

# Brand management – equinox

Business, Management



It also results in the two gym brands capturing more of the market, with Blink members having the potential to become Equinox members in the future. With a clear target market Equinox members are typically between 28 - 48 years old and make over \$200, 000 annually (Pastille, 2010) and the gyms also attract a number of celebrities. The exclusivity and high membership fees demand that Equinox Gyms set itself apart from its competitors and develops strategies to stay ahead. From the first point of contact Equinox is set as a luxury gym.

Its website features fantastic imagery and emanates class through easy navigation and detailed tours of all of its clubs including profiles of all instructors. The amenities also set Equinox apart; while each club is different as it tries to be specific to the area (Zamia, 2011) they all offer health spas with massages and the changing room facilities include hair dryers, deodorant, shampoos and conditioners as well as organic towels (Equinox, n. D. B. ).

While Equinox Gyms clearly have more financial resources with its link to 'Related' real estate giant there are still a number of similarities between it and Less Mills that make it worthy of a comparison. Less Mills is known worldwide for its choreographed fitness classes available across 14, 000 clubs in 80 countries (Less Mills International, AAA) while Equinox have been voted by Fitness Magazine (2010) as having the best classes.

In New Zealand Less Mills has ten dedicated clubs and like Equinox, these Clubs have additional amenities such as saunas, child care facilities, physiotherapists and beauticians (Less Mills, AAA). Less Mills clubs are also

arguably one of the high end gyms in both the equipment and facilities it offers and the premium price gained, so are targeting a similar market, although perhaps not quite as elite. Similarly, both gyms have a commitment to 'giving back to the community and good causes and to the environment.

This can be seen with Equinox's commitment to natural and environmentally friendly products such as its cleaning products, towels, locally sourced building materials, water flow reducing plumbing and recycling areas (Equinox, n. D. C). For Less Mills in New Zealand being green means tracking its carbon footprint with the goal of being restorative by 2016 (Less Mills, Bibb). Both gyms also have a strong brand identity and are focused on delivering a high quality experience and facilities to its members. In all the following examples a scale of 1-10 will be used.

This scale is used to show how effective each of the components have been to Equinox. 1 reflects very poorly while 10 is excellence.

## **Society and Market Environment**

**Environmental Awareness and Sustainability** Environmental awareness and sustainability is a growing area of concern for consumers. Many consumers are now demanding more information from manufacturers in regards to how they are being environmentally friendly and sustainable. The Less Mills clubs in New Zealand have this environmental focus.

There new UBS in Christopher and Hamilton are equipped with technology, which they wish to introduce to their other 8 facilities around New Zealand. On the model of 1 - 10, Less Mills would rate as an 8. The reasoning behind

this is that they are the only gym in New Zealand who has this new technology (Less Mills, Bibb); 1. When a person is using the treadmill or cross-fit machine, the power which is generated from the movement of the belt creates power to run the fans in the cardiac section. Therefore the faster you run the more power the fan will have to keep you cool. 2. In their new facilities,

Christopher and Hamilton, the underlay and gym flooring made from recycled vehicle tires. On top of technological changes in these two clubs, Less Mills has also made changes internally across all aspects of their brand to be more environmental friendly. Examples include; 0 Recycling stations to reuse rubbish 0 Dual flushing toilets to save water 0 Choosing environmentally friendly products where they can 0 Low-flow shower heads to save water 0 Printer paper contains recycled content 0 Reduction of paper through online timetables only 0 Using local suppliers as much as possible (Less Mills, Bibb).

This effort to be environmentally friendly has been very effective for the Less Mills brand, when in 2006 they were awarded the Environmental Choice New Zealand award. " This program has been designed to an environmental labeling program which was created to help businesses and consumers find products and services that ease the burden on the environment" (Environmental Choice, 2013) Although Less Mills have made an effort to be environmentally friendly, there are still many ways in which they would benefit from this effort and focus.

The main issue for Less Mills is that they do not openly and biblically promote their efforts in being environmentally friendly. Take for example, Equinox, they publicly advertise and promote their effort to be Equinox has an environmental focus which is why many high profiled and influential people choose to be a member. This relates back to the point where consumers want to see a change coming from those in high positions.

