

branding

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BRANDING—PAST AND PRESENT

Consumers who buy Calvin Klein underwear, Ford cars, or Coca-Cola without looking at competitive products are loyal to a brand. But what does this mean? One explanation is that they have internalized their purchasing to the point where it is no longer a conscious decision.

Unsurprisingly, this is the dream of every manufacturer and marketer because they believe they no longer have to invest time and money in convincing consumers to try or buy their products. Consumers believe a brand “speaks” to them in some way, and represents a lifestyle they either have or aspire to, or a unique service they want. Indeed, some people often say, “That’s not my brand” when confronted by a conflicting choice.

A company’s task is to maintain and manage that relationship. The brand’s design (in every respect) is a signifier, even a territorial marker. But who is marking the territory—the customer or the brand owner? It’s all a function of design.

According to marketers, a brand is a distinct product, service, or business, and branding is the act of impressing a product, service, or business on the mind of a consumer, or set of consumers. This process may last a lifetime, or for as long as the consumer remains in a demographic group.

Some believe that branding is not only about ubiquity, visibility, and function, but about “emotionally bonding” with a target group of customers. And a major part of that process lies in the design. So successful has some brand design been that when a consumer leaves a target age bracket, for example, they sometimes find themselves wanting to remain in it, living a young lifestyle well into middle age.

In the late 1990s and the early years of the 21st century, even state organizations and political parties have plowed huge public sums into designing brands to represent their services, usually inclusively (“Join Us” or “Use us”). Some companies, though, opt for an



“exclusive” approach by limiting their appeal to a target group, and to people who aspire to join it (“This product is for you and for people like you” or “You too can be like this”). Design is the key to making both approaches work.

Meanwhile, an opposing “No Logo” movement has sprung up in the wake of Naomi Klein’s book of the same name, which explores the aggressive movements of global capital behind many lifestyle brands.

Ironically, one company—the utilitarian Japanese retailer Muji—has successfully marketed its functional, well-designed goods for urban living under the “No Brand” moniker. So in a design-conscious world full of big-name retailers, consumers can feel that they’ve made the “right” choice by not making the “wrong” one, and make a statement by opting out of buying an over-familiar brand. We all play the brand politics game, even if we don’t want to; such is the power of even a well-designed “no brand.”

MUJI

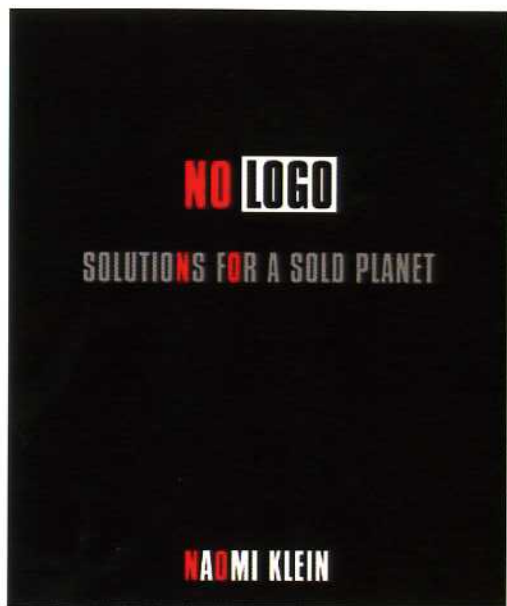
無印良品

1 This sign was found carved on a tomb near the entrance of the cathedral of Uppsala, Sweden. It looks like a craftsman's cross or mark. However, it is a mark symbolizing the family of the buried man. The idea of using symbols as identifying marks has been around for much of recorded history.

2 Muji, the famous utilitarian Japanese retailer, has successfully created a brand under the "no brand" moniker:

3 | 4 Some brands such as Ford and Coca-Cola have lasted the test of time and still maintain their values and personality.





