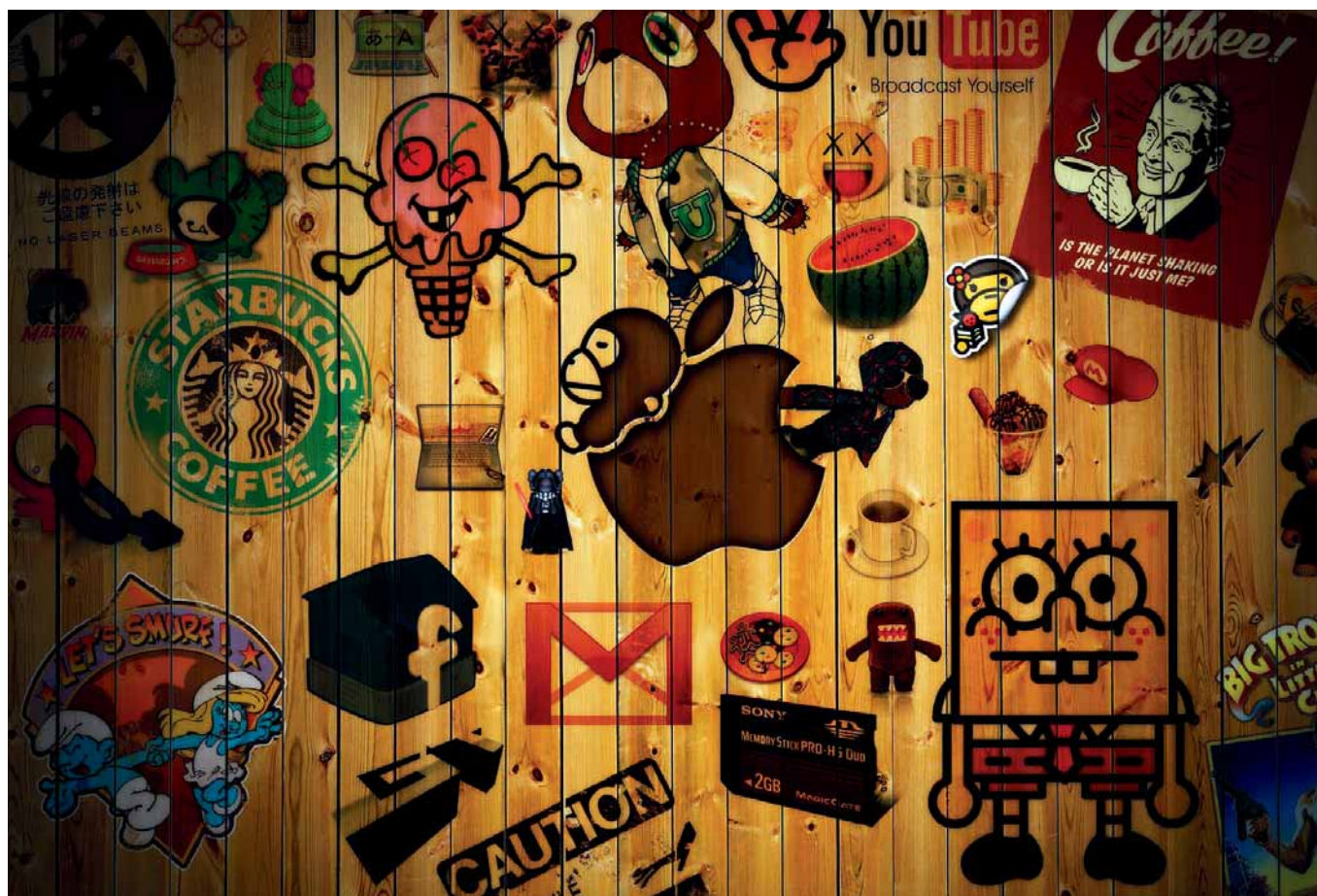


Make your brand work for you

Creating, monitoring, measuring, revamping, and managing it



A product's identity, name, and logo are invaluable assets. A strong brand increases consumer awareness and demand, and also creates better opportunities for expansion. "No brand can now exist without a comprehensive strategy and positioning," said *Nada Abi Saleh*, Deputy Managing Director at Leo Burnett advertising agency. Some established brands can also choose to revamp their image to reflect a fresh look or appeal to a new target audience. Going for a complete rebranding is also an option, although it risks decreasing brand recognition among customers. Before taking any such steps, customer perception of the brand must be tracked to identify its strengths and

