



# **GLOSSARY OF BRANDING TERMS**

## GLOSSARY OF BRANDING TERMS

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Brand equity? Masterbrand?  
Brand Architecture? Whether you are a Marketing Director, CEO, or Entrepreneur, it's important that we understand each other. The following definitions are included for that purpose.

## B

### **Brand:**

A mix of tangible and intangible attributes, symbolized in a trademark that can be managed to create value for organizations and customers. It is the physical representation of a company's offerings and values, but can exist subjectively in a person's mind. This is chiefly influenced by a person's comparison of the brand promise offered versus their perception, experience, and interaction with an organization, product or service.

### **Brand Ambassador:**

The face or spokesperson of a brand. The brand ambassador, which historically took the form of a CEO, celebrity endorser or other paid affiliate, represents the essence of a brand and is a controlled effort to humanize brand messaging, mission and outreach. More recently, employees, loyal customers and anyone passionate about the brand, have assumed the title. The ambassador eats, breathes and lives the brand, providing customers with a tangible and influential brand experience while serving as the campaigner, defender and avatar of the brand.

### **Brand Archetype(s):**

Categories of brands that share specific, universally recognizable personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors. These archetypes are drawn from influential psychiatrist Carl Jung's theory that humans use symbolism to understand larger concepts. Brands are categorized by twelve Jungian archetypes: The Innocent, The Everyman, The Hero, The Rebel, The Explorer, The Creator, The Ruler, The Magician, The Lover, The Caregiver, The Jester, and The Sage. Identification with an archetype allows brands to foster a deeper connection and understanding with their target audience. These archetypes can then be used to align the brand with specific customer personas and focus the efforts of marketing teams.

### **Brand Architecture:**

The organizational system that defines how a company's individual brands relate to and interact with one another. It shows the role and hierarchy that each brand plays in the greater structure of the company and defines the function of each. It provides clarity to companies and enables them to differentiate their brand elements and be intentional about managing brand equity.

**Brand Assets:**

The individual elements that come together to form the outward-facing brand. Brand assets include the fonts, colors, animations and resources that must work together in order to forge the distinctive appearance of a brand. While each element can stand alone to spark recognition of the brand, the union of all these elements is what creates a cohesive brand identity.

**Brand Attributes:**

The touchstones that define the qualities and personality of the brand in a customer's mind. Brand attributes help establish the spirit and tone that inform all communications and effectively guide internal culture. They are the qualities that make a brand unique, personal and recognizable.

**Brand Audit:**

A thorough, under-the-hood examination of a brand to uncover performance, position and customer insights. A brand requires these inspections in order to identify strengths, weakness and opportunities for refinement or new initiatives. The results of a brand audit will align teams and set the stage to prioritize and manage any course corrections needed.

**Brand Awareness:**

The ability of a brand's customers to identify the brand in a crowded market, and their level of familiarity with the brand's unique buying proposition. Greater brand awareness is often a primary goal of marketing a product or service and is critical when launching a new brand. Brand awareness coupled with brand preference creates an opportunity for premium pricing.

**Brand Discovery:**

The process of objectively examining a brand to better understand its role within the competitive landscape and gain insights into its consumers and what motivates category purchase. Brand discovery will reveal strengths, weaknesses and what customers value most among the brand's offerings and why.

**Brand Equity:**

The value of a brand's financial and non-financial assets measured by its quality of public awareness and influence. Brand equity represents the sum of all distinguishing qualities of a brand, drawn from all relevant stakeholders, that result in personal commitment to and demand for the brand; these differentiating thoughts and feelings make the brand valued and valuable.

**Brand Experience:**

The means by which a brand is created in the mind of a stakeholder through all experiences and interactions with or involving the brand. Some experiences are controlled, such as retail environments, advertising, products/services, websites, etc. Some are uncontrolled, like journalistic comment and word of mouth. Strong brands arise from consistent experiences that combine to form a clear, differentiated overall brand experience.

**Brand Extension:**

Leveraging the values of the brand to take the brand into new markets/sectors. A brand must first establish brand equity in order to successfully and intentionally extend into new categories and offerings.

**Brand Gap:**

The gap between an organization's business and creative strategies. Bridging the gap creates a cohesive brand identity that unites strategy and creative teams, and drives better customer connections.

**Brand Guidelines:**

A comprehensive document or rulebook affirming the principles of a brand and providing guidance for understanding its legacy, vision, mission, personality and attributes. Brand standards inform staff, external agencies and vendors of the code under which the brand operates. It serves to establish appropriate usage, variants and application of each of the brand assets, and specifies how each element fits together. Synonyms: Brand Standards, Style Guide

**Brand Harmonization:**

Ensuring that all products in a particular brand range have a consistent name, visual identity and, ideally, positioning across a number of geographic or product/service markets. This consistency allows for a clear articulation of offerings that set boundaries and facilitate harmony between a brand's promise and the public's expectations.

