

## **THE MUSEUMS OF BRANDING**

All over the world, with so many different meanings and perceptions of the word "branding", it appears that it has lost its true meaning; the terminology is more like a walk through a museum with a glorious past. Loose words like "economy" carry different meanings that speak differently to different people. To some, economy may refer to money, while to others, it means jobs, whereas for some, it's the thing causing climate change. Hold it right there. Branding gets even more adventurous. To many it's about having a business card with psychedelic logo, all the way to the polishing doorknobs to improve an image, while to others; it's about getting ahead of the economy. So what's the difference between branding and economy? Now these are the terminology confusions that call for candid discussions.

Branding was once a very noble profession during the last century, but today, it is mostly entangled with general advertising and is losing its power and message. As long as anyone can claim to be an instant master of this art, very little can be said about its integrity. Many decades ago, ad agencies mastered the craft to entice, hunt and capture customers. This century, the search engines offering brand new tools that empower the customers to hunt for the best deals are making the traditional branding craft almost obsolete. The search engine has made all deal-options so easily accessible that customers can stalk around the globe like 24/7 predators, calling the shots while zeroing in on their most desired purchases. As a result, traditional advertising has become a noise for deaf ears while branding entrapped into fancy graphic works has become an overly expensive redundancy. Customers no longer want to be dragged to what should they buy; they are now masters of their own domain.

This alone is a massive paradigm shift, and requires a brand new thought process. Price, quality and value is what's driving customer behavior and bottom-line issues, persuasive ads were great when things were scarce, and today, in the age of super abundance, no one is waiting anxiously for the next big annual catalogue with a new lineup of new products, as the world is opening its parade of exotic things round the clock. This change of buying habits has created the vacuum in all of the last century mediums.

Most business are overly cluttered with over-sold graphics and are now expecting miracles to happen to their old fashioned branding solutions. 99% of the current brand name identities are already stuck in an illusionary fame without any real ownership, basically in oblivion. The new role of the ad agencies is to become the risk-sharing partners in the projects and navigate the project with full share of responsibilities like architects delivering a standing structure and not just a fancy drawing. They will have to create deliver brand name assets and not just transient logos. The last century model of commission based on expenditure should be replaced by risk and rewards. Unfortunately most graphic mentality branding shops reject this notion while some new ones are taking the risk and sticking their neck out on performance based campaigns. Brand new type of services would emerge if the emerging future of advertising was re-captured, re-branded and re-named, as currently the term advertising is more of a liability.

Most businesses are expecting that a mass-media driven approach will solve all the image and identity issues. 24/7 broadcasts are in, and primetime is now no time at all. The centrality of the TV from the living room has now shifted to mobile receptacles nicely snuggled in hip pockets. The same morning paper that set the daily agenda now stays folded for days. The current mobile society has turned the tables around making TV and print highly ineffective and expensive. The new role of branding agencies is to re-invent new mediums and nurture a deeper understanding of online methods. Long gone are the days where credentials of cut-and-paste logos would create high profile Ad-Men. Today, it's all about IT and a greater deal of technological fusion. As IT now rules the new mediums, India will now rule the global advertising hub through worldwide marketing and innovative online cyber-services.

Before applying the word branding as a cure to all problems, a visit to its history and its possible future is a must. Advertising businesses, packaging and branding services, newspapers, TV will never die; while they have served humanity extremely well, they are most certainly well placed and respected in the archives of corporate history and now solid pillars of the museum but the new surges, driven by the most adventurous cybernauts have taken over, just like the earlier cycle of the 1900 when the newspapers were the driving force; today it's the search engines. Tomorrow it may be another new front. Visit the last century trends and study the peaks of branding during its five major cycles. Figure out your game plans on new platforms in this century. The more you study the online industry, the more you realize that how little even the online industry itself knows

about its pending ramification. A sudden drop on the online advertising is also on the horizon. Never the less a great future for smart marketing with guaranteed results lies ahead. This will now have the branding companies scratch their heads and start thinking.