Combining this and their focus and efforts to be environmentally aware and friendly, Equinox becomes a main choice for those who are needed to be seen as 'going green', i. e. , celebrities, politicians (Daily-Mail, 2013). Less Mills would greatly benefit from a campaign which showed and highlighted their effort and focus in being environmentally friendly. The Less Mills slogan reads " for a fitter planet", and this slogan would be ideal to assist in introducing Less Mills stance on environmental issues.

This could be done with similarities to Equinox who used their slogan of " It's not fitness. It's life" to represent the fact that although you may be fit and in shape, you are still not healthy in other aspects of your life. They refer to themselves as being able to get you fit but also healthy in other aspects of your life, with particular reference to becoming fit in an environmentally friendly way and opening your eyes to the idea that people and business need to become more sustainable. Less Mills, Bibb) The Less Mills slogan can not only mean that they aim to get all humans fitter, decrease obesity and push for people to be more healthy, but it can also mean that if you become a member at Less Mills, not only are you going to achieve results for yourself, you are also helping the planet 'Earth' to become fitter by using

Less Mills fitness products and services. Less Mills focus and efforts in being environmentally friendly and sustainable is a major point of difference (POD) for them compared to other fitness facilities within New Zealand.

To capitalize on their efforts in sustainability a marketing campaign focusing on publicizing and spreading the word about their efforts and achievements to date will make their entire focus and effort more effective.

Wooring: Technology Less Mills uses a number of technology based ways to interact and promote their products and services to the public. Their website is easy to navigate and has a links to all of their individual club websites and forums, I. E. , Christopher. Their website and Backbone page offers a detailed history of the brand and how it was founded including a timeline of when clubs were opened.

These two means of technology also offer inspiration and motivation with ideas of healthy eating, including recipes for smoothies and a FAQ page where questions can be posted and Less Mills posts a reply. Less Mills classes, such as body pump, are very popular. Included on the website and Backbone page is information about each class and what the participant will get out of a class. However, there is no information provide about scheduling of class times and how many spaces are still available. As a result Less Mills and their use of technology rates as a 6.

Although their website and Backbone pages are detailed in history and services they have to offer, they still lack some basic functions which consumers would benefit from and make their use of technology would be from the use of an application " app". Equinox has used an app to immense

success. The Equinox app is available for their members on tablets, mobile phones (phone and Android) and laptops. The main feature of this app allows members to view schedules for the personal trainers, beauticians, and other facilities that Equinox offer. They are then able to see the available times and book their appointment all by the use of this app.

Other features available on the app include:

- View and book classes for the following week, e. G. Yoga or Palates.
- GAPS to the nearest Equinox facility
- Reserve cardiac equipment, bike or treadmill, for any time and in any of the Equinox clubs throughout America. (Equinox. (n. D. B)).

A view of the Equinox App Based on the Equinox app, and what it has to offer their members, it is clear that this is a piece of technology that would be effective to Less Mills and the services they have to offer in particular their personal training and interactive classes.

## **Encapsulation**

Infrastructure Less Mills is a global brand. However, New Zealand is the only place in the world where there are physical Less Mills facilities. Less Mills has been able to gain a global reputation through the sale and distribution of their classes, with the most famous one being Body Pump. Less Mills distributes these classes to gyms and fitness facilities in 80 countries outside of New Zealand. (Less Mill, AAA). Less Mills approaches gyms and fitness facilities outside of New Zealand who they wish to distribute their classes too.

Their website, Less Mills international states " Less Mills has over 14 000 clubs registered with our classes, in 80 countries across the world" (Less Mill International, 2012). The 10 clubs that are located in New Zealand are also very simple. Although their clubs are very spacious with large floor area, they offer no other services in the fitness and health industry Just as massage or physiotherapy. As result of this Less Mills and their infrastructure would only rate a 6. The main reasoning behind this mark is that there is plenty of room for them to expand. Equinox, for example, has expanded into foreign markets.

Recently as 2012 they have opened a club in London, I-J and Toronto, Canada. Equinox has chosen these highly populated areas as a result of research which shows this is where a gap in the market occurs. In the case of Less Mills, they could expand their infrastructure in to foreign markets in the same way. By targeting areas where Less Mills classes are popular and opening a club would be their best way to expand their infrastructure into foreign markets. By collecting information and research, in much the same way as Equinox, very little risk would then occur for Less Mills and the expansion of their infrastructure. Arsenal health and wellbeing also. As a result, in all of their complexes they offer additional services including;

- Studio Cycling
- Pilates
- Martial Arts
- Water workouts
- Yoga



- Cardiac
- Conditioning
- Spa Treatments - facials, massage, laser, waxing, other therapies (Less Mills, Bibb)

As a result of these other services Equinox has managed to build a substantial amount of infrastructure which has allowed them to promote themselves in other ways that traditional fitness centres such as Less Mills cannot.