**Brand Hierarchy:**

The order of importance of individual brands within the architecture of a company's larger entity or parent brand. A system or order that differentiates the individual sub-brands of a larger brand and can be based on size, performance, public recognition and financial value. Example: Hershey's has a hierarchy of sub-brands including Reese, Almond Joy, Jolly Rancher and Bubble Yum.

**Brand Identity:**

The outward expression of a brand as it is seen and heard in the market—specifically the distinguishing verbal and visual elements and messages that appeal to the customer. These include the brand name, logo, tagline, tone and typography. Brand identity reinforces the brand’s position relative to the competition and articulates the intended brand message.

**Brand Image:**

The customer’s net “out-take” from the brand. For users this is based on practical experience of the product or service concerned (informed impressions) and how well this meets expectations; for non-users it is based almost entirely upon uninformed impressions, attitudes and beliefs.

**Brand Management:**

A continued analysis and execution of all techniques utilized to maximize the value of the brand over time. The management of all tangible and intangible elements representing or supporting the brand experience with the goal of increasing brand awareness and enhancing brand loyalty.

**Brand Map:**

A visual manifestation of a brand that provides a top-level view of all its inner workings, including employee roles, brand purpose, offerings and pricing. The brand map can be a useful tool to guide employee onboarding and training as well as larger organizational initiatives such as mergers and acquisitions.

**Brand Personality:**

The attribution of human personality traits (seriousness, warmth, imagination, etc.) to drive differentiation and customer connection. These traits inform brand behavior and are manifested to customers through employee actions and through prepared communication, packaging and advertising.

**Brand Positioning:**

The distinctive space that a brand occupies in its competitive environment to ensure that individuals can recognize and elect the brand over others. Brand positioning involves the careful manipulation of all marketing elements in order to claim the brand’s desired market position and clearly establish its unique impression in the customer’s mind.

**Brand Preference:**

A gauge of customer choice in a particular category, or the act of a customer choosing one product over another.

**Brand Salience:**

The strength or weakness of a brand in a particular purchasing decision, influenced by its brand positioning.

**Brand Standards:**

See: Brand Guidelines

**Brand Strategy:**

The long-term strategy that guides a business in the development of a brand and its implementation in every aspect of marketing and operations. It serves as a guidepost for internal stakeholders and partners and clarifies a company's value to its customers.

**Brand Valuation:**

The estimated financial value that all of a brand's tangible and intangible assets bring to a company. It is frequently used to guide brand strategy and make the case for branding investments, and it showcases the impact that a brand has on business performance now and in the future.

**Brand Values:**

An unwavering declaration of values or promises that steers a brand toward its "true north." Brand values are the internal attributes that establish a brand's unique transactional philosophy, underline its purpose and guide its decisions and behaviors.

**Branding:**

Creating, selecting and blending attributes to differentiate a product, service or business in an attractive, meaningful and compelling way. It works to illustrate the brand using consistent themes that align with brand promises to build the preference and loyalty of the consumer.

**Branding Agency:**

Branding agencies specialize in strategic brand building and management. Unlike advertising or marketing agencies, branding agencies focus on strategically positioning a brand in the competitive market and in the mind of the consumer rather than on tactically communicating brand services or offerings.

## C

### **Co-Branding:**

The use of two or more brand names in support of a new product, service or venture. Co-branding is a strategy that couples the strengths, awareness and customers of one brand with another in order to increase brand equity, target specific markets and/or combine brand values in the mind of the consumer.

### **Color System:**

A brand's master color guide that consists of primary and secondary palettes of print and digital color values that govern all usages of brand assets to ensure a sense of hierarchy, consistency, usability and harmony. The strategic selection of color, tones and hues evokes emotion for—and recognition of—a particular brand.

## D

### **Descriptor:**

A short statement added to a non-descriptive brand name that describes a quality or service central to the brand's offering. Example: Starbucks "Coffee", La Croix "Sparkling Water", Dell "Computers"

### **Differentiation:**

The process of researching, identifying and marketing unique characteristics of a brand, as compared to those of its competitors.

## E

### **Endorsed Brand:**

Often used synonymously with sub-brand, an endorsed brand is generally a product or service brand name that is supported by a masterbrand—either dominantly (e.g. Apple Watch) or lightly (e.g. Nestle Kit-Kat).

### **EPI (Ethical Positioning Index):**

A comprehensive scale that measures how ethical a company's brand positioning is. The index is comprised of the fundamentals in brand positioning (identity, image, personality, awareness and communication) and ethical variables such as beliefs, values and customs.

## F

### **Freemium:**

A mashup up of the words “free” and “premium,” when companies provide basic services free of cost, with the option to upgrade to a more robust offering for a price. Examples: LinkedIn, Youtube and Dropbox.

