preferences. The same applies to customer orientation, which seems unsuitable as brand value per se, since it is considered a fundamental corporate task to place customers at the centre of one's work. Customer proximity, in contrast, is conceived as a brand value, since proximity to customers is not self-evident – and can have a differentiating effect.

In addition to the frequent use of brand values with interchangeable content, nouns (e.g., down-to-earthness) are often used for brand values, which often does not really have an activating and appealing effect. Therefore, the targeted selection and use of adjectives

(e.g., down-to-earth) is recommended. In addition, three further linguistic causes of weak brand identities can be named:

- Ambiguous,
- Unrealistic and/or
- Abstract and thus meaningless brand values.

A German medium-sized company, for example, had chosen "performance" as its brand essence. In addition to the resulting linguistic hurdle for a predominantly German employee base, it became apparent that performance covers a broad spectrum with over 30 meanings, ranging from work performance to performance characteristics to a theatrical performance. In turn, one of the world's leading telecommunications providers announced a few years ago that it would focus on the brand values innovation, competence and simplicity. How a company with several hundred thousand employees and a wide range of modern IT and TC services intends to realize simplicity remains unclear. As far as the brand value innovation is concerned, this is initially abstract and meaningless. It additionally requires a complex formal system that substantiates the brand value for different business domains and departments. In some cases, brand scorecards (Linxweiler 2004, p. 339; Meyer 2007, p. 26) are used for this purpose. This approach is possible in principle, but involves substantial administrative efforts that cost plenty of time and money.

6.1.2 Use of CORE Brand Values

It is therefore advisable to define meaningful brand values that "speak for themselves" and can be quickly and easily understood and internalized by employees and customers. This can be achieved by branding partial aspects of the aforementioned generic values and communicating them in a credible manner. Quality, for example, can mean high quality, long life, robustness, stable value, reliability or safety, and in a figurative sense also valuable or competent. In the case of food, there are also meanings such as natural, sustainable, healthy, tasty and enjoyable. It is therefore advisable to focus on a partial aspect of quality as a brand value and not on "the big picture," as the latter offers too much room for interpretation and thus does not provide the necessary clarity and orientation in the company and certainly not for the customer. Good brand values are high-profile brand values that make sense on their own and are understood by employees and customers without a lot of explanatory words, workshops and commercials (Kilian 2017, p. 113).

Kilian's CORE criteria are a good starting point for determining high-profile brand values. According to this approach, the brand values and the brand essence must be as concrete, original, relevant and exceptional as possible (Kilian 2009c, pp. 42–43; Kilian 2012b, p. 65). They are meaningful and inspiring, grounded in the company, significant for customers and characteristic for the brand compared to competition.

Brand Values right to the CORE

Concrete	Meaningful and inspiring – The brand values are pictorial and catchy rather than nebulous and abstract, meaning they offer little room for interpretation
Original	Grounded in the company – The brand values are associated with the company's own achievements and can be exemplified by the company
Relevant	For the customers – The brand values have a special meaning for the customers and are taken into account in purchase decisions
Exceptional	Compared to competition – The brand values can ideally only, or at least very credibly and convincingly be claimed by the company

Source: Kilian (2012b, p. 65)

The previously mentioned brand values quality, innovation and customer orientation are anything but concrete. Nor are they original for a brand value, but merely the result of underlying brand drivers (Brandmeyer et al. 2008, p. 152). In contrast, the brand value "precise", for example, can both emphasise the importance of millimetre-precise workmanship and ensure a clearly understandable pricing policy. Anything that runs counter to precision does not fit the brand and therefore will not be made. Everyone understands this: the managing directors, the development team and the reception staff. "Relevant" in turn refers primarily to the target group, the customers. Only if precision is relevant to the customer or can achieve relevance through appropriate communication should it be considered as a brand value. If a company is precise in its actions and in the services it provides, the perception of quality will arise automatically as a result. Finally, "exceptional" means that a brand value is only or especially valid for the company's own brand, for example because of the company's unique history or patented technologies.

6.1.3 Determining the Brand Positioning

Based on the brand values that have been defined down to the CORE, it is important to optimally position one's own brand on the market. The positioning of a brand results from the comparison of the own brand identity with the identity of relevant competitors. Relevant brands are usually depicted with the help of two- or three-dimensional diagrams that show how the various brands are arranged relative to one another on the basis of two or three criteria or pairs of criteria (Kilian 2018a, p. 63).

The positioning of a company or its offerings aims to anchor, reinforce or change desired ideas about the products and services offered in the minds of non-customers and customers, because "the only reality that counts is what's already in the prospect's mind" (Ries and Trout 2001, p. 5).

It is usually not a matter of creating something new in the minds of customers, but of influencing existing ideas in a desired way and weaving one's own brand into existing knowledge structures, e.g., the knowledge that buying from the market leader is a safe choice.

By selecting and concentrating on a single advantage of one's own offering that is relevant to customers, it is possible to segment the market and to achieve an optimal positioning of one's own offering. On the one hand, executives and brand managers have the task of helping to define the positioning; on the other hand, they are often (co-)responsible for the implementation. The more skilful they are in doing so, the higher the customers' willingness to pay and the more pronounced their loyalty. In this context, it is not so much the facts that are decisive, but rather what is perceived in the minds of the customers as applicable and purposeful. Basically, eight promising positioning options come into question.

