Product and Brand Management
Professor. Vinay Sharma
Department of Management Studies
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
Lecture 57
Brand Continuum and Brand Reinforcement

Hello friends, welcome back. As I said, now we will be going ahead with very important concepts of reinforcement, revitalization and repositioning because when I will briefly discuss with you the concept of the brand lifecycle, you would realize that it is a journey. You have already got the point, because we have sort of seen progressions in terms of a value chain, in terms of a pyramid and in terms of architecture.

So, you have that idea already, that there is a lifecycle kind of a perspective associated with that, there is a progression kind of thing, but still, it would be strengthened with that kind of discussion. Now, before I introduce those elements of revitalization, reinforcement and repositioning, let me talk about those in the form of a continuum. So, you see brand management continuum is suggestive of that.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:54)

The Reinforcement and Remind strategy focuses on reminding the customers why they like and use the brand. So, here probably, they are distracted, they are going towards other kinds of brands, they are attracted more towards other brands, competitive brands, and then here, you want to remind them.

The firm is saying nothing fundamentally new, simply repeating and reiterating existing marketing messages, strengthening whatever they have been saying. Then there is an element of refreshment. Refresh involves giving customers new reasons to continue using the brand without fundamentally changing the positioning. For example, Coca-Cola. So, it is a huge brand with great brand value, just visit the brand website and you will realize that.

Then there is an element of Revitalization. It refers to the set of activities a brand undertakes to stay relevant in a changing environment. Then there is an element of Repositioning. Repositioning is a fundamental strategy, a radical strategy. It is often required for various reasons, some of the firms making others, in response to market forces or competitors' actions. It is seldom successful and is invariably very expensive.

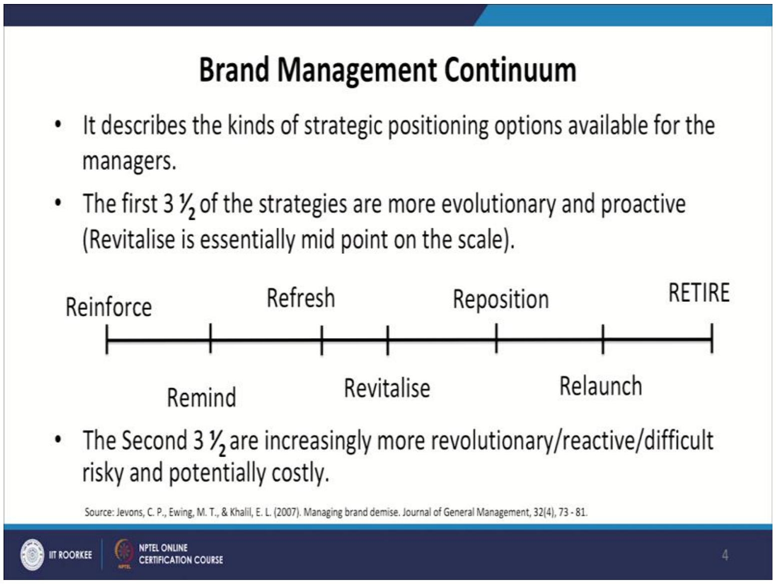
We have a source here for you. It is Jevons C.P., Ewing M.T. and Khalil E. L., 2007, 'Managing brand demise', Journal of General Management. So, there are several authors who have worked on these kinds of things. The point here which this author wants to make to their research, and several other authors as well, is that repositioning is a difficult thing to do. Why? Because you have established the image of your brand in the minds of the customers. You have established, marked these words, and then you have to destabilize that image, and re-establish something, so repositioning. You have to recreate an image or restructure an image in the minds of the customer. It is a difficult thing basically, imagine that you have a particular image in the minds of your peer group, for example, now you just want to reposition yourself, it is a difficult thing.

Then Relaunch is an even more extreme strategy and limited success rate. Then, Retirement is a strategy where the firm voluntarily calls the brand and we will be talking about these. There are several examples, Dabur has once tried to reposition itself, they have done it successfully, should I say. So, that was a successful attempt. Then they did a very fine job in doing that, it is a very meticulous kind of exercise.

Then, Relaunching for example. Maggi noodles have tried to relaunch itself, and they have done a good job as well. So, all these organizations I am talking of, have large panels of experts with them, they have intelligent brains with them. That is what we should admire because when we say that this is a strategy, we should not forget that there are strategists behind that, they are eminent people who understand these concepts well, and that is the purpose of these kinds of courses, wherein we wish for this understanding to be inculcated in our mind, so, that later on, we may also become one of those experts someday.

