

Is your brand doing its job?

 By [Anton Ressel](#)

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Many people believe that the word 'brand' relates simply to the visual identity of a particular company, product or organisation - in other words the organisation's name, logo and general look and feel.

In truth, a brand is all of these things and a whole lot more. Essentially, your brand represents all of the valuable and desirable qualities of your product or service to the consumer, while the term corporate identity relates to all the physical elements of the brand - such as the logo, signage, website look-and-feel etc. The two are very closely linked, and both need to be in place and managed if you are to get the most out of your marketing and brand development efforts.

Brand identity

Think of a famous brand like Red Bull. Sure, we can all recognise the logo and visual aspects of the brand, but more importantly Red Bull has been very successful in creating an identity for their brand that transcends the product and its visual elements alone. By aligning themselves with extreme sports such as cliff diving, motor racing, base jumping and surfing, Red Bull has managed to create a perception in the marketplace that it is the energy drink of choice for extreme athletes everywhere. Naturally this has filtered down into their general target market, which may not be extreme athletes themselves but either aspire to be, or at the very least find this lifestyle appealing. This relates in more awareness, customer loyalty and ultimately, in more sales.

Another example of clever brand management is Nando's. They have used humour in their advertising and brand positioning since day one, instead of focussing merely on their various product offerings, which is what most of their competitors are doing. The result has seen them associated with fun and cemented as a household name, making them one of the most visible food brands in SA and increasingly, internationally as well.

What these examples demonstrate is the value of a strong brand identity. A *brand identity*, or *brand image* is all the attributes one associates with a brand, **how the brand owner wants the consumer to perceive the brand** - and by extension the branded company, organisation, product or service.

A brand's identity is created by a combination of clever management of the brand name, the logo, the corporate ID and all supporting material and activities, including website, public relations, press and media, marketing materials, competitions and sponsorships, staff, brand spokespeople and so on. It does not happen overnight, and some brands have failed dismally in their efforts to create the desired perception - think of the millions that BP spent trying to position themselves as the 'green' oil company, and how that was wiped out by one highly publicised oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico!

Positioning the brand

From my own perspective, brand identity has a special significance. When my two partners and I started [Streetwires](#), we realised very early on that careful positioning of the brand was absolutely crucial to our success - we had hundreds of competitors in the wire and bead game, most of whom could offer similar products at a cheaper price, so our strategy was to focus on what we could offer customers that many of our competitors could not - such as capacity, reliability, in-house design capabilities, association with a successful job creation initiative - in other words, we had to create an identity for our company that transcended the products alone and highlighted all the benefits of doing business with us. This we did by careful management of our PR and media, customer service, corporate identity and all other elements associated with the brand.

So the question you need to ask yourself is: How do people perceive your brand, and is it the way you want them to perceive it, or do you need to give more thought to your brand identity and how it is managed? Of course, this statement makes the assumption that you actually have a brand and corporate identity in place - because in the absence of this, yours is really a hobby and not a business.

ABOUT ANTON RESSEL

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