Positioning Options

- Market leader (real or perceived)
- Challenger (No. 2)
- Preferred offering (from the experts' point of view)
- Original offering
- Category inventor
- Specialist
- Next generation
- Independent brand elements

Source: Brandtner (2005, p. 32); similar already Ries and Trout (2001, p. 43)

The first positioning option is market leadership. The size of the company is less important here than a clever – and from the customer's point of view comprehensible – definition of the relevant market. Red Bull, for example, was the market leader with its "energy drink" from the very first can, whereas the brand would be classified as "below the rest" in the soft drinks sector to this day. The Italian pasta brand Barilla, in turn, launched its brand in the USA as "Italy's pasta No. 1" and DWS advertised its funds in Germany for years with "Money belongs to the No.1."

Similarly, there are examples where challengers position themselves as No. 2 relative to the leading competitor, such as Pepsi and Burger King. However, here the criterion "better" rarely leads to the goal (Ries and Trout 2001, p. 53). An exception is the – earlier – positioning of Avis. For years, the car rental company communicated its second position with "We try harder." The trick was that it implicitly implied that in this way it would be able to overtake the market leader Hertz in the medium term.

Well-known expert-recommended offerings include Oral-B, the toothbrush brand that dentists most often advise their patients to use, and Finish, the dishwasher brand that leading dishwasher manufacturers recommend.

The brands Aspirin, Nutella and McDonald's, in turn, are originals. The same applies to Geox, Thermomix and Viagra. They are usually rated better than their copies. Usually, but not always, they are the first brands in a new category (see Aaker 2011).

Brands become category inventors when they define a meaningful new category from the customer's point of view. Well-known examples are Dr. Best (bendable toothbrush), Dell (PC direct sales), Aronal and Elmex (toothpaste varieties depending on the time of day), Wagner (stone-baked pizza) and the already mentioned brands Viagra (sexual enhancer), Thermomix (multifunctional kitchen appliance) and Geox (breathable shoes).

In cases where no meaningful new category can be found, positioning a brand as a specialist or niche provider is a good idea. Many of us prefer to go to the specialist rather than the generalist, not only when it comes to doctors! It is enough to be the first to specialize in a niche from the customer's point of view, as BMW (driving pleasure), Volvo (safety), KTM (off-road motorcycles), and Mrs. Sporty (fitness studios exclusively for women) have done. Typical specialization dimensions are size (small/large), price (high/low), gender (men/women), age (young/old), time of day (day/night), distribution (selective/broad), and intensity of use (hobby/professional).

The important thing is that you do not try to please everyone, because then you will not please anyone. Those who do not polarize to a certain degree are usually only positioned in a weak manner.

The "next generation" positioning approach also works well in many cases, especially in industries where progress is viewed positively. For example, dishwasher tabs with four instead of three functions, wet razor blades with five instead of four cutting blades and toothpastes with six instead of five protective functions are clearly preferred. In the case of smartphones, computer processors and software programs, too, the next generation is always promoted, making all previous (competitor) products look old.

What most approaches have in common is that their own positioning simultaneously (re)positions the brands of competitors: if Coca-Cola is the original, Pepsi must therefore be an imitation product. Dr. Best was the first bendable toothbrush, thus repositioning all other toothbrushes at the same moment – involuntarily – as fixed toothbrushes. And Geox sells breathing shoes, suggesting that all other manufacturers sell non-breathing shoes. Once a viable positioning has been found, it is a matter of translating one's own brand message into brand elements.

6.2 Brand Elements as Design Parameters

Brand elements are creative expressions of the brand identity, usually simple conceptual units that specifically address one or two sensory channels (e.g., color, shape, sound, imagery). They help to optimize the associations linked to a brand as well as to maximize recognition, whereby a distinction can be made between primary and secondary brand elements (cf. Fig. 6.3). Primary brand elements usually belong to the company and express the brand values, while secondary brand elements are usually assigned to third parties and enrich the brand (Kilian 2009a, p. 37).

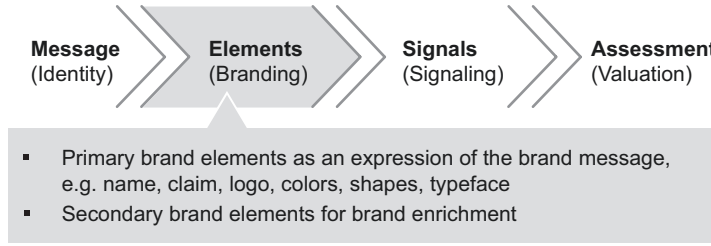

Fig. 6.3 The elements are part of the MESA branding approach

6.2.1 Primary Brand Elements

In terms of primary brand elements, the focus to date has almost always been on visual design parameters, first and foremost form, colour and layout, but also visual language, symbolism and typeface. The other four senses are usually only considered at the margins, if at all – and even more rarely defined in line with the brand. But a product is not only seen by customers. It is also heard, for example when operating a switch. It can also be smelled, for example when leather is used. Taste, in turn, is limited to food, although on special occasions, for example at trade fairs and company anniversaries, non-food manufacturers often serve food and drink to their guests as well. With a skilful selection, they can use this to additionally underline their identity. Sushi and Swabian ravioli, for example, are decoded quite differently. The same applies to inexpensive filter coffee from Ja! (Rewe) compared to Jacobs Krönung (Kilian 2017, pp. 113–114).

The constitutive brand elements include in particular the brand name, the logo, selected key images and design elements, especially colours, shapes and typefaces (Kilian 2020b, pp. 36–40). Brand language, brand sound and product sounds as well as brand haptics should also be considered and, depending on the nature of the product, a typical taste or scent of an offering should also be considered on a case-by-case basis. This applies all the more as classical elements are increasingly exploited. Therefore, it is increasingly necessary to use such brand elements for differentiation, which have so far only been used by a few companies (Kilian 2009a, p. 37).