## G

### **Generic Brand:**

A brand with little differentiation in its positioning that lacks a recognizable logo or brand assets. Typically, these brands are not advertised and serve as a lower-cost alternative. Example: Walgreens-brand Ibuprofen.

### **Graphic Style:**

A consistent theme of the graphic elements (e.g., typography, color and images) of a brand’s overall visual appearance. Graphic style is recognizable by the visual traits of an overall parent brand and can vary slightly but is overall consistent among the sub-brands.

## I

### **Icon:**

A small, graphic representation of a brand or brand function, typically within a graphical user interface. An icon helps users recognize a brand, illustrate what a brand does and navigate to or through its app and website. Facebook’s “Like” button is an example of an icon.

### **Initialism:**

An abbreviated version of a brand’s name formed by the first letter of each word in its name. Its appearance is identical to an acronym, but differs in that it’s pronounced letter by letter, rather than as a spoken word. Examples: CNN, NBC and AT&T, vs. NASA, which is an acronym.

### **Intangibles:**

Elements of a brand that are incapable of being touched and often difficult to assign value to. Intangibles assets include trademarks, copyrights, patents, design rights, proprietary expertise, databases, etc. Intangible brand attributes include: brand names, logos, graphic style (e.g. Adidas three stripes), colors, shapes and smells.

## L

### **Logo:**

A brand's most important and recognizable visual signifier. Composed of text (brand signature) and image (brand symbol), the logo serves as a company's flag. The terms logo and trademark are used synonymously. Example: Nike's swoosh.

## M

### **Market Leader:**

A company that has achieved a dominant position—either in scale or influence—within its field. This leading position often comes about because the company was the first to market a certain type of product and, with the protection of a patent, has managed to consolidate its position before direct competition was possible. Alternatively, a company may overtake a previous market leader through greater efficiency and skillful positioning.

### **Market Share:**

A company's share of total sales of a given category of product on a given market. Can be expressed either in terms of volume (how many units sold) or value (the worth of units sold).

### **Masterbrand:**

A brand that dominates all products or services in a range or across a business. Sometimes used with sub-brands, sometimes used with alpha or numeric signifiers. Mercedes-Benz and BMW are both employed as masterbrands.

### **Messaging:**

Communication that is strategically written to target an audience segment and encourage them to purchase and engage with the brand. A properly developed messaging system defines how the brand “speaks” with the customer while also capturing the nuance with which it does it.

### **Mission Statement:**

A formal declaration of the goals, values and purpose of a company. The mission statement defines why the company exists, what it aims to achieve and guides all decision making. It serves as a company's North Star, and is essentially the “who” and “why” of the brand story.

### **Monogram:**

A typographic logo that visualizes a company's initialism and can be used in lieu of a formal logo to represent the company. It is commonly used by fashion brands such as Chanel or Louis Vuitton.

## **N**

### **Name, Descriptive:**

A company that descriptively conveys the characteristics of its services without being specific to its brand story. Descriptive names do not allow for easy recall in a consumer's mind because they can be applied to any company offering similar services. Examples: Pacific Gas & Electric and Booking.com.

### **Name, Evocative:**

A brand name that suggests an association with an underlying benefit or conveys the positioning of the brand. Evocative names conjure emotions, imagery, metaphors and experiences in the mind of the consumer. Examples: Starbucks, Patagonia and Nike.

### **Name, Experiential:**

A brand name that describes the experience a customer will have with the brand. Examples: Pivot, Agility and Safari.

### **Name, Generic:**

A brand name that describes an entire category of products or services and provides little differentiation. Examples: Waster Management, Hotels.com and News Corp.

### **Name, Invented:**

An original brand name that is invented and has no linguistic definition or meaning. Examples: Twitter, Accenture, Google.

## **O**

### **On-Brand:**

The perception that a brand asset is consistent with how an audience expects a company to look, act or feel. A company that is consistently on-brand builds lasting, loyal relationships with its customers.

## P

### **Parent Brand:**

A brand that acts as an endorsement to one or more sub-brands. Parent brands are typically well-established and trusted by their audience, benefitting the sub-brands beneath it. Example: Coca-Cola, which has hundreds of sub-brands including Dasani, Powerade and Simply Orange.

### **Personas:**

Personas (a.k.a. customer personas) describe an audience segment's occupation, desires, actions, beliefs and anything that might influence their behavior with a brand; extending beyond demographics to psychographic motivators. This creates a consistent understanding of the audience for stakeholders during brand positioning and targeted communications.

### **Positioning Statement:**

A written description of the position that a company wishes itself, its product or its brand to occupy in the minds of its target audience. The statement explains why the company is different than competitors and what consumers will gain from purchasing it.