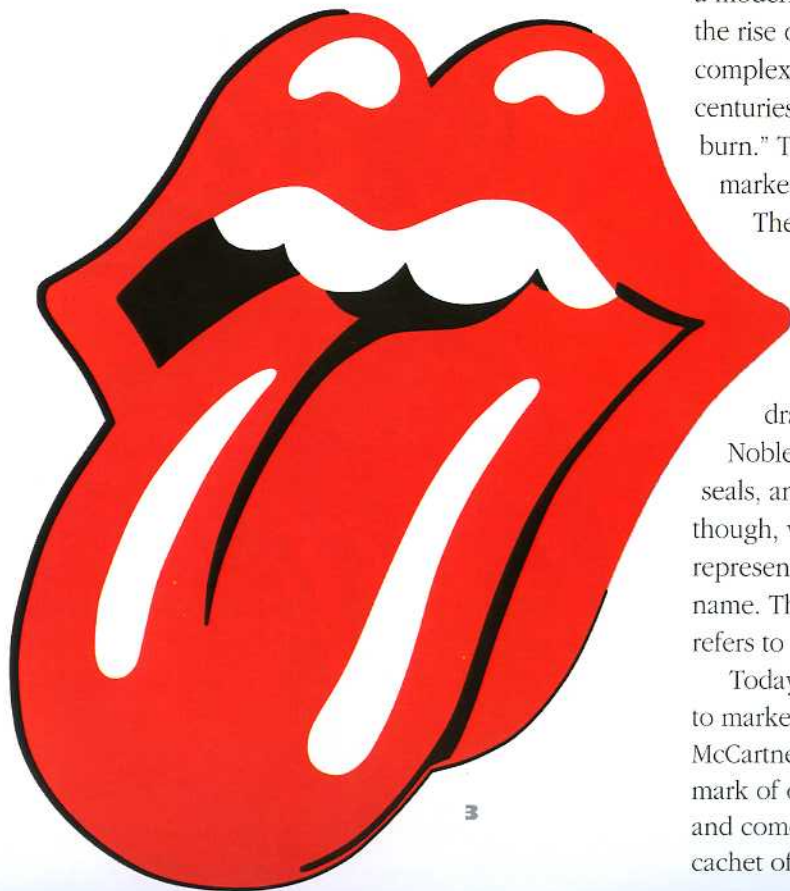
UK Rock band Radiohead has discovered this, too, shipping untold quantities of “unbranded” Radiohead merchandise while aligning themselves with Klein’s book. It’s all about good design for your target market.

But despite the arguments, branding is far from being a modern practice, even if its purpose has evolved with the rise of mass production and communication and complex social groupings. The term originated many centuries ago in the Old Norse word *brandr*, meaning “to burn.” This was how farmers and owners of livestock marked their animals to identify them.

The cattle barons of the West branded their cattle territorially so that everyone could see to which ranch they belonged. In Sweden, farmers marked possessions with a family cross, which also acted as a binding signature when drawn on legal documents.

Noble families in Europe developed family crests and seals, and some went to war carrying them. These, though, were not ideograms as such, but a graphical representation of tradition and continuity in the family name. That said, the British royal family now famously refers to itself as “the Old Firm.”

Today, though, even notions such as these are subject to market forces and brand positioning; think of McCartney, Coppola, Picasso, Freud... names whose mark of quality has spanned more than one generation and come to mean something new, while retaining the cachet of famous forebears.



1 Naomi Klein's book explores the aggressive movements of global capital behind many of the lifestyle brands.

2 The UK band Radiohead used the "no logo" and brand umbrella and sold large quantities of its merchandise.

3 Celebrities like Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney have created very strong personal brands apart from the brands created by groups such as The Rolling Stones and The Beatles.

4 The British royal family and suppliers of brands to them have used the endorsement of the royal crest to great effect. Brands such as Twinings have made the crest an integral part of their logo.



In the case of manufactured goods, in Greek and Roman times people would mark their wares with an identifiable symbol, to signal "ownership" and to establish a mark of quality. During the Middle Ages masons, stonecutters, and master builders carved their marks, just as painters began identifying their works with a signature. Over the centuries, such marks became an end in themselves as their design evolved and they came to represent not just quality or provenance, but other ideas associated with a product and, by association, its maker.