Less Mills can easily gain more infrastructure with their clubs in New Zealand. There are other services that they could incorporate into their fitness centres, in particular physiotherapists. It also offers another aspect to the brand and shows that not only is the Less Mills branding about fitness but also about personal health and wellbeing. As was the case with Equinox it will also give them another avenue for marketing. In order to make their infrastructure more effective, Less Mills needs to introduce other aspects of the health and fitness industry to their infrastructure.

However, it does not mean build more buildings and name them 'Less Mills Physiotherapy' it relates to the idea of using the space and clubs that they have already established in the New Zealand market and introduce additional services at those particular clubs. Going global must be a focus for Less Mills. They are well established in the New Zealand market with 10 clubs and their classes are well known around the world in 80 countries which equate to over 14,000 fitness and health clubs.

Due to this unique position that Less Mills classes are in, expanding and opening clubs in new and foreign markets where the classes are established

is also another key way that Less Mills will be able to make their infrastructure more effective and which will enable them to continue to build the global reputation of the brand. Internal Brand Ambiance: Culture Less Mills have the vision of making exercise fun and enjoyable.

Less Mills New Zealand undertook a survey where it was found that 46% of their regular members attend one or more of the classes that they offer each week (Less Mills International, 2011) This highlights the culture of Less Mills which is based around the idea that fitness and being healthy is not long boring hours lifting weights up and down. Confidence is a major aspect of fitness and health. When it comes to going to the gym, it can be a very daunting task for those who are slightly insecure about their weight and appearances, or those who are new to belonging to a gym.

This is a driving factor behind the success of the classes they offer. It encourages people to bring along friends for not only support but to also train together and enjoy fitness a lot more. The classes are designed to be interactive and fun experiences where age, gender and fitness level is no issue. Less Mills also pride themselves on being hands on with their clients. One great and support for free i. e. , spotter (An act where someone supports the weight in case of failure by the person exercising). Personal training is also another main aspect of Less Mills.

This builds on the culture where every Less Mills staff member is there to help, support and motivate people to achieve their goals. Less Mills pride themselves on being able to take 2 clients with every personal trainer. This is a huge confidence boost for those who are new to the gym and fitness or those

who want to bring someone, a friend, for support. Combining the culture of the classes, the personal trainers and Less Mills staff in general, the culture at Less Mills would rate as an 8. This represents all the effort that Less Mills put in to making every member feel special, welcome and just as important as the previous member.

Their attitude to help people achieving the goals is a real positive about the Less Mills experience. The Less Mills culture compared to Equinox is every different however. The main difference is in that Equinox members are usually very high profiled or even famous as previously mentioned. As a result Equinox has developed a culture which is very professional and discrete. Their culture is based around the idea that irrespective of their status, power or position all their clients will receive the same professional assistance, advice and service. Equinox has developed this culture to specifically relate to their clients.

Equinox has developed this culture based around the idea that their clients choose to be members at Equinox due to this culture that they can offer. The culture that Less Mills have installed in their clubs and their brand is one that works for them. They are able to maintain the fun and friendly culture that they have been able to build up in an effortless manner, due to employing the right staff, having the right programmes, interactive classes, and the right training for their staff to ensure that their culture continues to be a strong point of the Less Mills brand.

## **Additional Areas to Add Value**

Corporate Responsibility Corporate or social responsibility is about organizations engaging in activities that have a positive effect on society and promote public good in an effort to 'give back to the communities that contribute to them (Solomon et al. , 2007). Some say that customers purchasing decisions by consumers are increasingly related to their perceptions of that firm's role in society (Keller, 2013). Worcester (2009, p 587) found that corporate and social image is integral to the success of a firm.

Furthermore, Worcester believes that a positive corporate image based on social responsibility can " enhance a company's culture, bring cohesion to chaos, offer incentive to its people, increase its sales, help launch new products and services, and generally contribute to shareholder value. " The Brand Safari does not feature corporate responsibility on any of its quadrants, despite the fact that it has been shown to add value to a brand. Much marketing activity has been prompted due to the increased awareness by nonusers about issues other than just product characteristics.

