Is Human Relationship Building Akin to Brand Building?

Deriving from the literature written by Dr. David Aakar on the subject of Branding, I have tried my best to delineate some of the similarities between Human Relationship Building & Brand Building.

Rather the moot question's which we would need to answer after going through the similarities are

1) Can Branding be better understood from a human relationship perspective?

2) Can the role of **Focus**, which is so efficiently deployed in case of brand building, be transfer to building human relationship as well?

Excerpt:

Dr. Aakar suggested the key parameters on the basis of which we can differentiate one brand from another in his seminal work on Branding. These parameters were

a) **Functional Benefits** from the brand

b) **Emotional Linkage** with the brand

c) **Self Expressive** characteristic of the brand

To transfer the same logic to the human domain we add one more parameter to the above-mentioned list, namely **Intellectual Benefits**.

Thus when there exists a relationship between two human beings; one can view the phenomenon in the most basic form as:

$$R = F + I + E + S$$

Where,

     R = Relationship between the two human beings

     F = Functional Benefits (Materialistic & Physical Benefits)

     I = Intellectual Benefits (Information & Knowledge)

     E = Emotional Linking

     S = Self Expressive Characteristic (eg Alter Ego)

     F, I, E, S = **0 to 1 (most impt)**

Let us understand the normal process of building human relationship in following steps.

1) Usually the initiation takes place through the exchange of "**F**" to each other. *(We should be very clear regarding the **notion of intentions** behind the act and actual act taking place.ie. even though the **intention** is to have a emotional linkage yet it might start first of all with the act of creating awareness of one self by deploying possible benefits to each other)*

2) Next comes the phase of understanding each other and enhancing the worth of each other through "*I*". *(This also includes the exchange of knowledge and information through which one improves its **credibility** and **respect** wrt others **not involved**)*

3) In this phase the understanding reaches a point wherein the two relates to each other at the emotional level. *(eg Empathizing)*

4) Finally, in this phase the relationship is seen as an extension of one self in the other and any drawbacks are not ignored but corrected to enhance the relationship. *(Constructive feedback is the common outcome)*

Most Important Thing To Remember Is That The Amount Of Involvement And Exchange Need Not Be Same From Both The Directions. But This Need Not Be The Rule, Its An Exception Most Of The Time.

Hence as limit t tends to infinity (death), a particular relationship may be stuck in one of these phases or none at all.

If one applies the assumptions of Maslows Law in this case then we can argue that the later stage cannot be achieved prior to the initial stages. But again this need not be the case.

Still one does not forgo the requirement of initial benefits on reaching the higher levels as one does falls back on some basic

unknown purpose which is to an extent satisfied by the initial benefits.

Thus a relationship build over a period of time can be represented as:

$$R = \Sigma\ (F_i + I_i + E_i + S_i)$$

Where i = 0 (when it was initiated) to t (current time)

(I am considering time in discrete domain and not in continuous domain since we see life more in terms of discrete events and not as a continuum of processes as the case should be) (This is for one R at a time)

Thus when a relationship has reached a stage wherein F = 0.7, I = 0.4, E = 0.9, S = 0.0 we have the value of that relationship as R = 2

Now comes the interesting task that a human mind undertakes. It can categorize the different relationships based on…

a) **TYPE I:** The total value of the equation. This will take into account the past values. Hence the person using this method will be resistant to the changing circumstances and might get frustrated for he values the R more than he should be. (Since summation value cannot negate)

b) **TYPE II:** Prioritizing the relationship based on a set of given criteria (eg only when I >= 0.5 AND E >= 0.8). Here the person will be a thorough rationale thinker who would be seeing the pros and cons of the relationship or in other words would be evaluating his R's at regular interval of time to get the maximum benefit from the given conditions & R's **or to avoid irrational R's** (which were previously perceived as rational) **which will otherwise occupy the precious time and mind resource**.

c) **TYPE III:** Based on only when any one of the critical parameters exists (eg S > 0 rest can be of any value). Person falling in this category will be highly sensitive to any response from the other person in an R and will be highly committed yet irrational in his approach. He will mostly be having many R's in this category but very few actually warrant being of intimacy as an example, which he won't realize.

d) **TYPE IV:** The person may use all the above methods in complex manner making him vulnerable to his own intentions and desires which will change with every new input from each R. Such a person is mostly very reclusive in nature and do not convey his expectations to others.

Based on the above chosen method of categorization we get the levels of relationship (eg Intimate, Friendly, Student, etc)

Perfect R

Intimate

Friendly

Purpose Driven

Socially Driven

No R
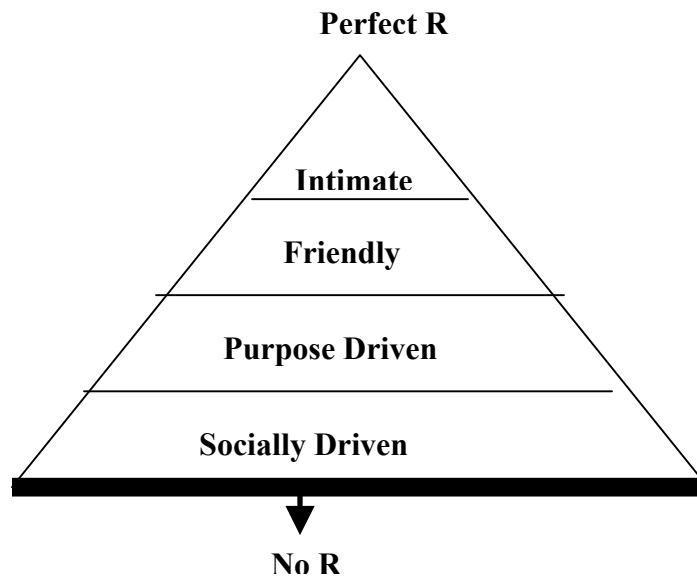
FOCUS:

Now comes another most critical aspect of Branding namely Focus. It provides a mean to channelize the resources (Money, Time, Mind etc) to get better returns from the investments made. That is to say that **Focus determines to an extent ROI.**

If we consider R in truly rationale and in numeric form then we will obviously degrade its importance. But that is not the case with our mind. We do certain analysis to come at a number which provides a mean to compare. (Although we do not know it in our normal senses. We think we are doing qualitative analysis, but just like MR we complete with quantitative analysis)

Focus determines further sustainability of an R wrt the others. Hence at times we find that we do not give enough time to those whom we

used to give before due to probably the subset of Intimate R may have increased and hence dilution of focus to one particular R.

But even this need not be true as one do find R which though did not received enough focus still are strong due to its fundamental bonding based on mentioned parameters in the equation.

Yet in most cases focus do initiates the relative assessment of an R due to the resource constraints. Hence if one really thinks from a practical point of view, it can be said that a focused approach to R building can help in a long way just like focused brand building.
With focus we do pruning, addition and updation of R's akin to Brand Portfolio.

Focus determines the essence of an R similar to Brand Essence.
Focus determines the Identity one needs to delineate in an R over a period of time just like Brand Identity with core Identity remaining constant, usually. Focus in short gives an R a meaning to sustain and grow.
Thus we integrate the equation wrt Focus (f) to get the changing value of that particular R at a time.

$$R = \Sigma \left[\int_{f_{i-1}}^{f_i} (F_i + I_i + E_i + S_i) \, df \right]$$

Where, if i-1 = -1 then we consider it be to 0 and i = 0 to t

Hence what we get here is the value of R considering the difference in focus between two time intervals over a total time period of the R. Thus the summation includes the total of all the parameters multiplied by the difference in its focus from last time interval to the one considered at present, giving us the precise level of R till time t.

Now the beauty of this equation is that people falling in the **TYPE I** category will be eliminated as with the help of the definite integral, we have incorporated an arrangement wherein decreasing focus will reduce the value of summation.

Eg let at time i=0, F=0.3, I=0.1,E=0.1,S=0.0, $f=0.5$

at time i=1, F=0.6, I=0.3,E=0.2,S=0.0, $f=0.7$

at time i=2, F=0.7, I=0.2,E=0.1,S=0.0, $f=0.3$

then

$$R_{i=1} = (0.3 + 0.1 + 0.1) * (0.7 - 0.5) = \textbf{0.1}$$

$$R_{i=2} = (0.3 + 0.1 + 0.1) * (0.7 - 0.5) + (0.7 + 0.2 + 0.1) * (0.3 - 0.7) = \textbf{- 0.1}$$

Thus focus efficiently takes care of TYPE I category of people and tries to make it a NULL set.

Similarly the focus parameter provides an avenue for other category of people as mentioned above (TYPE II, TYPE III & TYPE IV) to shift the importance from their given criteria to the focus parameter. ie we

see a level of evaluation with focus being considered as first and then the other criteria which inherently avoids any bias towards the previous higher values as we have observed and enhancing our R.

Now we can represent any R on a matrix of Focus, Time & summation of F,I,E,S as follows.
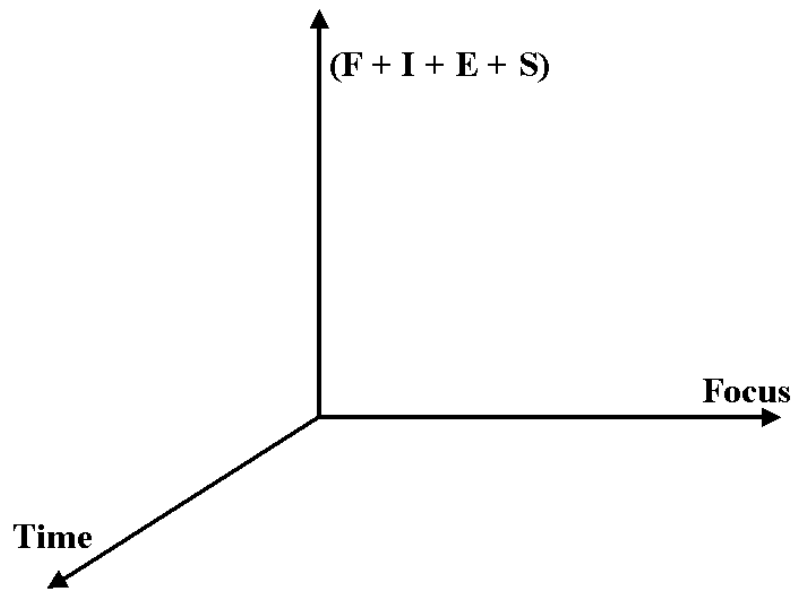
Matrix Representing An R

Hence as we started with the question, whether focus can help us to enhance our relationship or at least maintain a healthy viable set of R's to enhance the different entities involved.

Is Human R = Branding?

It may remain as a debatable issue, but I have tried my best to quantify the requirements to an extent possible.

Thanking you.