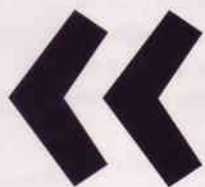


opposites

What do you do when consumers want something you *don't* have?



attract



Give it to them.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BMW

A BMW ISN'T FOR EVERYBODY.

And not just because it's out of reach for some pocketbooks. To some, the car is a symbol of status, which is exactly why they wouldn't go anywhere near it.

BMW's marketers know all that, although they don't say so in so many words, of course. But they describe the Beemer as a "polarizing" brand: It has its passionate devotees on the one hand, and on the other, people who feel just as passionately that "it's a fine car—just not for me."

By Constantine von Hoffman

Usually the gap between people who love a brand and those who loathe it is exploited by a brand's competitors. Target, for instance, succeeded in the big-box retail business by using design and attitude as a way to differentiate itself from Sam Walton's stores.

In some cases, however, companies are unwilling to cede a particular segment to the competition. Call it the "anti-brand"—brands that lie at the opposite end of their respective parent brands in terms of audience, price, style or other criteria. BMW adopted the Mini. Delta Air Lines spawned Song. Starwood Hotels created W. Each is built around separate staffs, even separate locations, to give them enough space to grow on their own. Done right, the anti-brand gives a company entry into an arena it never could have imagined filling without diluting the legacy brand. Done poorly, however, it can drag down both brands.

By maximizing the power of the anti-brand, BMW is taking the road less traveled: selling the Mini as "a car for people who never would have considered a BMW," says Jim McDowell, formerly the VP of marketing at BMW and now the vice president of Mini USA. "The psychographic of the Mini owner is very different from the BMW owner," says McDowell. "They are extremely optimistic, happy people. There's a little child in every one of them." In fact, everything about Mini drivers defies BMW's seekers of the "ultimate driving machine." The Mini is little, cute and quirky. And the people who buy it like to be able to apply at least one of those adjectives to themselves.

"Mini is an anti-BMW," says Michael Dunn, president and CEO of Prophet, a branding consultancy. "It's very idiosyncratic. It really speaks to a whole creative aesthetic. It's for people who view their life as a canvas."

And other companies are following suit with their own anti-brand strategies. Starwood and Delta, for instance, have tapped into that not-for-us group with W and Song, respectively. Unlike Mini's executives, the people at Song are cautious to articulate the differences between Song and Delta. Instead, Song's Marketing VP

Tim Mapes talks about how his airline is different from "all" big U.S. air carriers. He says the concept behind Song was a breath of fresh air to a category seen by most customers as very rigid and a bit stale.

That's one benefit of introducing a new brand: Companies can build into their corporate DNA an emphasis on a consistent customer approach, rather than try to retrofit it onto a preexisting organization. Mini, for example, realized that the customers it was after weren't going to respond well to standard high-pressure auto sales tactics; it needed salespeople who focused more on connecting with the customer and less on closing the deal. "Many of our salespeople have never worked in the auto industry before, but we wanted them because they are very good at building connections with people," McDowell says. "We needed a different kind of people selling cars."

Creating an anti-brand typically means creating a separate organization—or as separate an organization as can be managed. W, for instance, is headquartered in a different city, Song in a different building, and Mini is at, well, the opposite end of the building that houses BMW Group's U.S. operations. You need physical separation from the parent organization so you don't wind up copying it. To create a different culture and brand identity, it is important that the two organizations be as structurally unique as possible. Otherwise, familiarity might not breed contempt but, perhaps, similarity. And, if there's one thing an anti-brand can't abide, it's being the same. If the anti-brand starts feeling the same as the parent brand then it has no reason to exist.

In order for Song to succeed, says Mapes, it was essential not to think like an airline. "We go after customers less as an airline and more as a lifestyle brand," says Mapes. "What we're after is more about an attitude and a feeling."

To capture this attitude, Song turned to "Kerry Schwarz Russo"—a persona created to get Song's marketers to see its customers more as people and less as a demographic. Russo represents Song's target audience, says Mapes, "a woman who is at least 35,

The concept behind **Delta's Song** was a breath of fresh air to a category seen by most customers as rigid and a bit stale.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SONG