Primary Brand Elements
- Name (incl. domain)
- Claim (Slogan)
- Logo, symbols and key images
- Design elements (esp. colours, shapes and the typeface)
- Acoustics (esp. language, sounds and noises)
- Haptics (esp. surfaces)
- Olfactory (scent)
- Gustatory (taste)

The primary brand elements are also referred to as branding, branding elements or brand stylistics (Baumgarth 2014, p. 261; Schmidt 2015, p. 68). The most important brand element is the brand name. With the increasing prevalence of voice assistants, voice commerce is likely to gain further importance and with it brand names (Müller and Rest 2018, pp. 80–81). In addition, brand names ensure that companies or offerings become a household word and that customers can optimally store experiences with them in their memory. However, the effort required for name development should not be underestimated. With more than 25 million registered trademarks worldwide, a systematic approach is absolutely advisable. The increasing international integration plays an increasing role, too. It should be borne in mind, for example, that the seven main languages of the EU have only 1300 words in common and that out of 20 shortlisted brand names only two or three are usually eligible for protection after legal examination (Kilian 2006, p. B4), since around two million trademarks are protected for Germany alone.

In addition to finding a name for a new offering, reviewing an existing name in terms of its desired effect or modifying or replacing an existing brand name with a new one may also require going through the naming process (see Kilian 2018a, p. 70, for details).

Brand logos are another important brand element. Their central tasks include attracting attention, generating liking, communicating associations relevant to positioning, and being easily perceived and remembered. Logos are more or less distinct graphic elements in written or pictorial form. Figurative logos can be further differentiated into iconic, indexical and symbolic logos based on their sign meaning.

Iconic logos have a high degree of similarity with the designated object due to their concrete design. Typical examples are the logos of the mineral oil company Shell, the magazine Stern or the electronics supplier Apple. In contrast, indexical logos are characterized by the fact that they have no direct reference to the object, but merely have a certain property in common with it, such as the result for the building society Schwäbisch Hall, on whose stones one can build. Symbolic logos, in turn, are created through learning processes and agreements between people. All abstract logos fall into this category, e.g., the three stripes of Adidas, the Lacoste crocodile or the Mercedes star.

In addition to logos, claims and slogans are also important primary brand elements. While claims usually represent positioning statements, slogans can be defined as short, concise advertising texts (Görg 2005, pp. 15–16). In the following, both terms will be used synonymously. In contrast, a distinction between brand claim (brand slogan) and campaign claim (campaign slogan) seems more helpful. While the brand claim can be understood as a fixed component of the brand message, since it is part of the brand appearance in the long term, the campaign claim is usually only used for a limited period of time and in certain media formats, e.g., for the introduction of a new product. The difference can be illustrated by the example of the German bank chain Volksbank. While the brand claim "We clear the way" has been used since 1988, the campaign claim "The cooperative idea," introduced in 2018, is not always used everywhere. The brand claim is usually placed directly next to the name or logo, while the campaign claim is placed above or near the actual offering, e.g., as the headline of a print or online advertisement.

In very general terms, campaign claims can be described as short phrases used in communication to convey descriptive or emotional information. In contrast, the tasks of brand claims include increasing the recognition of a brand, linking the brand name with the offering and thus supporting active brand awareness as well as the positioning of the brand. Both brand and campaign claims, unlike brand names and logos, can be adapted easily over time and tailored to different areas of application or target groups.

In a similar way, the brand positioning can also be communicated through key visuals. Three forms of visual key motives can be distinguished: brand names, logos and user-related or pictorial worlds of experience. The use of a brand name and logo (e.g., the Michelin man "Bibendum") ensures the identification of the brand. Other typical examples are the Sarotti magician of the senses and the visual implementation of the brand "Du darfst" (You may). In the case of benefit-related imagery (e.g., Mr. Proper), the benefit associated with the brand is illustrated. In addition to the identification function, this approach serves to convey information through an enriched brand image. An example of a benefit-related imagery is the tomato of the toothbrush brand Dr. Best, which vividly illustrates the bendability of the brush when pressure is too high and thus the gentle cleaning of teeth with the brush. A pictorial world of experience (e.g., Davidoff Cool Water) has the task of conveying emotions in addition to its identification function. Classic examples are the worlds of the Marlboro cowboy and the Beck's sailing ship, which are characterised by freedom and adventure (Kilian 2009a, pp. 39–40).

Shapes and colours lend expression to the typeface of the brand name, the design of the logo and other visual elements. Physiologically, colors are perceived first, then shapes, and finally texts. Images consisting primarily of colours and shapes are not only almost always noticed first, but are also viewed significantly longer and with greater probability than written texts (Kilian 2012a, pp. 20–21). Color perception passes through three stages of awareness. Color impressions are followed by sensations, which in turn evoke a corresponding effect. For example, the color yellow is often associated with a jarring major tone, perceived as smooth and soft, associated with warmth, and judged as light. In addition to the sensory associations, colours also trigger general associations and effects (cf. Table 6.2).

The colour red has the strongest activating effect. It is culturally associated with blood and thus with fear, which also explains why most warning signs are red. The activation emanating from a hue is closely linked to the warmth of the hue. While warm colors such as red, orange and yellow are highly activating, cold hues such as purple, blue and green have little activating power. In addition to hue, color saturation (intensity and purity) and color brightness (perception of light and dark) are the main factors that influence brand perception. Colors with higher color saturation activate more strongly and are usually more appealing. The same applies to brighter colors. Color brightness is often linked to certain associations. While dark colors seem rather powerful and active, which is why they are perceived as strong, superior, vivid and hard, light colors seem rather weak and passive to us. We perceive them as soft, delicate and calm, but also as easygoing and devoted (Kilian 2012a, p. 21).

