



The “Cross Section” of Brands

Brands are made up of identity, essence, appearance, trust, promise, how they’re marketed, how they’re advertised and so forth. But what’s the most important? What comes first when thinking of a brand or developing a new one? Where do you start? What takes priority?

A better understanding of brands starts if you can visualize its structure and place in the marketing of a product or service. For that, let’s use an apple.

Just as an apple develops from the inside out, so do brands. When you cut an apple in half, you can see the core, then the fleshy part of the fruit surrounding that, and the outer skin. Brand structure is analogous to an apple, because it’s arranged like that.

- Brands at their core are ideas, expressed verbally. The idea that serves as the basis for brand creation may come from an opportunity identified in a business plan as an unmet need in the marketplace or a way to expand a company’s position with a new product or service. There you will find the brand name, the brand strategy, the URL, the brand positioning, the tagline, the value proposition, the description, the elevator pitch, the log line and treatment (if it’s a TV show, for example), the copy platform and so on. All of these components help to identify and position the product or service to the consumer with minimum effort.
- Once the verbal core is developed, the brand’s appearance is the next outward growth. Here you will find the graphic identity of the brand: the logo. This comes in the form of the brand dress (acceptable colors, graphics, photo style, typography, etc.), brand standards, plus items like packaging, bags, wearable’s (hats, shirts) and giveaways (mugs, paper weights, pens), and others. These are things that define, guard and communicate brand identity in a unique and attractive manner.
- Brands must touch their customers. They must be experienced to have meaning. The skin of your brand has to be irresistible and inviting to your target and, conversely, it may very well be a turn-off to someone who’s not your target. But that’s okay. You’re not trying to be all things to all people. The skin can be composed of many things that come in contact with your consumer: advertising, PR, promotions, displays, mailers, websites, social media, trade show exhibits, memberships ... you name it. The success of the brand experience lies in large part to its consistency with the visual and verbal integrity built beneath it.

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