Now, there are many products which retire in due course of time and there is a linear progression in front of you.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:10)

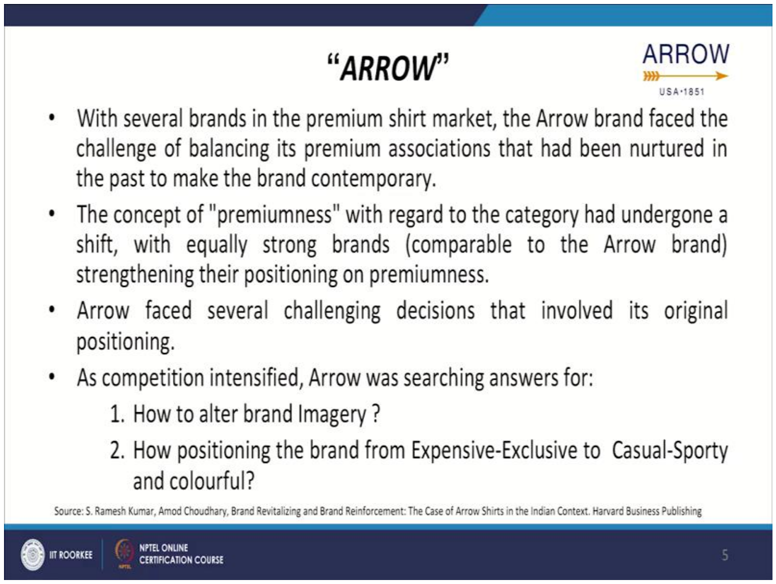


Now, it describes the brand management continuum, and the kinds of strategic position options available for the managers. The first three and a half of the strategies that are reinforced, remind, refresh, and half of revitalize that is three and a half. So, the first three and a half of the strategies are more evolutionary and proactive. Revitalize is essentially the midpoint on the scale as the authors say.

Then the second three and a half are increasingly more revolutionary, reactive, difficult, risky, and potentially costly, as the author says again. So, that is where it comes to the midpoint of revitalization and then goes towards retirement, that is what they have observed in their research. Then there are several other researchers, but concepts, somewhere in are mentioned an integrated fashion or disintegrated fashion, but concepts remain there.

Now, let us see how we should be looking at reinforcement, revitalization and repositioning in continuation.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:32)



So, let us take an example first. ARROW, and a wonderful example. Again, this is from the case of ARROW shirts in the Indian context, published by Harvard Business publishing, and the author is S. Ramesh Kumar and Amod Choudhary. The title is 'Brand revitalizing and brand reinforcement'. So, it is about ARROW shirts. It is from a good source and definitely good authors.

This case study talks about how with several brands in the premium shirt market, the ARROW brand faced the challenge of balancing its premium associations that had been nurtured in the past to make the brand contemporary. The concept of premiums with regard to the category had undergone a shift with equally strong brands comparable to the ARROW brand strengthening their positioning on premiums.

ARROW faces several challenging decisions that involve its original positioning. Now, it is interesting and we are sort of revitalizing, reinforcing, and repositioning, as competition intensified. Arrow was searching for answers to how to alter brand imagery, and just mark these words, you have created an image and you want to alter how positioning the brand from expensive exclusive to casual, sporty and colorful, should be done.

So, that is where the dilemma of ARROW comes in. I will be taking you along with these examples of two different kinds of concepts which we are talking about and several other examples as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:30)

Now, you see, the brand is manufactured and marketed by Arvind brands, and had the tagline in the earlier days it was "The Finest Shirt You Will Ever Put On, Authentic American Style". This was the earlier tagline they had as the author says. The present tagline is "When You Know" so the authors have done this case study and gone through primary or secondary sources.

Then there is an element of improved brand image. ARROW switched over the focus to lifestyle rather than just merchandise, and its marketing communications projected lifestyle images to strengthen its positive image. So, you have to stay with what you have been, while going ahead in terms of being contemporary as well.

Improved brand awareness wherein they started a new line of casual clothing, and the brand extended a new line of products, ARROW women, and they also entered the footwear market to increase the distribution channel and points and extended tie-ups with e-commerce websites to increase visibility and sales.

Now, when they were doing this, they came up with an interesting campaign wherein they showed Mr O.P. Khanna, who has been a very pivotal figure in the Indian automotive industry especially. He has played several other important roles, and he steered an NGO also, which played a very important role for cardiac patients who could not afford cardiac treatments.