Arguably, 20th-century artists such as Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst became "brands" by the modern definition when they adopted the techniques of mass-production to make "signature," "original" goods.

5 *matisse*

5 Powerful signatures and brands are not just restricted to products and services; they transcend categories and industries, from fashion to art.

THE MODERN DEFINITION

The modern definition of branding developed in the 19th century during the industrial revolution when it became increasingly important for manufacturers to create identifiable names and symbols to make their products stand out from their competitors'.

As mass-production (beginning with Ford) and mass-communication networks (starting with the telegraph and the telephone) spread and gained momentum, many manufacturing brands gained the means to outlive generations and cross geographical borders. Some of those brands still exist to this day.

And as word spread, so the design of the message became as important as what the message actually said. Over time, they became one and the same thing as the brand, the logo, the aesthetic, and the "experience" became an essential means to grab market share and mindshare, and to mark out territories in both.

Today, branding is the process by which a company, a product name, or an image becomes synonymous with a set of values, aspirations, or states, such as "youth," "independence," "trustworthiness," "quality," or "performance."

Brand equity (the value associated with a brand) is built over time through different media, such as

television, radio, the Internet, print advertising, product placement (branding by association), or peer groups, particularly in the case of youth markets. When it works properly, branding results in an "autopilot" kind of purchase and the brand can become more valuable than the company (as many Internet-based ventures discovered). Brands, rightly or wrongly, can have a deep impact on their audiences' lives.

In rare instances, a brand can become synonymous with a product type. It's this power that makes many customers call adhesive tape "Scotch tape" or "Sellotape," or their vacuum cleaner a "Hoover," even if they're using competitive products. However, these territorial markers are not always permanent, particularly in fast-moving markets such as information technology and high-tech hardware.

Until recently, many office workers called their photocopiers "Xeroxes," regardless of which company actually made their machines. Indeed, "Xerox" became both a noun and a verb in common parlance, but both have fallen out of favor with a new generation, as competitors have muscled in on that company's territory. The word is now unfamiliar to many younger people, however good the company's products might still be.



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Audi

SONY

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Names like Audi, VW, Mercedes, Sony, and Budweiser are all brands with powerful associations. Each is trying to reflect a specific personality through its look, feel, and design.

“Rebranding,” that often-derided term, is therefore of vital importance to many companies who have to redefine themselves around a new set of objectives—and a new design scheme to signify it.

Think of IBM: once synonymous with huge mainframe computers, then with the (“IBM compatible”) PC, IBM has recently repositioned itself as a services company, with a new softer design scheme and a simplified range of product names to match. Microsoft, which once paid scant regard to the Internet, now focuses almost exclusively on it. All these new aspirations are reflected in the companies’ design principles.

Question: Can you identify this company?

Not difficult! Most people can recognize McDonald’s in a split second.

But why do people know McDonald’s so well? The fast food market is cutthroat and crowded, and McDonald’s products are broadly similar to those of its competitors, so what sets it apart? Arguably, people visit McDonald’s because of the McDonald’s brand, which translates into two words: “convenience” and “fun.”

The company also designs many of its products and services for children, with the thinking being that if the

design attracts children, kids will persuade adults to reach for their wallets. Recently, it has also pitched itself at senior citizens and ethnic minorities, and has even started poking fun at itself in TV advertisements.

McDonald’s is so well established that many people look for the big yellow “M” that has come to represent the company’s intended values throughout the world. A well-designed logo crosses language and cultural barriers. The colorful, welcoming brand design, which extends to packaging, uniforms, product names, and free gifts, says, “These products are fun and convenient for everyone,” while its new-found sense of humor cleverly undermines its image as a corporate behemoth to attract even skeptics.