### **Private Label:**

Private label products are sold under a brand name but manufactured by an outside company. Brands using a third-party to manufacture private label products have control of the brand packaging, prices and marketing, without owning the production facilities. Example: Kroger's Private Selection and Simple Truth brands.

## Q

### **Qualitative Research:**

Research conducted through interviews, focus groups and other forms of observation. It provides context about an audience's feelings, beliefs and motivations regarding a brand, product or service with nuance and depth.

### **Quantitative Research:**

Research that uses surveys, polls and questionnaires to provide numerical observations on large audience samples. It provides empirical answers to branding and marketing questions, and is often used to provide factual, projectable and statistically significant information for decision-making.

## R

### **Rebranding:**

The act of updating or revising a brand. The decision often follows a merger, acquisition, or realization that the company has evolved and its brand is no longer compatible with its identity. Rebranding may consider a change in target audience, how the brand's internal and external circumstances have shifted and competitors' positioning.

### **Repositioning:**

Enacting changes to a product's positioning to enhance its value in the mind of customers or change its potential market. Typically initiated when a product's target audience(s) has shifted or the product is used in a different manner than originally positioned. Many products and services are originally positioned inadequately, minimizing the potential market. It is almost always possible to reposition the product and create an alternate consumer perception.

## S

### **Service Brand:**

A brand that is centered on people and customer service interactions, rather than products. Examples: Starbucks, Southwest Airlines.

### **Style Guide:**

See: Brand Guidelines

### **Sub-brand:**

A product or service that has its own name, design and identity, and is affiliated with a parent or masterbrand. A sub-brand benefits from the parent brand's name recognition and consumer loyalty, but the sub-brand is never stronger than the parent brand. Examples: Coca-Cola Zero, Samsung Galaxy, Virgin Atlantic, Apple AirPods

### **SWOT:**

An acronym for the technique to analyze a brand's internal and external Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It provides an understanding of where and how the brand can improve, and how to set itself apart from competitors.

## **Symbol:**

Symbols, the graphical portion of a logo, provide an instant way for consumers to recognize a brand. A well-known symbol, like McDonald's Golden Arches, the Pillsbury Doughboy, or Starbucks' Mermaid can be seen and recognized without any words.

## **T**

## **Tagline:**

A short phrase that communicates a brand's personality and energy in a distinctive catchphrase that is both succinct and memorable; often a concise embodiment of the brand positioning. Example: Disneyland's "The happiest place on earth." or Nike's "Just do it."

## **Tangibles:**

The assets, attributes, values and other distinctive elements that make up a brand. This can include the product and its packaging, manufacturing plants, brick and mortar locations, cash, and useful qualities of the brand that are known to exist through experience and knowledge.

## **Touchpoint:**

Any instance of interaction that a brand has with its audience. Touchpoints allow a brand to build a relationship with the consumer—each point should leave a lasting impression. Examples: A website, customer service interaction, business card, product packaging, social media post or an online review.

## **Trademark:**

A word, phrase, symbol, and/or design or any combination of those that uniquely identifies one brand. It allows a company to be the sole user of the trademark and ensures that the brand remains distinct from competitors. Unregistered trademarks are typically accompanied by the unregulated <sup>TM</sup> symbol, while trademarks registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) bear the <sup>®</sup> registered trademark symbol. "Trademark" and "logo" are often used synonymously.

## **Typographic System:**

A system of fonts and typographic standards that informs the consistent and distinct typography of a brand's visual identity.

## U

### **UBP (Unique Buying Proposition):**

A distinctive and intentional brand position in customers' minds that is encouraged by brand awareness. It answers the question, "How does this product or service uniquely meet my needs?" and can encompass product features, emotional/lifestyle benefits and other qualities. UBP is the reason customers choose a product over competitors.

### **USP (Unique Selling Proposition):**

A distinctive and intentional strategy in marketing a brand that provides differentiation in the marketplace, typically by focusing on product features. It influences how a product or service is put in front of a target audience.

## V

### **Value Proposition/Statement:**

A set declaration of standards, principles or ideals promoted by a brand that targets both customers and stakeholders. A brand's value proposition typically highlights brand integrity, dedication or importance and can be key in brand positioning.

### **Verbal Identity:**

The non-visual elements that define a brand identity in written communications and spoken language. Consistency in verbal identity can be recognized by phrases, tone of voice and the brand persona.

### **Vision Statement:**

A vision statement is what the brand aims to become and how you're going to succeed in getting there. By its very nature, the vision is forward-looking and it's grand.

### **Visual Identity:**

What a brand looks like—including, among other things, its logo, typography, packaging and literature systems.

## W

### **Wordmark:**

A brand's logo that includes the typography of a full company name without other visual graphic elements. Examples: Google, Sony, Coca-Cola.



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