So, he has done a great job, he has been lauded as an awarded personality and a benchmark for many people in this country. So, an IITian definitely, Mr Khanna was shown in this campaign wherein, he wears ARROW apparel. So, they kind of brought in people who played a very important role in the Indian landscape and suggested that ARROW has been associated with people. ARROW has been in the roots of this country and now contemporarily also, they are making a mark basically by bringing in Mr O.P. Khanna as the brand icon.

That is an interesting campaign, you watch it on YouTube, and you would realize, Mr Khanna has done so much in his life. The point is that ARROW could make a point, and that campaign yielded lots of results for them, and we are talking of the concepts of reinforcement, revitalization, and repositioning. Now, let me take you to reinforcement precisely at this moment.

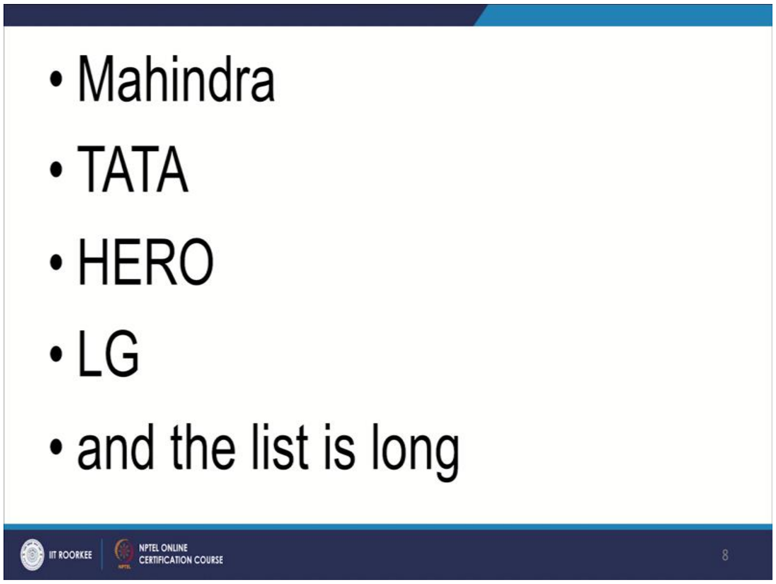
(Refer Slide Time: 12:58)

Marketers must actively manage brand equity over time by reinforcing the brand meaning and, if necessary, by adjusting the marketing program to identify new sources of brand equity. That is precisely what we are trying to understand, that is why I mentioned the campaign of ARROW and, that is why we focused on the case study as well. Brand reinforcement includes regular monitoring of a product at all the levels of the product life cycle.

I would try to associate this element with the brand lifecycle as well. I have already suggested that it is an evolving concept, although the product life cycle is an established mature concept, wherein, you have an introduction stage, growth stage, maturity stage and decline stage. We have talked about this in our discussion on product management. There were two other stages which I talked about, the saddle stage as well as the revitalization stage before the deep decline stage.

This is to keep a check on the changes in the tastes and preferences of the customers. Brand equity can be strengthened by marketing initiatives that continuously communicate the brand's relevance to customers in terms of brand awareness and brand image. So, that is where the structure comes in. Try to connect this description with the example I have just talked about. Let us look at these examples.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:35)



Mahindra, Tata, Hero MotoCorp, LG, and there is a long list and you would find that they have reinforced their brand strength in due course of time. Many a time they have revitalized a few of the associated brands or some secondary brand associations in due course of time, to come up with the complete strength but as corporate brands, they have reinforced themselves many times historically and successfully too.

We talked about Tata in our last section, wherein I mentioned the current brand value of Tatas. I mentioned that in 1998-99 it was not that much. Mahindra has also done an exceptional job, as far as this thing goes. Hero motors is an iconic organization in this country. LG also has gone through several kinds of stages, but still, they have done very well.