In short, McDonald’s hamburgers are presold. That’s the power of a brand—as long as consumers see the company in the same way that it sees itself. This is one of the inherent risks with brand positioning, and with a design that represents a company’s value system. If a company’s design scheme and message to consumers trumpets “trust,” “innovation” or “you can talk to us,” then the company had better deliver on that promise. The bigger the target, the more snipers will try to shoot holes in a company’s vision of itself.



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Some brands have now become so powerful that they are synonymous with their category.

BRANDS IN THE CONNECTED WORLD

The growth of interactive media, such as the Internet, digital and interactive TV and radio, mobile technologies, GPRS, and TiVO, has changed the rules of the branding game. Customers are willing to receive data from whichever “channel” they select and use it to make purchasing decisions, and even enter into a technology-enabled dialog with chosen suppliers. (At least, that’s what many companies are aiming for, even if the technology sometimes lets them down!)

For designers today, this is the biggest challenge: is the design strategy flexible enough to maintain brand consistency across different channels and technologies? More than ever companies, which are now complex networks of partners, affiliates, and even media organizations, must establish clear guidelines for the use of their brand. These include billboards and periodical advertisements, points of sale, interactive TV and Internet portals, and the postage-stamp-sized screens and cut-down content of cellphones and mobile devices.

Branding has never been through such turbulent times—which is good news for designers. The principles of branding haven’t changed, but the pace and number of potential choices have. The speed of change, the unpredictability of economies, the rapid progress of

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The British *Financial Times* has taken its very successful newspaper brand and used similar colors and branding on the Net, enabling its customers to have the same experience across channels.

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FINAN

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BUSINESS

NYSE plans to impose tighter rules on analysts

The New York Stock Exchange will need weeks to propose a further succession of analyst research work and investment banking activity. Page 23; Lex, Page 23; Close Brothers, Page 26; Inside the great divide, Page 27

AIB to sell Allfirst for \$3bn
AIB Irish Bank is to be sold to troubled Allfirst subsidiary for \$3.2bn, in a \$3.2bn deal. Page 23; Lex, Page 23; 8-sterling chapter, Page 34

Equities rise for second day
Wall Street and European bourses rise for a second day. The FTSE 100 gained 4 ppc (sent to 3,800.6), and the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed up 100.30, or 2 ppc (sent to 7,997.12). World stocks, Page 48; London stocks, Page 49

MOVE TO END RE

Bruss plans trading shake

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3 | 4

AOL have created an identity for their brand that works very well across channels, be it the Internet, PDA, or mobile.



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Jack Welch, retirement deal probed

up talks with KLM
be signed by end of year 21:53 |

strike cost \$60m

ts threaten its future
uld run holding operation

ish Energy's analysts' conference

GE cuts Welch's multi-million
package
SEC to launch probe into
retirement deal 16:05 | [Read](#)

IBM and Intel team up in server
deal
Companies to develop and
share technology 1:26 | [Read](#)

e Bank leasing unit for \$2.9bn
n to drop non-core units

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Subscription feature
Dell plans to expand beyond
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The CNN logo is very adaptable and can be transferred across many media and formats without losing any impact.



technology, and increasing market fragmentation all conspire to make developing and managing a strong design scheme essential.

If a consumer is buying shampoo and toothpaste, a printer and a digital camera, or a pair of shoes and some lingerie, the design and information requirements are very different, and become more complicated when the channels to deliver information are multiplying and evolving.

Depending on whether the purchase is being made from a catalog, on the Internet via a PC, or through interactive TV, for example, information design requirements have no option but to change, so the designer must consider how to maintain brand consistency. Navigation when shopping via interactive TV is achieved through the remote control, so design here must be led by simplicity. The color reproduction possibilities of print, computer monitors, and TV are also very different. We will examine these issues later.

So it's clear that good design is more essential than ever to brand relevance and visibility. A strong brand today should not only understand and adopt design principles appropriate to the product, but also to the channel or delivery mechanism (from business to consumer). Brand design across new and future platforms will play a massive role in building that visibility.

