

NEW ENGLAND'S MOST POWERFUL BRANDS

25

2013

PROTOBRAND

Based on the expert opinion of marketing professionals from around the country, ProtoBrand 25 is a study of New England's most powerful brands. Brands were rated across eight dimensions including cultural power, brand momentum, distinctiveness, uniqueness, quality, loyalty, admiration, and resume enhancement.

The most powerful brands are elevated by the deep emotional relationships they share with people. The ranking shows how the power of a brand is not merely a function of size or location, but rather an indication of a deeper underlying metaphorical relationship and symbolic meaning. Brands on the rise have found a way to increase relevance by forging emotional connections, whereas brands on the wane need to find a way to recapture their emotional mojo.



GE claims the top spot this year, having finished second and third in 2010 and 2011 respectively. A leading global brand, GE has a history of innovation which spans over 130 years. Continuously ranking high in numerous business publications—whether for innovation, admiration, or overall size—the brand strikes an emotional chord with people, by leveraging its core promise of “Imagination at Work.” GE touches consumers around the world through a number of products including appliances, light bulbs, and home electronics.



HOT OR NOT?

In contrast to the last study wave in 2011, we have witnessed some significant shifts in 2013 with GE claiming the top spot, Dunkin' Donuts coming in a close second, and ESPN being edged out to a strong third place in the rankings. In regards to the movers and shakers, we see Zipcar appearing on the ProtoBrand 25 for the first time. The brand is benefitting from a cultural shift towards car sharing and smart marketing which has created increased salience. Another newcomer is Converse, a brand which has increased momentum significantly and rekindled its cult status as an essential ingredient of “cool” among Millennials.

Other ProtoBrand 25 newcomers include Marshalls and its parent company T.J.Maxx. Liberty Mutual has also secured a spot on the ProtoBrand 25. It would seem that the power of its emotional brand story centered around the idea of “responsibility” and a commitment to forging human connections has paid dividends. Of all the brands ranked, L.L.Bean and Samuel Adams are the two brands which best personify the spirit of New England. Of note are major brands that have fallen off the ProtoBrand 25 which include Timberland, Stanley, and Welch's.

DIMENSIONS OF BRAND POWER

The following brands rose to the top in the dimensions of brand power.

MOMENTUM

Zipcar, a brand on the rise relative to its competitors, is expected to continue to improve in the ranking.

QUALITY

In comparison to its competitors, Bose is viewed as more reliable and trustworthy, two key aspects of brand quality.

RESUMÉ ENHANCER

In regards to the company behind the brand, a marketing professional would most benefit career-wise from working at ESPN.

DISTINCTIVELY NEW ENGLAND

Samuel Adams and L.L.Bean are the two brands whose profiles most embody the energy and essence of New England.

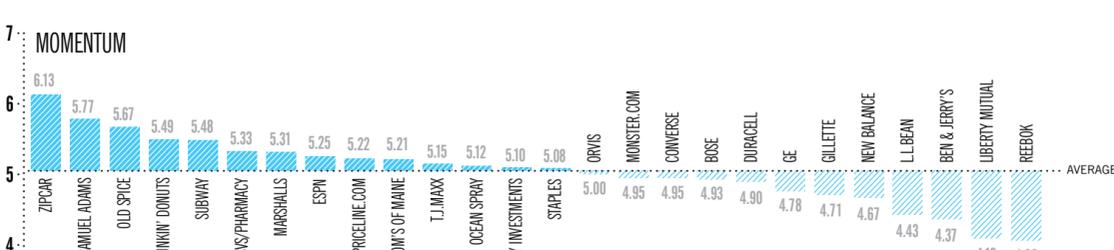
SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

When considering ethical and social values, Ben & Jerry's is the brand most viewed as benefitting society at large.

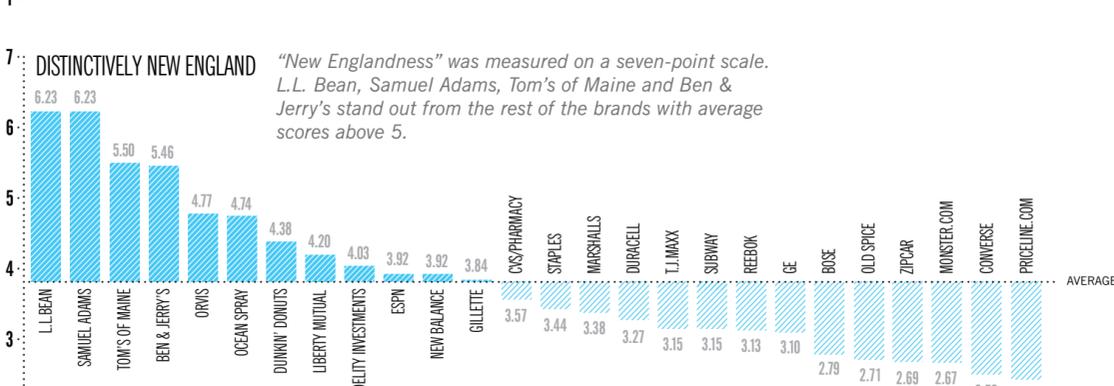
ADMIRABLE

When it comes to brands marketing professionals hold in highest regard, Samuel Adams is the most admired brand.

BRAND RATINGS



Brand momentum was measured on a seven-point scale. Zipcar is the undisputed leader on this dimension with an average score above 6. By contrast, Reebok and Liberty Mutual have the lowest momentum of all the ranked brands with average scores just above 4.



“New Englandness” was measured on a seven-point scale. L.L.Bean, Samuel Adams, Tom's of Maine and Ben & Jerry's stand out from the brands with average scores above 5.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND PROTOBRAND 25

We define a powerful consumer brand as one that has a significant cultural influence and shapes the way people think and feel about its products and services. This is the criterion we asked the study participants to use in selecting and evaluating their chosen brands. To obtain an objective assessment, we surveyed marketing professionals from around the country who do not live in New England. Each participant was exposed to a list of brands from New England from which they were asked to make a selection.

What did we ask?

Participants selected what they believe to be the six strongest brands among those included in the study. Then, for each brand that was selected, they rated whether or not it was gaining momentum; if it had cultural power; its uniqueness, distinctiveness, and quality relative to other brands in its category; if consumers are loyal to the brand; if experience working with the brand enhances a marketing professional's credentials; and, finally, if they admire the brand. The objective was to get a broad-based assessment of New England brands. The aggregate of the number of experts selecting a brand, along with the brand's rating scores, determined its overall ranking. This means, for example, that although a brand may have scored very well in the rating questions, comparatively few experts short-listed it as a powerful brand. The inverse is also true: a brand may have made a number of short-lists, but its rating scores were low. Consequently, in both cases, the aggregate score did not merit inclusion in the ProtoBrand 25.

To be included in the study, a brand needed to:

1. Be headquartered in New England.
2. Have marketing direction stemming from New England.
3. Have a significant portion of revenue coming from consumer markets—this excluded brands which operate primarily in business-to-business, such as State Street and Boston Scientific.
4. Have a national footprint.