weaknesses. Consultants assist companies in creating and maintaining a recognizable brand identity. Increasing a brand's exposure requires a comprehensive effort, from print adverts to online social media, PR, and packaging. A consistent message across all available channels is crucial in building a solid brand identity. Since branding is a sizeable investment, the potential quantitative and qualitative returns must be analyzed to gauge the feasibility of the exercise.

BRAND AND IDENTITY

Branding helps make a company or product memorable and readily identifiable. It can involve a trade name, logo, slogan, mascot,

or even a distinctive form of packaging. Nike's swoosh and Lacoste's crocodile are two famous examples of successful branding. Locally, LiPos is LibanPost's well known mascot, Bonjus's pyramid is a famous packaging for fruit juices, 'Peace of Mind' is the recognizable slogan of BLOM Bank, and 'Hayda Jawna, Hayda Nehna' (This is our spirit, this is who we are) is the famous Almaza beer motto. "Branding is everything to a brand name," said *George Jabbour*, Managing Director of Fortune Promoseven ad agency, and President of the Syndicate of Advertising Agencies. Branding gives a brand its unique ID card, said Jabbour, setting it apart from other brands. According to *Maya Karanouh*, CEO and Chairman of

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Tag Brands, a branding design agency, a brand has a personality and a character that branding techniques highlight, share, and sell to clients. Branding also highlights the brand's distinction and reputation. *Vera Hassan*, Marketing Department Manager at Patchi, said that quality is the first pillar in brand building. "It took us long years to stand out as a brand and to build the name that we carry today," she said. Designer *Elie Saab* worked hard to make his brand into the international name it is today, with celebrities now showing off Elie Saab dresses on the red carpet. According to *Abi Saleh*, a brand is achieved through reaching out to all the senses. "People feel the brand using all their senses, and identify it accordingly," she said. For example, loyal Yves Rocher customers automatically associate the brand's outlets with the scent of fruits. Some local French bakeries with a dedicated corner inside supermarkets add baking ingredients that produce a distinct aroma. This attracts customers and whets their appetite. People often unconsciously sing to themselves a product's jingle and then start thinking about it.

IT'S ALIVE!

"A brand lives, moves, and evolves," said *Karanouh*. *Albert Thoumy*, Communications Manager at Crepaway said: "Branding is storytelling." Renowned local eatery *Casper & Gambini's* created an enduring myth for its brand's origins with a legend about two Italian families that sold freshly-made sandwiches to harbor workers. Creating a brand is a four-phase cycle. First, a branding consultant explores the product and its specifications, and then benchmarks it

against competitors in the market. Then the consultant and product owner identify a business strategy and target audience. For example, a local manufacturer of a new brand of diapers would communicate all the specifications of his product to a consultant who then compares them to market leaders such as Pampers. In the next stage, the brand acquires a shape and personality: It is given a name, logo, colors, fonts, and supporting visuals to build its image. The brand's identity will cover the product as well as its advertising, stationery, uniforms,

BRAND EROSION: TOO MUCH RECOGNITION HURTS

Many people don't realize that Kleenex is not a common term, but actually a brand of paper towels. Brand names whose usage becomes too popular risk brand erosion - becoming a generic term which refers to a general class of products or services instead of a particular company. Local examples include *Sohat* (bottled mineral water) and *Bonjus* (juice drinks). Another example is *Nescafé*, which has come to refer to any form of instant coffee drink, not the particular product. A generic trademark runs the risk of losing its intellectual property rights in economically advanced countries like the US and UK, with competitors then becoming able to use the generic brand name to describe their similar products. *Zipper*, *yoyo*, *thermos*, and *aspirin* are examples of trademarks that lost their legal protection and can no longer be registered. A trademark can also become generic if it is used as a verb, a plural, or a possessive part of speech, ending up in the dictionary as a common word. Google, for example, is discouraging publications from using the term "googling" for web searches.

and other brand carrying material. Retail products require suitable packaging, an important vehicle for branding. "Packaging establishes shelf identity which makes a brand stand out among similar products in a supermarket," said *Boudy Nasralla*, Managing Partner at WonderEight, a branding agency. Shelf identity includes stickers, decorative elements, or stands that make a product pop out. The final stage of the branding cycle is the longest: Brand consistency. "The creation of a brand's visual identity needs six to eight weeks," said *Karanouh*. Achieving the recognition of a venerable brand such as *Sanita*, of course, takes many, many years.