So, all these examples, if we just go into the narratives, you will realize that there is a strong context of reinforcement as far as the situation goes. Now, let us look at this chart in front of us, and let us look at reinforcement strategies.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:09)

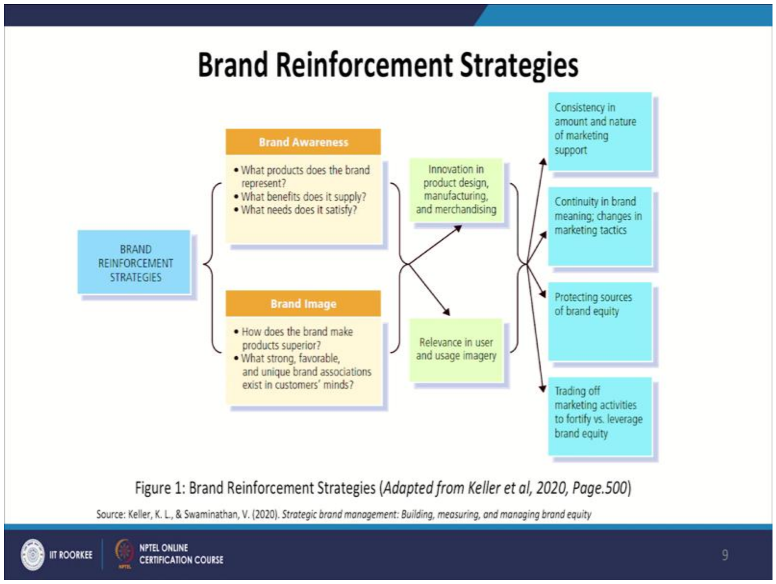


Figure 1: Brand Reinforcement Strategies (*Adapted from Keller et al, 2020, Page.500*)

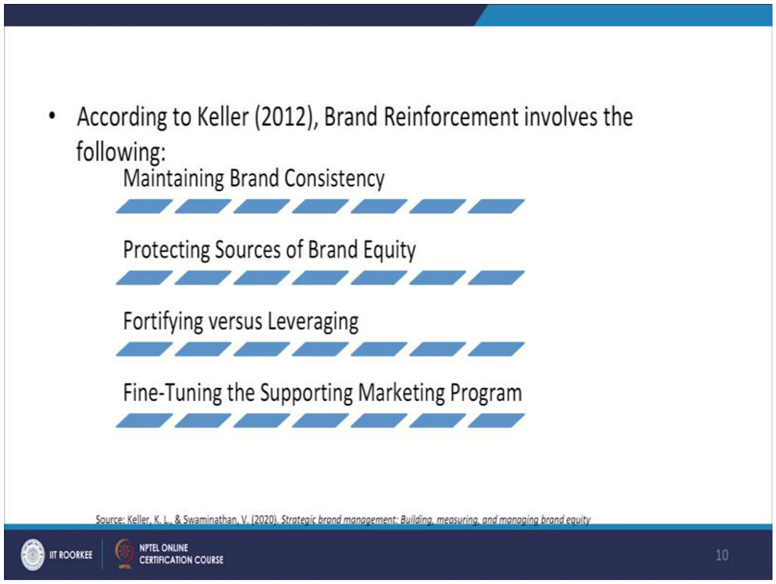
This is a sort of progression in which one must think of varying. Brand reinforcement strategies have two elements of brand awareness and the brand image I just mentioned about those. Then from a combination of brand awareness and brand image, you have innovation in product design, manufacturing and merchandising. On the other hand, relevance in user and usage imagery.

Now, brand awareness and brand image, I should mention here, are constituted of, for example, awareness is related to what products the brand represents, what benefit does it supply, and what needs does it satisfy. The images associated with how the brand makes products superior, what strong, favorable, and unique brand associations exist in customers' minds, and then this combination as I said goes towards innovation, product design, manufacturing and merchandising and relevance in using users' imagery.

Then this combination traverses into consistency in the amount and nature of marketing support, continuity in brand meaning, changes in marketing tactics, and protecting sources of brand equity. We have been focusing on understanding how to identify the sources of brand equity, when we were talking about brand research, brand valuation and those kinds of aspects and then there is the trading of marketing activities, fortify versus leverage brand equity.

So, that is how this strategic progression traverses from this place to that place. This is adopted from Keller and Swanithan, 2020, page 500.

(Refer Slide time: 18:07)



Now, according to Keller, brand reinforcement involves these aspects, maintaining brand consistency. We have talked about consistency earlier as well, which is a very important element for us to understand that customers should not feel that today, the brand must be deciphered as something else. McDonald's should connote the same aspects, same features, same attributes, same feeling, same emotions, as it has been doing.

Protecting sources of brand equity, which is again a very important element of as far as reinforcement, fortifying versus leveraging, and fine-tuning the supporting marketing program. This is very important, because, this aspect not only supports a progression from stage one to customer mindset, the stage two value brand value chain, but also it is very important for us to develop a robust brand architecture as well.