With regard to the shape style that characterizes the design of many brands, a distinction can be made between dimension (points, lines, surfaces and solids), design implementation, limitation (contour), quantity (absolute or relative size) and quality. The quality of

Table 6.2 Associative and psychological effects of colours

Color	Associations	Effect
Blue	Silence, harmony; space, eternity; sky, vastness, infinity; cleanliness	Quiet, reassuring, harmonious, secure; longing; sympathetic, friendly, spontaneous; dutiful, focused; rational thinking
Red	I; fire, blood; love, sexuality, exoticism, fantasy; joie de vivre, vital energy, zest for action	Dynamic, active, powerful, magnificent; aggressive, dangerous; exciting, desiring, challenging; emotionally sensitive
Green	Youth, spring, nature; hope, confidence; calm, relaxation; tolerance; security; health	Natural, pleasant, calming; lively, full of life, refreshing; close to nature; peaceful, calm; sensitive
Yellow	Fertility, summer, blessing, abundance; danger, threat; jealousy, envy, avarice; caution	Radiant, cheerful, sunny, clear, free; communicative, connecting, stimulating, extroverted; intuitively sensual
Brown	Health, security; sluggishness, laziness; intemperance: bourgeoisie, conventionality	Warm, earthy, comfortable; static, cozy, un-erotic; withdrawn, saggy
White	Beginning, innocence, purity, piety, faith, eternity, truthfulness, accuracy	Perfect, ideal; simple, functional; clinical, clean, sterile; cheerful; illusionary, spiritual, unrealistic
Grey	Thoughtfulness, punctuality, insensitivity, indifference, gloom, modesty	Modern, plain; old; unconcerned, indifferent, balancing, neutralizing, conforming; screened, secretive, hidden
Black	Seriousness; darkness, grief, death, end, emptiness; selfishness, guilt, distress; magic, power	Sublime, elegant; technical, strong, powerful; transient, static, passive; closed, pessimistic, obsessive, hopeless

Source: Küthe and Küthe (2002, pp. 24, 99–101, 108, 114, and 123); Kilian (2012a, p. 20)

form refers to the contour of an object. While acute-angled shapes, e.g., triangles, appear active and powerful as well as changeable, tense and constructive, right-angled shapes, e.g., squares, are perceived as powerful and passive – but also as masculine, hard, determined and rational. In contrast, round shapes, e.g., circles, appear more passive and weak and at the same time feminine, soft, moving, undetermined and emotional (Kilian 2012a, p. 21).

The typeface chosen is of particular importance; it can be designed with or without serifs (crosslines at the end of the letters) and can appear authoritarian, honest, childlike (such as the Disney typeface) or friendly (cf. Fig. 6.4):

- Authoritarian: Angular capital letters in bold, (menacingly) tall type
- Honest: Slim straight letters with soft, simple shapes
- Friendly: Italic letters with rounded ends or serifs
- Childlike: Rounded letters with squiggles or especially “thick”

In addition to visual impressions, brands can also make an acoustic impression. The spectrum of acoustic brand elements is large. It ranges from product-specific sound, interactive sounds, sound logos (jingles) and brand songs to background music, corporate

Fig. 6.4 The visual "tone" of the typeface

anthems and corporate voices to cooperative brand music, e.g., in the form of music marketing and music sponsoring (detailed in Kilian 2009a, p. 41). Sound logos, which used to be called jingles, are often of central importance. Sound logos are short or core motives that are used at prominent points as acoustic trademarks. They usually consist of a short, distinctive sequence of sounds, sometimes a specific noise, and contribute to brand recognition due to their easy memorability. Well-known examples are the sound logos of BMW, Intel and Deutsche Telekom. Sound logos also frequently reinforce the effectiveness of brand names (e.g., "Ei, Ei, Ei … Verpoorten") or brand claims (e.g., "Wenn's um Geld geht … Sparkasse") through melody, rhythm and sound.

In many cases it is also advisable to address the sense of touch. The perception is primarily tactile via the skin, then kinaesthetic via muscles, tendons, joints and the surrounding tissue. Haptic stimuli are better perceived visually when it comes to shape and size or coarse, visible textures. In contrast, haptic perceptibility is just as superior to visual perceptibility when it comes to temperature, consistency and weight as it is with fine, barely perceptible textures. Materiality can make all the difference. It can be brand-defining or serve as an expression of the brand identity. For example, aluminium gives products their lightness, leather gives them elegance and value, wood conveys naturalness and metal – compared to plastic – makes it clear that a product is robust and durable (Kilian 2017, p. 114). In addition to the primary brand elements mentioned, there are numerous secondary brand elements that can be used to further characterize the brand.

6.2.2 Secondary Brand Elements

Secondary brand elements are characterized by the fact that they enrich a brand. Through the connection with other objects, the brand image can be strengthened or changed. Basically, there are seven starting points for brand enrichment:

- Country or region of origin
- Licensing (e.g., photos, songs)
- Sponsoring of events
- Brand alliances (esp. co-branding)
- Advertising cooperations (e.g., with influencers)
- Neutral institutions (e.g., quality seals, test reports)
- Distribution channels and partners

Typical secondary brand elements include the country of origin (CoO) of a brand, licensing and sponsoring of events as well as brand alliances and advertising cooperations. The

latter two approaches allow the companies involved to combine their own brand image and market know-how with an adequate partner in order to operate successfully on the market together – while maintaining their respective independence (detailed in Kilian and Pickenpack 2018). Well-known examples of co-branding are chocolate from Ritter Sport and Smarties, electric razors with integrated aftershave from Philishave and Nivea Men, and unusually designed kitchen appliances from Philips and Alessi. As far as advertising cooperations are concerned, the multi-year collaboration between Puma and Pamela Reif is a case in point. The key success factors of brand cooperations include (Baumgarth 2014, p. 280):

- High fit between the brands involved (brand fit)
- Independent, complementary competences and matching offerings of the partners (product fit)
- Extensive target group overlaps (commonalities)
- Positive assessment of the joint advertising appearance (advertising appeal)

It must be checked in advance whether partners complement each other optimally, as well as whether and to what extent the target groups are compatible with each other. The aspect of advertising fit is closely linked to the implementation and is therefore hardly testable in advance, but is partly related to brand and product fit as well as the scope of the common target group. If major inconsistencies already emerge here, the joint advertising appearance is also usually poorly assessed, as credible arguments for a comprehensible connection are lacking.