BRAND MONITORING

"Launching a brand without monitoring is like going to a new place without a map," said *Jennifer Abou Mrad*, Research Manager at InfoPro's Research Department, which prepares, among other products, the "BrandTraker" and the "BankTrak" monitoring tools. *Abou Mrad* said that tracking a brand's health and performance allows the brand's owner to take the market's pulse. "Brand tracking offers facts about the brand which should be taken into consideration within the brand's strategy," she said. *Leo Burnett's Abi Saleh* said that monitoring is essential to calculate future steps related to the brand. Brand tracking is used to assess brand awareness, usage, image, advertising recall, satisfaction, reputation, and loyalty. These studies involve collecting quantitative data from consumers on a regular basis. "The variables used in the study depend on the studied brand," said *Abou Mrad*. For example, intention to purchase and quality versus price variables are used while tracking a retail product, but not in a bank tracking assessment. "Brand monitoring followed by appropriate action will enhance a brand's image," said *Nasralla*. *Mirna Issa*, Head of Marketing Department at IPT, a petroleum services company, said the company samples its corporate clients and end-users' opinions. *Patchi* led several market researches in all countries where it is sold before launching its recent rebranding campaign. Some restaurants like *Creaway* always ask their customers to fill comment cards, which they review on a daily basis. *Abou Mrad* said brand tracking should be performed on a periodic and frequent basis: "The tracking frequency is higher depending on the brand assessed and the frequency of its purchase." Tracking for supermarket





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products should be performed monthly, for example, while a car brand needs to assess its brand positioning less frequently. Abou Mrad said tracking a brand must follow stringent market research methodologies. She said local banks are more active in tracking their brand strength and perception than other sectors, but that is changing: "Retailers are becoming more interested by tracking their brands."

INCREASING EXPOSURE

Branding is intimately linked with marketing and advertising strategies. Crepaway's Thoumy said the company always makes sure both strategies are consistent in their message. This includes delivering messages clearly and fostering customers' loyalty. "IPT's brand identity is integrated in our communication strategy at every point of public contact," said Issa. Brochures, ad campaigns, billboards, sponsorships, interactive CDs, are all outreach techniques to reinforce the power of the brand. The choice of marketing channel depends on the target audience and business objectives. According to Thoumy, a business can no longer do without a social media presence: "We are working on creating our e-identity in line with our corporate identity." Crepaway's Facebook page and Twitter account are among the most visited business channels locally, he said. The advantage is that traffic is redirected

towards the website and mobile apps. "We are moving from mass media to personalized media," said Thoumy. IPT also uses online advertising techniques as major support tools for other conventional advertising material. Ad agencies used to create brand identities. "Ad agencies used to look like general practitioners, but nowadays, we are moving towards more specialization," said Fortune Promoseven's Jabbour. Beside branding-dedicated agencies, there are often specialized teams for branding within ad agencies.

CUSTOMER LOYALTY

The number of brands for the same product line available in any market is ever rising. Faced with a multitude of choices, consumers feel safer when choosing products from a brand they trust. On the supply side, established brands guarantee an edge over competition and ensure resilience in times of crisis. "Patchi's brand name has made it number one within the industry and attracts footfall," said Hassan. According to Thoumy, the success of the branding strategy Crepaway developed

BRANDS' SCALE OF DISTINCTIVENESS

Brand names or trademarks are divided into five categories, ranging from fanciful, invented words, which are typically strong trademarks, to generic terms, which are not protectable at all. The categories, ranked in decreasing order in terms of strength, are:

- a. Fanciful Marks: Coined (made-up) words that have no relation to the goods being described. Example: Exxon for petroleum products.
- b. Arbitrary Marks: Existing words that contribute no meaning to the goods being described. Example: Apple for computers.
- c. Suggestive Marks: Words that suggest meaning or relation but that do not describe the goods themselves. Example: Coppertone for suntan lotion.
- d. Descriptive Marks: Marks that describe either the goods or a characteristic of the goods. Example: Shoeland for a shoe store.
- e. Generic Terms: Words that are actual accepted and recognized descriptions of a class of goods or services. Example: Computer Software, Facial Tissue.