Reinforcement may be thought of, but there would be a time, when we would be needing to reinforce the brand someday. That would be the context, when you are thinking in terms of brand architecture but not necessarily what you would desire for that. So, that is the main point because ultimately you always desired the equity to establish at a level wherein it starts paying for itself in a longer-longer term. What does maintaining brand consistency mean?

(Refer Slide Time: 20:10)

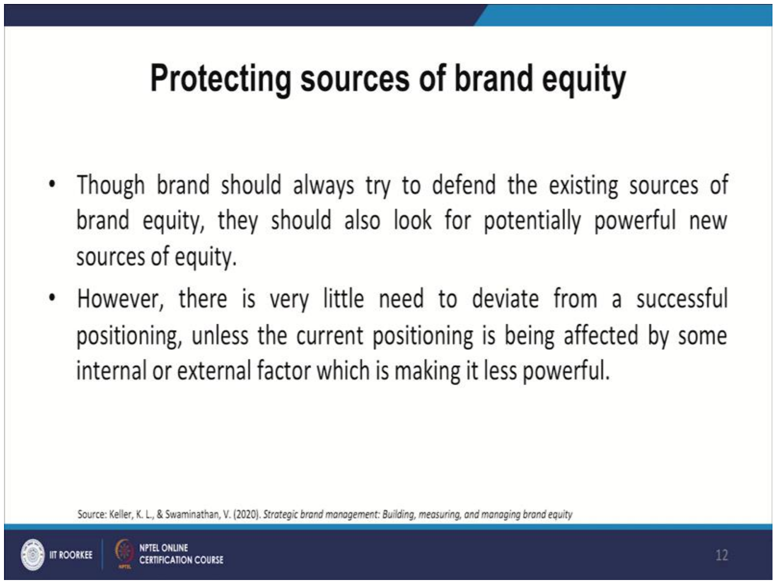
So, brand consistency leads consumers to get familiarized with the brand and enhance their perception of brand uniqueness resulting in brand reputation. Brands with shrinking research and development and marketing communication budgets run the risk of becoming technologically disadvantaged. Market leaders and failures are an aspect of inadequate marketing support, it is an essentially dangerous strategy when combined with price increases.

An example of a failure to adequately support a brand occurred when Pan American World Airways, they could not do so well or Compaq PC could not do so well. These are examples given by authors to suggest that, retrospectively if we look into why brands could not do so well, then consistency emerges as a very important kind of factor.

Personally, I always think in terms of being successful and not so successful. I do not consider failure as an outcome anyways, it is my individual thought process because there are so many efforts, which go into developing brands, and so much intelligence from all sides comes into play. So, as a scholar of strategy and marketing, I always think in terms that something would have gone wrong, that we could not foresee.

So, consistency and change management, brand equity with consistency requires making numerous tactical shifts and changes in order to maintain the strategic thrust and direction of the brand. The most effective tactics for a particular brand at any one time vary. And the strategic positioning of many leading brands has been kept uniform over time by the retention of key elements of the marketing program and the preservation of brand meaning, for example, Dettol Antiseptic soap, a very consistent kind of effort.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:25)



Then comes the protection of sources of brand equity. Though brands should always try to defend the existing sources of brand equity, they should also look for potentially powerful new sources of equity. Potential has been a very important point of concern for us since the beginning of the discussion in terms of brand and branding.

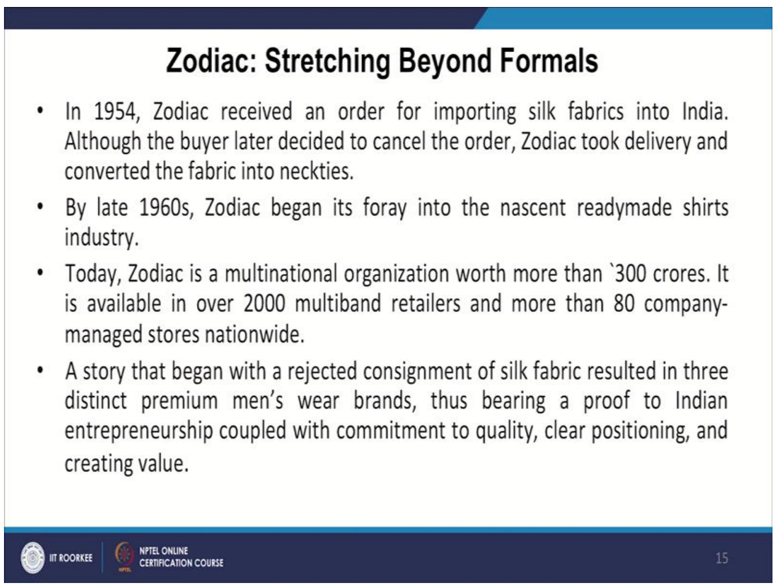
However, there is very little need to deviate from a successful positioning unless the current positioning is being affected by some internal or external factor which is making it less powerful. I mentioned earlier that repositioning is a tougher deal because changing the image altogether would not be so easy.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:08)

