

## A Logo is Not a Brand

If we could help our clients understand only one thing it would be this: a logo is not a brand. A brand goes further than a custom type treatment that displays a company's name or an illustrative icon that captures the essence of a business. A brand is much more comprehensive than a trademark etched in metal behind a receptionist's desk or sandblasted on glass. The Nike swoosh or the IBM blue-bars help to build their brands, but they are not the brand. Your logo is not a brand, only one of its essential building blocks.

So then just what is a brand? Take Starbucks for example. The first thing that may come to mind is a green circular mermaid logo with the words 'Starbucks Coffee' on the outer edges. However, even though you might first think of the logo, a brand is not a logo and a logo is not a brand. Logo is short for logotype which originates from Logos, a Greek term for the meaning word. Technically, a logo is a subdivision of a trademark that can also include other subdivisions such as symbols, monograms, emblems, or graphic devices. Logos in particular are trademarks made of custom-lettered words. For example, AMD, a global supplier of computer chips, is a monogram that stands for Advanced Micro Devices. Starbucks though, is a symbol. Both Starbucks and AMD are trademarks. The Nike swoosh is a symbol, the McDonald's curved yellow 'M' is a monogram. Neither of which are the actual brand, only an integral part. Aside from logos, the question still remains as to what a brand really is. Most companies produce some variation on a corporate identity system, which can include such things as stationery, brochures, websites, packaging, and various forms of signage as well as a vast array of advertising. These 'touch-points' interact with your audience and in so doing help them to identify with your company. A corporate identity system is a way of controlling the dissemination of your brand through company publications, advertisements, stationery, vehicles, signage, and so on. Although these pieces represent a lot of what your customers see, corporate identity systems should never be confused as the brand itself. As valuable as they are in creating consistency within the brand, consistency is not a brand.

If a brand is not a logo or a corporate identity system, then is a brand its products or services? Johnson & Johnson, a 120 year-old company, manufactures the infamous pink baby lotion in its signature pink plastic bottle as well as its legendary 'No More Tears' baby shampoo. Many customers equate these two products with Johnson & Johnson as a whole. However, Johnson & Johnson's shampoo and lotions are not what makes Johnson & Johnson's brand. Johnson & Johnson offers several hundred different products such as Band-Aids, baby cologne, lotions, pain relievers, etc. But even these hundreds of different products don't comprise the entire Johnson & Johnson brand. Similarly, Starbucks is so much more than just coffee. They offer many other products; such as coffee beans, mugs, espresso machines, pastries, Odwalla juice, CDs, etc. Customers also use Starbucks services such as their Hear Music Media Bar, which lets customers create compilations on CDs. Building a successful brand is not simply managing products, sales, distribution, or the quality of the products or services. Likewise, managing the Starbucks' brand isn't only about managing the types of coffee sold, how much coffee is sold, where coffee is distributed, or the quality of the coffee. Ultimately, the Johnson and Johnson brand as well as the Starbucks' brand is more expansive than a list of product offerings however important these offerings might be.

Ultimately a brand is how people feel about a product, a service, or a company, and in most cases, all three.

As human beings, it is our emotional responses and instincts that define how we interpret a brand. Meaning, that individuals are what define a brand—not companies, not markets, nor the general public. Now this isn't to say that a company doesn't try to define its brand, it does and it should. It also doesn't mean that general impressions about a brand don't influence what an individual might think. It ultimately means that the individual chooses what they are going to believe about your brand. Sort of like beauty being in the eye of the beholder, your brand is whatever someone says it is. Your brand is the cumulative impressions that an individual forms whenever they come in contact with your logo, or your advertising, or any of the products or services you might offer. A logo is not a brand, just one of the 'touch-points' an individual interacts with in order to decide what your brand really is.

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