In addition, neutral institutions, e.g., Stiftung Warentest and the Institut Fresenius, but also non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) are among the secondary brand elements. Through independent tests and their own seals of approval, they can positively influence the perception of brands. Finally, the chosen distribution channels and sales partners also influence brand perception. Therefore, secondary brand elements should be chosen carefully.

6.3 Brand Signals as a Means of Expression

The brand elements under consideration are never used in isolation, but are combined with each other in a variety of ways, whereby four types of brand signals can be distinguished with products, environments, media and people (PEMP), as Fig. 6.5 shows.

Of central importance is the brand-compliant design of the functionality, materiality and design of the offering. Secondly, environments, especially brand experience worlds, have an important influence on the brand image. Typical examples are brand parks, brand events and brand sales locations, e.g., brand shops (Kilian 2010b, pp. 51–52). They make it possible to transform the primarily sales-oriented point of sale (POS) into a more multi-layered point of experience (POE) that provides distinctive, memorable brand experiences.

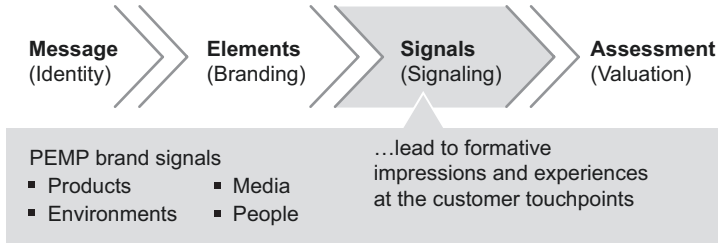

Fig. 6.5 The signals are part of the MESA branding approach

In combination with a continuously experienced product experience or a positive service outcome, the point of sale brand experience becomes a formative component of the brand perceptions that shape our behaviour in the long term (Kilian 2008, pp. 197–198; Kilian 2012a, p. 42). In addition, thirdly, all media formats used must be designed to conform to the brand, from TV commercials to outdoor advertising to the brand website. Finally, people must be taken into account as important brand signals. These include in particular sales and service staff, but also micro, macro and mega-influencers as well as prominent testimonials from the fields of sport, fashion and music as well as film and television (Kilian 2020a, pp. 81–84).

In contrast to brand environments such as trade fair stands and brand shops, where all five senses can almost always be consciously addressed, this is usually not possible with the other brand signal types. Thus, with products and people, usually only three or four sensory channels can be specifically addressed. Via (mass) media, in turn, usually only one or two sensory channels can be addressed directly, which is why the close senses of haptics, smell and taste can often only be addressed indirectly, e.g., through language, images and/or sounds that activate haptic, olfactory and/or gustatory inner perceptions.

If, for example, a radio commercial sounds a crack-crisp-crunch noise when biting into fresh biscuits, the associated taste experience of a Leibniz biscuit is inevitably activated. Similarly, the audible scratching of a heating rod not protected by a water softener recalls the haptic protective effect of Calgon. In a similar way, a haptic effect can also be visualized in a print ad. In an ad for Guhl shampoo, for example, the haptic product benefit "soft" is not only simply verbalized, but also depicted in the form of wooden letters to illustrate it. The letter "s" is rendered with a visibly rough wooden surface, the letter "o" is embodied by a Guhl shampoo bottle, and, following the reading direction and our learned before-after understanding, the remaining letters are depicted with smooth surfaces and rounded edges. In Table 6.3, the multi-sense action spectrum is reproduced as an example for all four brand signal types (Kilian 2018c, p. 132).

In addition to medially varying possibilities, the industry, product or service-related differences as well as situation-dependent parameters influence the relative importance of the five senses in the perception process. In general, four explanatory approaches can be named that explain the relative dominance of a sense channel. While the discontinuity hypothesis states that the dominant modality is the one whose stimulation is

Table 6.3 Multisensual effect of brand signals

Brand signals	Examples	See	Hear	Smell	Touch	Taste
Products	e.g., Packaging	■	■	■	■	□
Environments	Building	■	■	■	■	
	POS/Shops	■	■	■	■	■
	Events	■	■	■	■	■
	Trade fairs	■	■	■	■	■
Media	TV	■	■	□	□	
	Radio		■	□		
	Cinema	■	■	□	□	
	CD/DVD/Internet	■	■	□		
	Phone	□	■			
People	e.g., Sales staff	■	■	■	■	

Source: Kilian (2009b, p. 154); Kilian (2018c, p. 133)
Legend: ■ = (almost) always true (directly perceptible), □ = only rarely true (only indirectly perceptible)

discontinuous, according to the modality suitability hypothesis the sensory channel that appears to be most suitable for the concrete perceptual situation dominates. In contrast, the information reliability hypothesis emphasizes a relative dominance of the sensory modality that provides the most reliable information. Finally, the attentional guidance hypothesis explains the pronounced importance of a sense channel by the fact that this sense, through conscious addressing, receives the most attention situationally (Kilian 2018c, pp. 121–122).