Source: International Trademark Association

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translated into higher sales. "Through our brand image marketing, we managed to establish a strong relationship with our clients for nearly 30 years," he said. When disturbing rumors were spreading about the safety of poultry meat in the country, loyal customers continued trusting Hawa Chicken products, for example. On the other hand, the Danish pastry maker Fluffy has lost the branding contest because it has no recognizable identity, according to WonderEight's Nasralla: "Cheaper Turkish brands are nibbling at Fluffy's market share because customers do not know it well." A strong brand will also improve its chances in terms of franchising and overseas business opportunities. "Patchi's established name made it much easier for us to implement the brand in foreign countries, regional ones, and as far as the US," said Hassan.

REVAMP OR REBRAND?

Customers who appreciate established brands also appreciate changes in them. "Even a very successful brand would benefit from a light revisit from time to time," said Abi Saleh. Modifications could be as simple as a logo evolution or color change, or involve a total rebranding. Crepaway has adopted five different logos and two slogans since 1998. Thoumy said that this served them well because they showed the brand's evolution with time. "Our first slogan, 'Come As You Are', showed that we are a free-style eatery. Our new 'All Good' one emphasizes our reputation for high quality," he said. In 2008, IPT decided to go for a rebrand. "The main motivation was the fast growth of our business and the newly implemented structure," said Issa. "This decision was not a risky one, taking into consideration the fact that the new design was not so different from the old one." Bank of Beirut also introduced a new corporate logo this year to reflect its modern image and evolution. Patchi underwent a successful rebranding in 2012. Patchi's logo was revamped and had the slogan 'HeartMade' added to it. A new anise green color also dominated the brand's visual identity and new chocolate boxes. Hassan said the new change reflects the company's interest in targeting a younger generation, less drawn to classic gold or silver packaging. By contrast, complete rebranding is riskier because a totally new logo could make the

Uplifts preserve the brand spirit and provide it with maturity

brand unrecognizable to its audience. The modification of Zaatar w Zeit's logo was subject to controversy on social media. The restaurant used its 'Missing Z' campaign to introduce its new thyme leaf and oil drop logo. Some customers said the new

logo was not automatically identifiable as Zaatar w Zeit's. "Our new logo shocked our clients at first, but later on they got accustomed to it," said Manuel Wazen, Communication Manager at Zaatar w Zeit. He said that rebranding is less risky when a brand already has a loyal customer base. Abi Saleh said that following up on rebranding with a strong communication campaign means customers usually integrate the change easily.

BRAND CONSULTANTS

Companies can manage their branding issues internally, but some will choose to hire external consultants for the purpose. The market offers both specialized branding agencies, along with advertising agencies with branding teams. "Branding companies do branding only, while ad agencies are responsible for all the creative process, from creating the brand to communicating it to the public," said Abi Saleh. The work achieved by an ad agency goes through the branding strategy from beginning to end. Branding consultants promise clients to add

value to the company and brand through a mix of services. "Brand consultants are able to guide clients through all the branding cycle," said Karanouh. A brand consultant could conduct a health check of the brand to determine its positioning, its strengths and its weaknesses. Brand consultancies also help companies in any strategic brand decisions, from a brand's dollar value measurement to its extension and new product development. Brand consultants have an outside perception of the brand – closer to that of the consumer. Patchi takes important decisions internally but hires consultants to take care of the technicalities of branding. "We always work according to our business priority; that's why the brand-related decisions are always made internally," said Hassan.

Reported by Rana Freifer



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 - ▶ **L0713-140** Branding vs. advertising: How to know the difference?
 - ▶ **L0713-141** The basics of branding
 - ▶ **L0713-142** The new rules of branding your business online
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