Equinox has a commitment to giving back to society, as well as being environmentally friendly. Equinox is involved in three projects; 'Cycle for Survival', 'The Heroes Project' for programs for wounded soldiers and 'Shape up NYC' (Equinox, n. D. D). In today's society there is much scrutiny placed around the impact of organizations on the environment. This is something that both Less Mills and Equinox take seriously and both are committed to reducing their impact and using eco-friendly materials (Equinox, n. D. ; Less

Mills, Bibb). While Less Mills may be involved in other projects contributing to the community the advertisement of it is not as strong. For customers to appreciate this, and for it to add value to the brand customers need to see it. Sound corporate responsibility (and the marketing of) can ultimately lead to stronger relationships between firms and stakeholders and has the potential to increase loyalty, gain premium pricing and be seen more positively in the face of a crisis (Paella ; Shank, 2011).

Area Two: Innovation Innovation can be thought of as a process by which organizations transform ideas onto new or improved products and services in order to differentiate themselves from competitors (Version, I-Castillo ; Voss, 2012). According to Gouges ; van Rhode van Outshone (2011) is not the objective 'newness' that is important, but the perceived 'newness' to the consumers. This means that the acceptance and perception of the innovation will differ across societies and cultures.

Innovation is a component that is not on the Brand Safari Model that could be added to the 'Encapsulation' quadrant to add value to the brand. Version et al (2012) state that innovation is a necessity in today's environment to stay ahead of the competition, hence the importance of innovation to an organization. It will only succeed if the new ideas can be connected with the needs of the consumers and the markets. Keller (2013) shows that an innovative corporate image has a number of benefits, such as a positive effect on corporate credibility and acceptance by consumers of brand extensions.

Likewise, Keller also believes that an innovative image is also linked to perceptions of being expert, trustworthy and likable. These beliefs by consumers ultimately add more value to the brand. Encapsulation entails getting customers used to the norms of the brand (Chose, 2013). If a norm of the brand is innovation it shows that the organization is committed to both investing in research and development and fostering a culture based on empowering employees to think 'outside the box. Equinox gyms have been called an 'American cult brand' and the 'gym for celebrities and investment bankers' (Lording, 2013) and is selling not only fitness, but a lifestyle. According to Lording, Equinox's selling point is its innovation and luxury, with fitness classes that are ahead of the fitness trends in a setting that makes exercise feel like pampering. This innovative culture is fostered by management and the marketing team who have a focus on digital and social marketing (Zamia, 2011).

This e-marketing for Equinox shows with its phone app, giving members easy information as to where and when classes are occurring, and also the 'Q-Blob' which has been described by Drill (2012) as the crown jewel of articles and blobs are subsequently created and the page has also led to an increased presence on YouTube. Equinox of course, labels itself as innovative with particular reference to its fitness classes, but the organization is delivering this to members. For example, its Kensington Club offers rooftop cycling classes (Lakehurst, 2013) and the addition of specialist organic juice bars at its gyms (Creative Juice, n. . ). Because Less Mills has less financial resources than larger global companies a key to future success will be linked to its ability to innovate. The organization is consistently coming up with new

fitness classes such as the 30 minute GRIT classes (Less Mills, coco) and have recently won an award for its new 'Smart' piece of barbell weight equipment (Less Mills, 20th). Areas where Less Mills can improve are through social Edie and its digital marketing and it should look at Equinox's phone app to show where classes are located to take advantage of the number of location Less Mills classes are at.

## **Conclusion**

Equinox can be seen as the benchmark for Less Mills and the services they offer. Equinox is able to offer their members more amenities in the fitness and health industry. Although Less Mills has classes which are known worldwide, they only have limited number of physical clubs in New Zealand. In much the same way that Equinox is expanding into new markets, Less Mills need to continue its focus and aim awards a global scale in order to make their products, services and brand better known. However the two brands do have similarities.

They are both hugely concern for the environment and pride themselves on coming up and being leaders in the health and fitness industry in regards to environment; awareness, friendliness and sustainability. They also have a huge focus and make vast and sizable contributions in giving back to the community. Equinox have several charities and events which they support on a national scale in America and Less Mills has run several events in New Zealand in particular reference to fund raising for the devastating Christopher earthquake.