For the most effective stimulation of the sensory channels, it is important on the one hand that the stimuli occur at the same time and preferably at the same place. On the other hand, the multisensory amplification and integration of the different sensory impressions is of central importance. Both of these factors cause neural responses to be faster, more accurate, and over-additive. Neurons are thought to fire up to twelve times more strongly during coherent simultaneous responses across multiple senses than during unimodal sensory stimulation, whereas inconsistencies result in reduced activation. In either case, much of the information received remains unconscious. Nevertheless, these unconsciously or implicitly perceived sensory impressions have an influence on our behavior, as, for example, study results on priming with temperature and the hardness of materials have shown. For example, if a person receives a warm (cold) coffee drink before a conversation in which he or she must evaluate the personality of a person unknown to him or her, the subsequent evaluation of this unfamiliar person turns out to be significantly more positive (negative). Similarly, evaluating a warm (cold) therapy pillow leads the person to be more likely to choose a gift for a friend (for themselves) in their subsequent choice of allowance. The reason for this is that both physical and psychological warmth, understood as "interpersonal warmth," are mentally processed in the same brain area (Williams and Bargh 2008, pp. 606–607). This is referred to, more generally, as "embodied cognition." What is meant is that our thinking is closely interwoven mentally with our bodily experience, and

probably even largely emerges from it, as Ackerman et al. point out: "Our understanding of the world … fundamentally depends on our multisensory experiences with it" (2010, p. 1713).

Accordingly, the weight, texture and hardness of objects influence subsequent impressions and decisions in relation to unrelated situations and people. For example, holding a heavy (light) clipboard leads candidates to be rated better (worse) overall and as more (less) interested in the advertised position based on available application materials. Similarly, assembling a five-piece jigsaw puzzle with a rough (smooth) surface leads to a subsequently described ambiguous social interaction between individuals being described as (less) difficult and hard. In turn, a hard log (a soft blanket) causes an employee to be rated as (less) rigid and strict in a subsequently described interaction with his boss. This effect is evident not only with active touch, but also with passive haptic impressions. For example, if a person is seated on a hard (padded) chair and asked to fictitiously provide two price quotes for a car purchase, the car salesperson is described as (less) rigid and emotionless (Ackerman et al. 2010, p. 1712).

The selected examples make it clear that the physical experience and the mental sensation are closely connected. It is therefore advisable to record the sensory manifestations of the individual design elements of one's own brand signals and to check whether they are constitutive and thus formative for the customers' perception. In the case of light products, for example, lightness is often illustrated by desaturated colours, while in the case of premium products exclusivity is usually symbolised by golden logos or font colours and fine, straight typography. In addition to (non-)constitutive status, context also plays an important role in the interpretation of brand elements. Table 6.4 shows an example of the comparison of explicit features with implicit meanings.

The testing process starts with the recording of all explicit expressions. It is then advisable to examine the characteristics to determine whether or not they are contextually constitutive for the perception. For all relevant features, the implicit meanings should then be determined. Finally, it is advisable to check the different implicit meanings (and their

Table 6.4 Coherence of physical design elements and mental meanings

Sensory channel	Exemplary characteristics (explicit)			Feature inspection	Meaning (implicit)	Consistency check
Visual	Large	Colorful	Dark	Constituent? Context?	Enter here for each design element	Within one sensory channel or across several/all sensory channels? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No
	Small	Achromatic	Bright			
Acoustical	Loud	Quick	Major			
	Silent	Slow	Minor			
Haptical	Hard	Heavy	Rough			
	Soft	Light	Fine			
Olfactory	Penetrating	Fresh	Woody			
	Not p.	Not fresh	Flowery			

Source: Kilian (2018c, p. 124); similarly already Kilian (2007, pp. 324, 329 and 347)

underlying explicit expressions) for coherence within one sensory channel as well as for coherence across several, and if possible, all sensory channels. If there is a high degree of coherence, it is sufficient to further optimize the existing expressions and, if necessary, to reinforce them with additional expressions. If there is only partial coherence or no coherence at all, it is advisable to modify the individual characteristics in order to bring them as close to the desired meaning as possible.

As the examples have shown, concrete, physically perceptible characteristics unconsciously activate mental concepts, which in turn influence product assessment and purchase decisions. In principle, if the amount of information is distributed over several sensory organs, more information can be processed overall. In addition, multisensory perception increases memory and recall (Kilian 2018c, pp. 123–124).

How a brand value can be shaped across all senses can be exemplified by the value "power," which stands for reputation, influence and authority. The brand essence "claim to leadership" of Mercedes-Benz is an example for this. As a general rule, a large proportion of central value fields can be specifically addressed via all five sensory modalities, as diffferent and MetaDesign (2006, pp. 3–4) were able to empirically demonstrate. A study by Klepper (2010), based on this, comes to comparable results, as Table 6.5 makes clear.

Visually, power can be expressed, among other things, through dark, valuable colours, a distanced visual language and a font without serifs. Acoustically, penetrating, loud music

Table 6.5 The multisensual coding of the value "power"

Sense	Diffferent and MetaDesign (2006)	Institute Corporate Senses (2010)
View	Dark, valuable colours Distanced imagery Solid shapes Vigorous e.g., Judgement, stretch limousine	High emotiveness High wavelength (600–650 nm) Rather geometric shapes Light to medium line contrast Low dynamism Without serifs
Listen	Loud Pervasive Precise rhythms e.g., March, lion, fanfare	High volume, dynamics, quality Cold tuning, low pitch Semi-free rhythm Medium complexity Classic impression Large instrumentation e.g., Orchestra, strings
Feeling	Cold, smooth, hard, heavy Leathery, high quality e.g., Gold leaf	Warm, smooth, hard, dry Low vibration e.g., Diamond, gold, stone, steel
Smell	Aggrandizing, heavy e.g., Incense	Spicy, animalistic, woody Not: watery, fruity, flowery
Taste	Bitter, spicy, hot e.g., Whiskey, nutmeg, dark chocolate with chili	Tart, spicy, herbaceous, woody Not: fresh, floral, citrus, green