The reason for all this is that businesses think in terms of channels, but most consumers see only the brand, and unconnected bits of information. Customers expect all interactions with a brand to be consistent and to provide them with information, opportunity, and customer service. Put simply, they want value that justifies their time, effort, and money.

So in more and more industries, from the automobile industry to retail banking, managing a complex multichannel design strategy effectively and seamlessly is a major source of competitive advantage.

MORE THAN JUST A PRODUCT

Recent technical advances have made speed and relevance central to success. Technology is enabling existing products, such as telephones, to converge with other technologies and delivery mechanisms. Hence we have mobile phones that can send text messages and emails, surf the Web, and which promise video, audio, and location-based services delivered in a swift and affordable form.

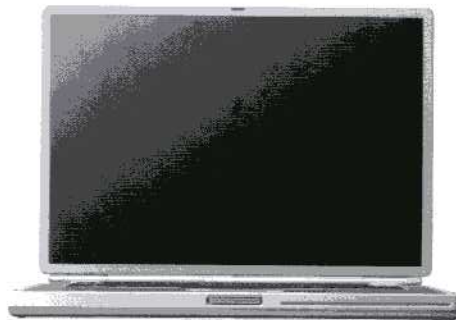
New delivery forms create new ways for people to interact not only with each other, but also with providers of content, such as music, film, travel opportunities, financial services, consumer goods, and groceries. Many people go so far as to join communities of users centered on content type or, more attractively for companies, content provider.

Some companies—such as Virgin—have recognized the potential in branding other companies' services, such as mobile phone networks and even electricity, and building value and additional services around them to create a community "feel."

There are challenges here for designers. As a website is a virtual megastore, the online brand presence needs to be just as tightly designed and controlled as its real-world counterpart. Increasingly, customers like to be addressed as individuals online, so sites need to be designed as "live," interactive experiences, and not just as showcases.

These changes are also influencing the types of brands that are being created for consumers. Food is no longer seen in the media as a family chore, as it was in the 1950s (for women), but as being about home and lifestyle design, and "sensory experiences" regardless of gender. To stay relevant and survive, then, it is crucial that brands understand such social, cultural, and demographic changes.

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Earn an "A++" in fun with our back-to-school backpacks, clothes, and more. [Shop now!](#)

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Depending on the brand strategy, the execution of design (regardless of the medium) changes dramatically. Apple focuses on the “must-have,” unique design of its products. Amazon focuses on personalization,

from greeting customers by name to recommendations based on previous purchases. Disney, on the other hand, focuses on the “experience” and fun elements, while brands like Accenture focus on their expertise and “value-adds.”

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Advertising has moved on from simply explaining the use of products to making them more experiential. The soft drinks industry, one that traditionally stressed taste, is a good example. Red Bull has pushed that concept to the next level.

I AM YOUR IDEA

USE ME ↓

LOSE ME →

It's not how many ideas you have. It's how many you make happen. So whether it's your idea or Accenture's, we'll help you turn innovation into results. See how at accenture.com

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Products such as computers have changed from being “technology equipment” into consumer-focused centers of “lifestyle entertainment.” Airlines are less about transport and more about “travel and experience” opportunities that can augment lives through sophisticated bonus schemes such as airmiles.

But these are also rich information-gathering opportunities for the companies concerned, who are not in the free-gift business. They get something just as valuable as money in return: data about choices and lifestyles, plus the customer’s repeat business (loyalty) for as long as they can maintain that relationship.

Brand design is no longer a “monologue,” but a dialog between companies and customers, so businesses need to be able to shift the focus of their brands accordingly—as long as they keep the underlying principles intact.

So it’s essential that designers remain at the center of this dialog, as they are responsible for designing the message and making it attractive to emerging audiences.

According to Alan Mitchell in his book, *Branding Strategies in the Information Age*, there are four new models of brand strategy that are being followed by companies today:

Relationship branding: This is where the main asset of the company is its relationship with consumers—for example, brands like Amazon and Avon. When designing brands that are relationship oriented, a designer should highlight aspects of the unique

Red Bull gives you wiiings.

relationship that a customer has with that brand. The Amazon experience is about personalizing and understanding the customer's preferences through technology channels, turning a "one-to-many" experience into a "one-to-one" dialog. Avon's, meanwhile, is still centered on direct customer contact, with precisely the same intention.