Then you see Intel as an example. Intel has passed through many stages. Today they are enjoying huge customer acceptance, there have been some strategic changes, which they have made in due course of time. There has been a time when Intel had to think in terms of several kinds of production and operation systems that they could generate with the help of customer feedback by re-analyzing how important it is for the customer to have data security and those kinds of things.

When they gain this confidence from the side of the customer, they become Intel which means, resembling power and safety and that is why we always say Intel inside. That is the kind of strength which they have gained. You can visit their website or read several case studies on Intel to understand when and how they are required to go in terms of protecting the source of brand equity.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:25)



Now comes Fortifying versus Leveraging. Fortifying refers to enhancing brand equity in terms of awareness and perception, whereas, leveraging refers to making money from a brand and taking advantage of the brand instead. Of course, one should and why not? Ultimately at the end of the brand value chain, you have to reach the stockholders' value and stakeholders' value at large.

Failure to fortify a brand might result in brand decay which means the brand in terms of its element of name might not vanish for a very long time but the brand in terms of its totality, the way the customer knows, might not be there and that is where brand decay comes in. I would be talking about this and there would be no leveraging from the brand anymore. So, if you somehow do not fortify that, there should be a proper balance between fortifying and leveraging brands.

The point is that it is probably fortresses, wherein, you keep strengthening the walls, and you keep taking the advantage of the level you have gained in terms of the place where you have constructed a fortress.

Zodiac is a very important example in terms of when we talk of these concepts. In 1954, Zodiac received an order for importing silk fabrics into India. Although, the buyer later somehow could not go along with the order and probably did not accept that. Zodiac took the delivery and converted the fabric into neckties. We all know that their neckties are a good product, and they have a strong brand value around that product, and several other products they produce like shirts.

By the late 1960s, Zodiac began its foray into the nascent redeemed shirts industry. Not many players were there, some players, but not many of them. They entered into that space and situations starting from silk neckties to redeemed shirts, and that is what we are talking of in terms of extension, many times in terms of reinforcement, and then, so on.

Today, Zodiac is a multinational organization worth more than 300 crores of revenue. It is available in over 2000 multi brand retailers and more than 80 company-managed stores nationwide. This data can be rechecked through credible sources or let us say their website, but would be around somewhere what we are trying to mention. So, please do not take this as a sacrosanct or a fixed kind of data, you can visit statistics to confirm this. So, if there is a fluctuating mark, so, please excuse me for that.

Now, a story that began with a rejected consignment of silk fabric resulted in three distinct premium menswear brands. Thus bearing proof of Indian entrepreneurship coupled with a commitment to quality, clear positioning and creating value. So, acumen in terms of developing brand strength going ahead with the brand architecture you have in mind. I am reiterating those things with every example, so as to be suggestive of the fact that the ultimate objective is developing brand equity.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:42)

So, then, fine-tuning the supporting marketing program, wherein, brand reinforcement can be done through improving the product-related performance associations and non-product-related imagery associations as well. Product-related performance associations wherein for brands whose core associations are primarily product-related attributes and or functional benefits, innovation in product design, manufacturing and merchandising are especially critical to maintaining the enhancing brand equity, for example, Television, Smartphones, Cameras, etc. So, here product related performance is one of the most important components of, as far as, fine-tuning of the supporting marketing programs.

Then there are non-product related imagery associations, for brands whose core associations are primarily non-product attributes and symbolic or experience shield benefits, relevance in user and usage imagery is especially critical to maintaining or enhancing brand equity. For example, TV channels, we have talked about Netflix, and Walt Disney, we have talked about Disney World at length in one of my examples earlier.

So, that is how, when we talk of supporting marketing programs, which is again an element of whatever we have been discussing. I would be coming back to you with another aspect of revitalization, and then I would be taking you towards repositioning, and then towards if at all, there is a brand demise, decline, whichever way you want to look at it. Someday it vanishes, many times it happens, but then I would be coupling that discussion with a brand lifecycle in conceptual terms, and then I will be culminating the whole discussion. So, just go along with me till then, I will be coming back to you. Goodbye.