

Singapore Management University

Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

Perspectives@SMU

Centre for Management Practice

9-2014

Branding your company

Singapore Management University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/pers>



Part of the [Advertising and Promotion Management Commons](#), and the [Marketing Commons](#)

Citation

Singapore Management University. Branding your company. (2014).

Available at: <https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/pers/245>

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Centre for Management Practice at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Perspectives@SMU by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email cherylds@smu.edu.sg.

BRANDING YOUR COMPANY

Published:

25 Sep 2014



You need to understand what your brand stands for before building it

In December 2013, Canadian low-cost carrier WestJet set up big screen TVs showing a man dressed as Santa Claus at the airports in Toronto and Hamilton. Santa was taking wishes for Christmas presents via a video link for flights heading to Calgary.

Unbeknownst to the passengers, “Santa” was in a studio in Calgary along with 150 WestJet employees, taking down their wishes on the other end of the link. Within the two hours that the flights were in the air, the WestJet folks had scrambled to a nearby mall to purchase the presents – including a 50-inch LED TV – and got them gift-wrapped. When the two flights touched down, these presents came out on the baggage claim conveyor belts with the names of passengers on the parcels.

“Such a campaign is about being achieving top-of-mind awareness and separating you from the rest of the market,” says **Yasemin Tecmen Stubbe** of YTS Marketing. With over 36 million views on YouTube in the nine months that WestJet has put up the video, it would be fair to say the company has created awareness within the air traveller’s mind.

The value of branding

The WestJet video is the airline’s second annual Christmas Miracle, which started in 2012 with a [less elaborate effort](#) that notched up over 1.5 million views on YouTube. A lot more has been spent on the 2013 video compared to the first, but it pales in comparison to the cost of producing a TV commercial. Add in the buying of advertisement spots on TV, print, and online, and one gets a better perspective on the cost effectiveness of WestJet’s branding effort.

"You cannot put a value to branding - it's in the customer's mind."

The key, however, is the goodwill and positive media coverage that no amount of money can buy, and which the Christmas Miracle videos generate in buckets. That WestJet has pumped in whatever was necessary to create that buzz speaks volumes about its senior management’s appreciation of the value of good branding, explains Stubbe, but not everyone thinks that way.

“Senior management might go, ‘That’s great but what does it do for my profitability?’ You cannot approach such a campaign by saying, ‘I want to achieve \$100 million in sales.’ You have to look at it as creating brand awareness and positive interaction. You cannot put a value to it – it’s in the customer’s mind.”

It underlines how Stubbe illustrates the difference between marketing, advertising, and branding: Marketing is someone proclaiming “I have good products”, advertising is proclaiming “I have good products” over and over loudly, and branding is achieved when the target audience says, “I believe you have good products”.

Stubbe, who was responsible for hotel chain Hyatt’s luxury brand Park Hyatt’s branding and integrated marketing strategy, says there is considerable confusion among some of her clients about what branding constitutes.

“The challenge we face as brand consultants is that not all clients understand what branding is,” Stubbe tells *Perspectives @SMU*. “They understand marketing, be it on social media or search engine optimisation, and they have a budget for it. When it comes to branding, it’s not so clear: ‘My brand needs to be more powerful; my brand needs to be more recognised etc’, but it is less properly defined.

“Some of my clients think they have a great brand but when I talk to the staff, they have no idea what constitutes the company’s brand. For these companies, they have bigger problems than what they initially thought.”

Know your customer

Drawing on her experience in the hospitality industry, Stubbe highlights the importance of internal communication in creating the desired impression of the hotel in a guest’s mind; in other words, forming the hotel’s brand through the actions of hotel staff.

“If your staff don’t really know who you are and where the company wants to get to, if the employees don’t get passionate about what they are working for, a company will not be able to achieve true success.”

She elaborates: “To be able to have a satisfied customer, you need to take everything into account. From pre-arrival to post-departure, how do you communicate with them? Everything that they come into contact with – all the brand touchpoints – how are these all integrated?

“The way I would communicate the importance to the staff is to make sure they understand their role in this whole symphony that is a hotel. If a single violinist plays badly, the whole orchestra suffers.”

Parlaying that into the broader context of general management, Stubbe says it is important to know your customer well in order to deliver the best possible service or product. Beyond considering all the brand touchpoints and how it affects the perception of a company, it is far more important to understand your customers.

“You have to do your market research such as surveys and focus groups to innovate and be better. You need all that to know what your customers want and what you are lacking. You need data, but you have to know what you need that data for. You cannot just collect data for data’s sake; otherwise you’ll just be constantly shooting in the dark.”

Yasemin Tecmen Stubbe was the speaker at the Singapore Management University Centre for Marketing Excellence event, “The Art of Branding in the Hospitality Industry” on September 3, 2014.