Source: Diffferent and MetaDesign (2006, pp. 3–4) as well as Klepper (2010)

with high dynamics seems appropriate, e.g., a classical orchestra with large instrumentation playing a spirited piece of music. Haptically, power tends to be warm and soft when combined with gold, and cold and hard when diamonds are used. In any case, smooth, high-quality surfaces and heavy materials are recommended. Accordingly, the Bang & Olufsen remote controls are made of metal and weigh a good 250 g, while commercially available plastic remote controls are usually only 150 g light. Olfactorily, power is closely related to roomy, heavy fragrances that should be as spicy, animalic or woody as possible. In terms of taste, power is best conveyed by bitter, spicy foods, e.g., during tastings at trade fair booths.

Most companies are still a long way from brand-compliant, multi-sensual brand communication. Based on a sustainable brand identity whose values meet the CORE criteria mentioned above, the first step is to specifically use primary brand elements to visually differentiate the brand. In the fashion industry, for example, 92% of print advertisements are incorrectly assigned or not assigned at all by people interested in fashion if the brand name and logo are hidden (Serviceplan and Facit 2007, p. 50). Across all industries, the percentage of unassigned or incorrectly classified ads is 48% (Scheier and Held 2014, p. 80). If one also considers that with an average viewing time of only 2 seconds, the key image attracts a large part of the attention, while up to 95% of the other ad content cannot be perceived or consciously processed (Kroeber-Riel 1988, p. 182). This ultimately means that half of the brands run industry advertising, but not brand advertising.

As soon as independent visual brand elements have been established, the second step is to address other senses in a brand-compliant manner. Most of the time, the focus is initially on perceived liking of the brand elements, which creates a pleasant but mostly unspecific atmosphere and often does not enable a direct connection with the brand. The second stage is therefore only recommended for a temporary transitional phase, if at all. Ideally, companies move directly to the third stage, in which the brand is made to be experienced conclusively through all five senses. True multi-sensory branding enables the most lasting experiences and long-lasting, positive brand memories. For this, it is necessary that the brand can be stringently experienced through all senses, whereby senses should also be deliberately included that have not yet been specifically addressed by the competition. In addition, it is important that all sensory impressions convey the same experience and that a direct and appropriate reference to the brand is always recognizable. As a result, the sensory impressions reinforce and complement each other and a coherent, brand-specific experience is created that engages customers with the brand and binds them meaningfully to the brand (Kilian 2010a, p. 48).

It is important that the effects associated with the brand signals are regularly captured qualitatively and/or quantitatively. The same is true for the effect of the message (identity) of the brand, which should be assessed regularly.

6.4 Brand Assessment for Performance Monitoring

The objective of brand assessments is the qualitative evaluation of brand strength and, in some cases, its quantification as monetary brand equity. Central starting points of qualitative valuations are the brand purchase funnel, the recording of brand perception and the regular determination of the appreciation of the brand, e.g., via a willingness to recommend score (cf. Fig. 6.6).

The two most important measures of brand equity are brand awareness and brand image in the relevant target group. In general, a distinction can be made between recall and recognition. Firstly, unaided awareness can be determined, whereby a distinction is made between first mention (top-of-mind) and subsequent mentions. The area surveyed can be very broad or very narrow. In principle, the more general the context in which a brand is mentioned, the better. In a second step, the aided awareness can be determined, whereby cues are given without, however, mentioning the brand name itself. For example, a specific situation (e.g., a visit to the cinema) can be cited or the figurative logo or a current campaign (commercial or print ad) can be described. In a third step, recognition is typically recorded with the question "Do you know the brand …?" or by asking whether the respondent has seen the brand recently (Kahn 2013, pp. 63–64).

The aided brand awareness also represents the first stage of the brand purchase funnel (cf. Fig. 6.7). For the second stage, familiarity with the brand is asked, in the third stage it is recorded whether the brand was shortlisted, then whether the brand, e.g., a car brand, was actually purchased. In the case of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), the purchase stage can be further differentiated into the stages purchased once vs. purchased more frequently (e.g., for beverages) or occasionally vs. regularly purchased (e.g., when considering different retail chains) (Perrey and Meyer 2011, p. 200). In the fifth and final stage, it is determined whether the customer would choose the brand again. For each stage, the process stage value can be determined. It indicates which proportion of the target group has reached the process stage under consideration. In the present case, 65% of the respondents are familiar with the brand under investigation. In addition to recording the process stage values, the percentage change between two neighbouring process stage values, the so-called transfer rate, is of interest. The transfer rate makes clear what proportion of the

