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MICHAEL JACKSON – THE NAME WHICH BECAME A BRAND

We can all learn something from Michael Jackson. He developed a new style in pop music. He influenced many of popular songwriters of our time. He was the King of Pop, a musician and a legendary entertainer. But, what made him really famous and popular? Was it his moonwalk? Was it his singing talent? Was it his looks? His nose? No. Michael Jackson knew that he was a brand on his own. He created in the mind of everyone the perception that there is no other “product” on the market quite like himself. He used it. He built a powerful name that he used to market himself. He knew that people will come because he is Michael Jackson. He was a walking, talking, dancing and singing brand. He knew that there is only one Michael Jackson. He knew that no one could dance, sing, and entertain the way he does. So, what is a brand? In the world of creative arts, advertising and marketing, branding is somewhat similar to the branding that happens in a ranch. It helps isolate or identify your cattle from the others in the ranch. By definition, a brand is a trademark which is designed to differentiate your product from other products. It is based on the concept of singularity which is the key in creating in the mind of the consumer the perception that there is no other product on the market quite like yours. From a creative professional's point of view, I think he is brilliant. This is why companies hire designers who help create an image of their brands for them, brands that would be remembered and which will have an immediate recall. However, there are a couple of things that we need to consider when thinking about brands. Branding is not marketing. Rather marketing is brand building. When you build a good brand, selling would not be difficult at all. When Michael Jackson announces to the world he is holding a world tour at so-and-so place, his tickets get sold in a flash - 5 tickets per second! So, if you build a powerful brand, you will have a powerful marketing program. Branding is a more efficient way of selling products and services.

A brand is based on the concept of singularity. For consumers, if you do not stand out in the crowd, they will most likely forget about you. With Michael

Jackson, he focused on dance pop. He did not venture into singing in Broadway; rather he kept himself in the pop music category -- hence the title, The King of Pop. It is easier for consumers to remember one name than having several names. For example, coffee is to Starbucks. Cola is to Coke. Healthy food on the go is to Subway. Toothpaste is to Colgate. Good things happen when you narrow your focus. Create publicity by being the first today, there is an overabundance of commercials each seeking our attention. To successfully sift through all that information, a brand must stand out. To stand out, you either be the first to do something or completely reinvent what is already out there. By creating the image that your brand is the first will help save you tons of advertising money. Michael Jackson made popular one of the best known dance techniques in the world -- the Moonwalk, which later became his signature dance move. He may not have been the first to do the moonwalk but he was the first to incorporate it in his dance performances.

Your brand should be easy on the eyes of your market. Michael Jackson mastered the art of trademark in his fashion from his gold plated military styled jacket to the single white glove and arm band. He knew his unique fashion sense would strengthen his branding image. Today, it is difficult to dissociate our image of Michael without thinking of his fashion style. However, we have to be careful of the branding image we want. When the King of Pop started wearing a mask, people speculated that his nose was falling off. It is far from the truth. It was Michael's way of reinventing himself after tough legal times. Did it work? It did create a publicity buzz that he needed to spur his career forward after a long break. Branding is consistency. The essence of branding is consistency. Although the market demographics may change, it does not mean that your brand should change as well. Michael Jackson was not just liked by those born in the 80s. His music and his talent were universal such that millions adored him. However, it was not easy sailing for him. The King of Pop did not become popular overnight. He tirelessly worked for four decades to develop his style, his voice, his move and everything about him so that his fans will continue to want more.

Therefore, whenever we undertake a task that involves branding, it is worth learning from one of the best brands in the world - Michael Jackson. In late 2007, Jackson said the following of his work and future influence: 'Music has been my

outlet, my gift to all of the lovers in this world. Through it, my music, I know I will live forever'.