



By Richard D. Czerniawski

WO)MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE

My wife and I are winging our way home from Barcelona; I've been reflecting on my experiences there. One lesson I recall vividly: my daughter Christina, a chef and restaurateur in Barcelona, took exception to a comment I made that "bread is bread." "No, Dad," she corrected, "bread is NOT bread. There's excellent bread and then the rest."

Okay, I get it. We purchase bread or a specific brand of bread because, well, we prefer it. It meets our (higher) standards. We prefer that it is baked fresh, uses ecological ingredients, it's gluten-free, sourced from family-owned local bakers, is baked to perfection, and is delicious. But then, there is more than one bakery shop in Barcelona, where Christina purchases bread for her restaurant, Mama's – Organic Kitchen and Café, and her family. There's more than one bakery shop that meets her very high standards.

We all have an "evoked set" from which we choose our bread, or just about any of the products we purchase. These are competitive products you're mindful of and satisfy your primary product need. If your beer brand or pharmaceutical or medical device or credit card, or whatever, is not available, then you choose something from your evoked set that not only gets the job done but meets your criteria. Chances are you have more than one acceptable choice, your evoked set, from which you will choose and be totally satisfied. So maybe bread is bread, at least within your evoked set.

Recently Christina switched from one baker to another for her bread. (She actually purchases from three bakeries every day.) She made the switch because the one baker was failing her. They substituted, without consulting her, one bread for her choice, cut the size of the loaves, raised prices, and cut quality. Now, Christina could have gone with a host of other bakers. (I can only imagine the vast number of bakers in her restaurant's neighborhood alone, no less for all of Barcelona.) However, she switched to a bakery that not only provides a product that meets her demands for what she serves to her patrons but provides some, critically important intangibles.

I'm coming full circle, thinking that bread is bread (within your set), but (wo)man does not live by bread alone. The new bakery is open 24/7, so she doesn't need to fear running out of the right bread to accompany the right meal. Additionally, this new baker provides free delivery service, which she avails herself to every day. These are two non-bread items (not baked into the loaf) that make a difference when other bakers meet her specs for the physical bread product. In other words, these are intangibles that while non-material to the product are material to the baker's brand and the customer's, in this case, my daughter's, choice.

We, marketers, need to find our meaningful differentiation in the physical product. It's our responsibility.

We owe it to our brand, organization and, importantly, customers. Moreover, we must find a way to communicate it such that it compels customer preference and choice. However, when the customer puts us in an evoked set, which is difficult to break out of, then we need to go beyond the physical product and consider the whole product. We need to build in those non-material intangibles that will have a material impact on creating a more favorable experience and driving customer preference.

(Wo)man does not live by bread alone. Neither does your brand live on the physical attributes of your product alone.

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