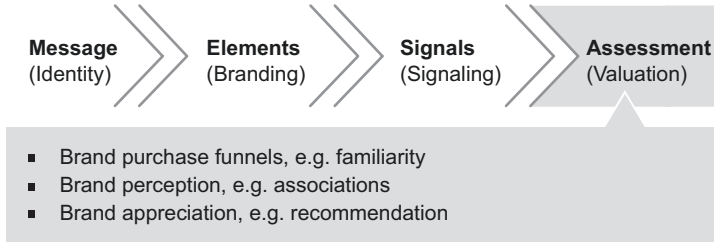

Fig. 6.6 The assessment is part of the MESA branding approach

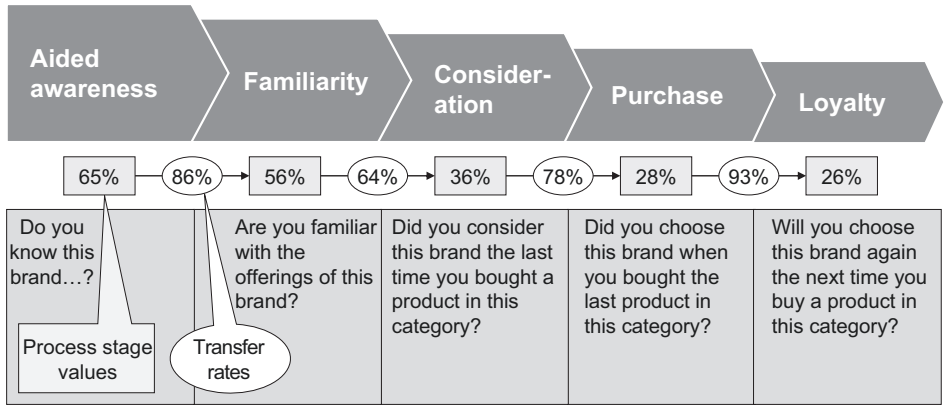

Fig. 6.7 Process stages and transfer rates of the brand purchase funnel. (Adapted from Perrey and Meyer 2011, pp. 194, 196–203)

target group reaches the next process stage (Perrey and Meyer 2011, p. 194). In the above case, for example, only 64% of the respondents consider the brand they are familiar with. This value, which is significantly lower than the other three transfer rates, makes it clear that more than a third of the people in the target group surveyed do not consider the brand, which suggests further research, e.g., individual interviews or focus groups.

In the image analysis, it is advisable to take a closer look at the external image in the relevant target group and to compare it with the self-image (identity) of the brand. With regard to the identity, the brand essence, the brand values and the brand claim used in the long term are usually examined more closely, if available. In addition, the core target group is usually examined regularly and it is checked whether the mission, vision and strategy of the brand are still up-to-date. Table 6.6 shows the central analysis parameters.

While identity and design can easily be analyzed and compared on the basis of existing documents or exemplarily on the basis of selected offerings (e.g., product, brochure or website), customer surveys are usually required to capture the image, especially with regard to the brand personality. In contrast, the performance attributes are known and current studies are usually available with regard to customer benefits, e.g., as a result of regularly conducted customer satisfaction or TQM surveys. Figure 6.8 shows the formative elements of the brand image.

In addition to the brand personality, the customer benefits and the performance attributes, it is advisable to have the brand values evaluated from the customer's point of view. In addition, brand values of competitors and potential cooperation partners as well as other relevant aspects can be used and presented as image differentials. If the industry average per characteristic can also be determined, strengths/weaknesses profiles with the mean value as the zero point per characteristic are possible. In addition, brand-independent statements can be examined that are relevant for the entire industry, e.g., whether [brand name] is a modern brand, particularly stable in value, likeable or offers comprehensive

Table 6.6 Central analysis parameters of brands

Self-image	Configuration	External image
Identity	Design	Image
Brand essence	Visual, esp.	Performance attributes
Brand values	Colours	Customer benefit
Brand claim	Shapes	Brand personality
Mission	Key visuals	Demographic
Vision	Acoustic	Characteristic
Strategy	Haptic	Awareness

Source: Kilian (2018b, p. 45)

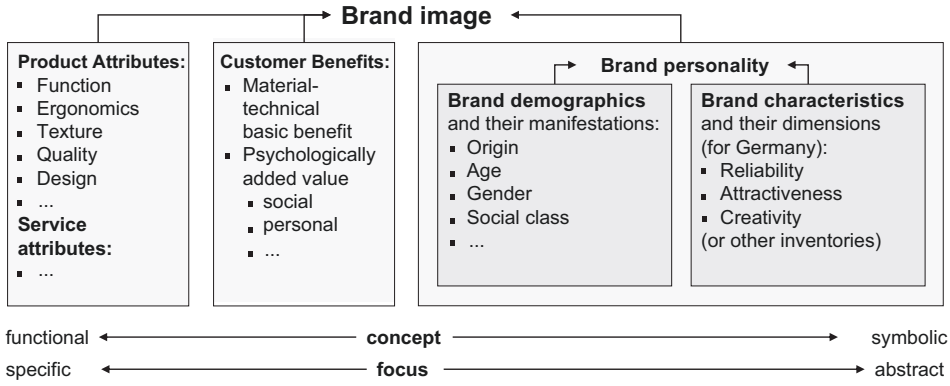

Fig. 6.8 Components of the brand image. (Adapted from Kilian 2011, p. 57)

services. In addition, general inventories, e.g., polarity profiles and semiometric profiles (value fields) for recording the image of one's own brand and of competitor brands are conceivable (Kilian 2018b, pp. 48–49).

Finally, it seems reasonable to record success parameters closely related to brand success, e.g., customer satisfaction or recommendation behaviour (Reichheld 2003, p. 53). The question of willingness to recommend (word of mouth) serves as a key indicator for loyalty and growth. It is now used by many companies (e.g., BMW, LinkedIn and Vodafone) because a single question increases the probability of responding, facilitates the evaluation and ensures that the result is available immediately. The decisive factor in the use of the aforementioned measurement instruments is to draw the right conclusions from them and to further optimise one's own market and brand presence step by step in a multisensory manner through consistent action.

Only a brand message with a strong profile that is defined to the CORE, suitable brand elements that express what is special about the brand, perfectly coordinated brand signals that present the brand uniformly across all touchpoints and make us experience the brand through as many senses as possible, as well as a periodic assessment of the brand that clarifies its own status quo in the competitive environment, makes a brand successful in the long term.

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