

**HAMISH PRINGLE,  
PETER FIELD:  
BRAND IMMORTALITY – HOW  
BRANDS CAN LIVE LONG  
AND PROSPER  
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**B**rand do not have to follow a Product Life Cycle. The authors of this book believe this and they have appropriately titled the book “BRAND Immortality: how brands can live long and prosper.” Besides being a theoretical treatise on efficient brand management, this book is also presented as a Do-It-Yourself tool for marketers to follow in their quest for making their brands grow. The authors appropriately call it a “manual for brands of all types and ages that seek immortality.”

**I**n 1980, Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) initiated an effectiveness award to recognize promotional campaigns that demonstrate the measured success of marketing communication efforts. Advertising, media and communication agencies in the UK have contributed over a thousand cases of best practices since then. A large number of these cases form the database for the development of the hypotheses of the authors who have a lifelong association with this trade body.

**W**hen Andrew Marsden, President of the UK’s Marketing Society arrived at his first job at Unilever as a marketing trainee his boss said: “Always remember that the brand was here before you arrived and it had better be there long after you are gone. Your job is to ensure that you leave it in at least as good a shape as you found it.” Based on this strong message

the authors have examined success stories from around the globe (mostly the western world) to put forward their case for brand immortality.

The target audience of the book is not only marketers interested in exploring the relationship between brands and the consumers. The book also offers an interesting viewpoint to academicians, non-marketers in business and people with a general interest in brands, as they are increasingly becoming a very important element of their lifestyle. The marketing icon Philip Kotler comments on this book ; “Pringle and Field expertly use theory and cases to demonstrate that brands can remain alive and healthy indefinitely if handled with competence and imagination.”

Immortality for brands is certainly achievable as long as marketers manage them well and continue to invest in them and feed the brands through continuous investment in communication and innovation. Whenever a product or category nears extinction, the brand has to leapfrog onto another product or category. This is a vital step since brands are the greatest assets of shareholders and no entrepreneur wants his investment to be short-lived.

While arguing their immortality theory the authors consign the famous BCG matrix to a category specific model more appropriate for allocating resources within a business unit and highlight the pitfall of applying it to brands. Similarly, the Ansoff Matrix is relegated as a model for tangible assets that ignores the reality of brand strengths and brand elasticities. Moreover, as brands are increasingly treated as intangible assets these two matrices are to be used as stepping stones for brand growth rather than constricting the overall flight of the brand to stardom. Porters five forces model is also analyzed. It can contribute to brand immortality by way of forcing the companies to act “paranoid” and constantly challenge their preconceptions of their competitive set. The strategic framework of the “Four Ps of Marketing” will have a strong role to play in making brands immortal but needs to be expanded to add more Ps like “People” to make their brands stronger and resilient.

Marketers have to respond effectively to a rapidly changing set of consumer needs in order to continue making their brands relevant in the mind of the consumers and ensure continued brand resilience. Increasingly there is awareness that emotional attachment to the brand is of vital importance for the consumer and brands must recognize this in all stages of brand life in order to achieve Brand Strength and avoid brand decline.

880 marketing success stories/cases in UK have been scrutinized and success factors identified by the authors. These cases cover a diversity of brands across all categories and cover brands in their stages of launch, growth and maturity. These cases form the base on which it is theorized that managing a brand's immortality is the responsibility of the brand custodians and they have the capabilities to do so. In their enthusiasm and delight at uncovering the insights that have made successful brands great, the authors have stepped forward and offered rules-of-thumb for brand managers to make their brand immortal at each of the different stages. These are described as "Broad Rules of Longevity" and cover areas such as brand extensions, brand vision, brand strategy and brand metrics.

One sphere that has not been given much consideration is that of brands that were strong once but have since declined. Perhaps this is due to the hypothesis base of success stories only. Addition of cases of failed brands for whatever reasons, would have made the book complete. Analysis of case studies of such brands would have added more strength to the arguments of the authors in favour of their hypothesis of immortality.

There is scant reference throughout the book to the Product Life Stages. The authors have chosen to describe the ground realities as category life-stages. These are New, Growth, Mature and Declining categories and the authors offer definite guidelines for managing a brand as it passes through these categories. These are substantiated by insights derived from the successful British cases.

Many strategies are available for brands to survive in a declining category. The brands that must die are the victims of their category life cycle rather than lack of professional and skilful brand management. This book is highly recommend to any one interested in successful and strong brands as Pringle and Field prove their point with sound theory and impressive clarity very strongly, based on insightful marketing success stories.