

Sustainable Branding

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In today's society, there is a lot of competition between individuals, companies, and corporations to be the best at what they do. Everybody is always looking for a competitive edge to get ahead of the others. In business, the key to radical differentiation and long lasting success comes from within the brand and how a company positions itself. In this paper, I will address why a brand is more than a logo, product, or corporate identity, how to develop a successful brand, and how a brand can remain sustainable over time. Alina Wheeler quotes David Haigh to describe the difference between a brand, and branding below (2013):

“Brands help consumers choose from a bewildering array of choices, communicate the intrinsic quality of the product or service, and use distinctive imagery, language, and associations to encourage customers to identify with the brand” (pg. 2), while branding is “the process used to build awareness and extend customer loyalty. It requires a mandate from the top and readiness to invest in the future. Branding is about seizing every opportunity to express why people should choose one brand over another. A desire to lead, outpace the competition, and give employees the best tools to reach customers are the reasons why companies leverage branding” (pg. 6).

The Brand

A brand develops over time, based on how these factors are combined and executed to make people feel. Marty Neumeier discusses in his book The Brand Gap (2005) that a logo is a “trademark made from a custom-lettered word,” (pg. 1), a corporate identity system is a “20th-century construct for controlling the use of trademarks and trade-dress elements,” (pg. 2), and a product refers to a tangible element in which the quality, sales and distribution thereof can be

managed. The brand itself are those intuitive pieces that are not defined or controlled by the company, but by the people. According to Marty Neumeier in his book, Zag (2006), “People create brands to bring order out of clutter,” (pg. 19). Dan Pollata (2011) discusses that a brand is a culmination of a company’s design, people, customer service, array of communication tools, the way one speaks, facilities used to conduct business, strategy, etcetera, while Sean Adams best describes the notion of brand in his tutorial *What Makes a Brand?* (2015) as “the promise, reputation, and big idea. It is a highly valued asset. A brand creates emotional connections, good or bad.”

The Creative Strategies for Brand Development

To develop a brand, one must begin with principal foundation of qualities. Certain questions must be answered. Neumeier states in The Brand Gap, to “demand unambiguous answers to three little questions: 1) Who are you? 2) What do you do? 3) Why does it matter?” (Neumeier 30). These questions determine the basic reasons for why a brand exists or why an individual desire to create or enhance their brand. In part two of Zag, *Designing Your Zag*, the author focuses on a 17-step process that aligns with the questions previously mentioned and is used to build brands. When determining who you are, you must evaluate “where the raw energy will come from” (pg. 49). When determining what you do, one must define a core purpose, or “the fundamental reason your company exists beyond making money,” according to Built to Last authors Jim Collins and Jerry Porras (pg. 53). When shaping why it matters, one must focus on their vision, or a concrete illustration of the future that must grow with the like minded people who are passionate about a cause (pg. 54). Determining these bases allow for a company to establish a clear communication strategy that will guide them in combining brand elements such as a name, logo or design type, corporate identity, and product.

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“Brand-building isn’t a series of isolated activities, but a complete system in which five disciplines—differentiation, collaboration, innovation, validation, and cultivation—combine to produce a sustainable competitive advantage” (Neumeier 47). To be successful over time, companies must establish emotional connections within and with their client base that result in customer loyalty and the ability to not compromise the value of the brand to fit later needs. Tom Kitchin explains that “It is worth taking a few moments to amplify these concepts of brand trust and brand promise. In fact, the brand does not actually make promises in any meaningful, human sense, but it does strongly imply them, by connecting one experience with an organisation to the next” (pg. 315). Brands need to be adaptable in the sense that they can change positively over time as new challenges are presented and society evolves. They must go beyond the expected.

Conclusion

Overall, by addressing why a brand is more than a logo, product, or corporate identity, how to develop a successful brand, and how a brand can remain sustainable over time, it is apparent why the key to radical differentiation and long lasting success comes from within the brand and how a company positions itself. “Developing brand-learning approaches that work will require new disciplines, new technologies, new approaches and new tools” (Kitchin 326).

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