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## BRANDING – THE MYTHS AND THE REALITIES

Branding is easier said than done. Advertising gurus the world over are still mulling over what exactly defines branding. Why does one brand score over others and why does one fail to generate customer confidence despite everything going supposedly right for it?

Is it the logo?

Is it the color?

Is it the design of your ads, your brochures, the packaging of your products/services, the look of your corporate office, etc?

Or is it the promise that a particular product or service conveys – the promise of quality, authenticity and credibility?

Hmm.....actually it is a combination of all this. But primarily, it is the 4th point which matters most – the promise! Why is it that some products or companies are able to build up high brand recall and brand loyalty in the minds of their customers?

Whereas for some others, no amount of big budget advertising and marketing expenditure can help register their product as a brand people may keep coming back to?

### **Quality + Marketing = Winner**

It really depends on two vital things – one, the quality of your product/service and two, the promotional and marketing mix you develop to reach out to your customers.

First and foremost, if you have a good quality product with great performance, coupled with warranties and the right kind of value for money, you have the arms required to win the war. That's step one.

Now for the ammunition, that is the promotional mix that will position it as a brand that assures reliability. It is not enough to have a slick-looking logo, a trendy color combination, a visually appealing packaging and some hip ads splashed all over the TV channels, newspapers and the internet to win over the customer.

You must first know, what exactly is required to build up brand equity for your product. As an internet guru explains, a brand is like the cherry on top of an ice-cream pie where it conveys the brand's promise. In fact, how you brand your corporate identity goes a long way in establishing your product/service in customer conscience.

While the ice-cream scoops stand for your products and services, the apples represent your corporate environment and crust in the pie is actually your systems and how effectively they work and respond to customers.

### **How does a brand convey its promise?**

That's actually quite an interesting way to look at branding. This promise of the brand is conveyed through quite a few factors:

- the product's reputation (the company's own reputation also goes a long way here),
- its experience (particularly if the product has been in the market for some time – a perfect material for viral marketing),
- the product's name – a catchy, easy to remember name helps
- its logo – though innocuous looking, a logo is a stamp of authority
- its positioning in the market and accordingly its pricing
- news and reviews about it – the web 2.0 world is all about sharing notes, information and experiences through social networking sites and what is written about has become vitally important
- advertising – a good tag line or slogan can race into public memory
- marketing collateral – depends upon your product/service and what media suits it best such as flyers, sales letters, direct mailers, and so on)

Developing a promotional mix depends on the character or features of the product/service. For instance for some products/services may just need a direct marketing campaign and not TVCs or print ads at all, such as home-based businesses.

Or some such as debt management services may bank on a well done corporate video production to create a brand presence in business fairs.

Watch out for my next article in which I discuss the vital ingredients needed for preparing an effective media mix, particularly in the context of interactive advertising.