

# Smashing Your Brand

Back in 1915 Earl R. Dean, who was working at the Root Glass Company, was given a brief to design a bottle, which firstly could be recognized in the dark. And then, even if broken, a person could tell at first glance what it was.

Taking his inspiration from the pod of the cocoa bean, Dean produced a bottle with ridged contours.

He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. This led to the Coca-Cola Company's contourization strategy, which used the shape to emphasize the very brand. The bottle he designed was the classic Coke bottle, which has become one of the most famous glass icons ever. The bottle is still in service, still recognizable, and been passing the smash test for every generation over the last 80 years.

The Coke bottle story reveals a fascinating aspect from a brand-building perspective, because in theory all brands should be able to pass this sort of test. So if you removed the logo

from your brand, would it still be recognizable? Would the copy stand up to it? Would the colours, graphics and images standing alone pass the text?

Can your brand survive being smashed? It is an interesting exercise, which removes a logo-fixated mindset and brings you closer to a philosophy valuing all elements that create the brand that it is. Two black ears from a well-known mouse are instantly recognizable as Disney. A Singapore girl suggests Singapore Airlines. These are only components of the brand, and yet they're unmistakable.

The trick is to create each element so that it's so strong, so able to stand alone, yet at the same time so integrated and synergistic that it can take the brand to a whole new level of familiarity.

To place too great an emphasis on a brand's logo carries risks. Least of all there is a danger of neglecting all the other potential brand-building

opportunities. If paid due attention, there are many other aspects that become recognizable in their own right. Colour, navigation, texture, sound, shape. Even blindfolded, you'd know you're holding a classic Coke bottle.

It's time to kill your logo

Remove your logo, and what do you have left? This is a very important question because a brand is so much bigger than its logo. Are the remaining components easily identifiable as yours? If not, it's time to Smash Your Brand.

The Smash Your Brand philosophy considers every possible consumer touch point with a view to build or maintaining the image of the brand. The images, the sounds, the tactile feelings and the text all need to become fully integrated components in the branding platform. Each aspect



playing a role as vital as the logo itself.

Knowing what you're known for

Advertising messages are increasingly cluttering our airwaves and print media. The average consumer is bombarded with an astonishing 3,000 brand messages a day. As each brand fights to be heard in this cacophony of the commercial world, it's vital that they strike the perfect note to stand out. Our use of media itself has become more sporadic. Media plays on in the

background of our busy lives, we have developed internal filtering systems that help us switch off.

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This fragmentation of attention, requires advertising develop a totally integrated brand message, optimising every brand signal in such a way that the brand becomes instantly recognizable. This presents the advertiser with enormous challenges. As many as 20 per cent of the tween generation own their own cell phone, and there's every indication that this number is increasing on an annual basis. A large proportion of these phones are the basic variety with non-colour screens, less-sophisticated graphics and minimal visual effects. How would your brand fare on this match-box-sized canvas?

The situation of media fragmentation is further complicated by brand alliances. A large number – close to 56 per cent – of all Fortune 500 companies have formed alliances in their communications. This fact alone requires an even larger need for the implementation of a Smash Your Brand strategy, because when two brands share one space, the need

to convey separate values and commercial messages in a limited 30-second spot, two logos alone simply won't do the job.

There are only a few brands that would pass the Smash Your Brand test today. Take a moment to consider it. If you were to remove your logo and any other textual reference to your brand name, would your customers still recognize the product as yours? Chances are that you will find that without the logo and name, your brand loses its meaning. In order to reverse logo dependency, all other elements – colours, pictures, sound, design and signage – must be fully integrated.

Smash Your Brand – piece by piece

Smash Your Brand into 12 different pieces. Each piece should work independently of one another, although each is still essential in the process of establishing and maintaining a truly smashable brand. The synergies created across the pieces

will be essential for your brand's success.

Smash your picture

Everything can be smashed – even your picture. Since its beginnings in 1965, the United Colours of Benetton has consistently developed a consistent brand style identifiable in any size, in any country and in any context. It was Benetton's intention to develop its own unique personality. They consider their clothing to be “An expression of our time”. Their strategy in maintaining this integrity has been to generate all their own images.

Luciano Benetton explains, “Communication should never be commissioned from outside the company, but conceived from within its heart”. Benetton is a brand that would survive smashing. The image and the design is its own statement and is



part and parcel of the Benetton “heart”.

Smash your shape

Shape is one of the most overlooked branding components, even though certain shapes clearly speak of their particular brand. Think of the bottle shapes of Coke, Galliano or Chanel No. 5. Particular shapes have become synonymous with certain brands. The Golden Arches refer to McDonald's trademark, and they're consistently present at every outlet in every country all over the world.

Since 1981 the shape of the Absolut vodka bottle has been the primary component in every aspect of the brand and its communication. From fashion shows

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to ice hotels, footprints on the beach or Northern lights, Absolut's inventive ads are all based on the shape of the bottle. The shape of the bottle is the shape of the brand.

## Smash your name

Or what about smashing your name...? When the Porsche 911 was introduced in Frankfurt in 1963 the model was called 901. The brochures were printed, the marketing material was all in place but everything had to be urgently changed. Much to Porsche's dismay, they discovered that Peugeot owned the rights to all three-digit model numbers of any combination with a zero in the middle, and this was non-negotiable. Fortunately only 13 models got through the production line with the 901 insignia, thereafter it became known as the 911.

Peugeot has held the numeric name rights for cars since 1963. The middle zero gives them a distinction that automatically identifies their models as

Peugeot – even if you're not able to conjure up a mental picture of a 204, or a 504.

## Smashing your language

Disney, Kellogg's and Gillette are three completely different brands with one thing in common. Over the past decade they've established a branded language. The irony of this is that they may not even be aware of it. Whether coincidentally or purposefully, our studies shows that 74 per cent of today's consumers associate the word "crunch" with Kellogg's. Another 59 per cent consider the word "masculine" and Gillette one and the same. Americans formed the strongest associations of masculinity and Gillette – by an astounding 84 per cent.

Every component of your brand can be smashed, your language, colours, shapes, tactile feeling – even your sound or pictures. Smashing these leads to much more than a characteristic brand – it creates a point of differentiation – impossible

to copy by your competitors. Remember branding is everything but a logo – it's a way to add a characteristic personality to your brand including every component creating a true point of difference.

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## About Martin Lindstrom

Martin Lindstrom is recognized by the Chartered Institute of Marketing as one of the world's primary branding gurus. He's an adviser to several Fortune 500 brands including Disney, Mars, Pepsi, LEGO, American Express, Mercedes-Benz, Reuters, Visa, Pepsi, McDonald's, Kellogg's, Ericsson, Yellow Pages and Microsoft. Lindstrom has authored four bestselling books on branding – BRAND sense is his latest in the series.



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