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Values branding: Here the main asset of the company is its focus on a group of values, way of life, or philosophy. Examples are Disney and Nike. In these brands the design is led heavily by the values: Disney's focus is on safe, colorful, children-led family fun; Nike's is on emerging street-level trends and sporting icons to make sportswear, and sport, hip for the clubbing generation. In both cases their designs have become icons in themselves, and both have also created their own "worlds" of experience and helped define aspects of popular culture.



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Avon relies on direct customer contact to maintain brand loyalty. Looking at products in your own home creates a more relaxed atmosphere.

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Websites such as Gap and Levis try to deliver online the experience that people have in their stores, by recreating look, feel, and color choices.



TOUR SHOPPING BAG

Items In Bag: 0 Items

Ferrari

English
Italiano

Search the site

GO

Or try Full Search

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO? >>

GET LEVI'S® PRODUCTS ONLINE AT

JCPenney.com

MORE ONLINE RETAILERS



9 | 10
 Ferrari and Rolex have made design and exclusivity integral to what the brand delivers to its customers. Such brands are linked with an aspirational lifestyle.

Intellectual property branding:

Here the main asset of a company is its specialist knowledge and know-how, its unique approach, and range of services. When designing for such clients it is important that the brand can translate such values as knowledge, trust, professionalism, and understanding—particularly when customers are parting with large sums of money to bring onboard that specialist knowledge. Accountancy and consultancy giant Andersen was famously a casualty of its promise of trust, at a time when its branding campaign was pushing a message of “one company” worldwide. Not a good time for regional headquarters to claim that it had no knowledge of the US office’s illegal practices! (But you can hardly blame the designer for that.)

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Passion branding: In this case the main asset of the company is the drive and passion that its target customers have for the brand. Ferrari, Jaguar, and Rolex are obvious examples. When designing for passion brands, understanding the target audience is crucial. Most people associate with these brands

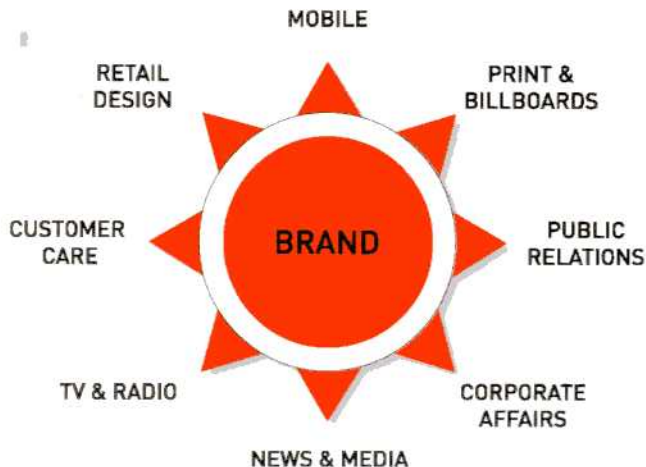
on a very personal level, so the smallest “off-brand” campaign or design can have a major impact on current customers (who often return), and on people who might aspire to be customers one day.

BRINGING BRANDS TO LIFE

Brand identity only has value when it is communicated correctly to the appropriate audience, and the views of customers are determined by what they see and hear about the brand through the media.

Brands therefore have to realize that a “scatter shot” approach (firing out untargeted messages with the hope that enough of the correct audience will be hit) no longer works. The media is no longer as simple as it was in the days when billboard, print, and, later, television advertising were the only real options. At the same time, consumers have become more sophisticated in their response to branding campaigns, just as the media has become more complex and demographically focused.

So choosing the most appropriate, targeted medium is essential for success, and design must be dictated by medium. If “Brand X” has opted to sell its products primarily via interactive TV, then having pastel shades, on the one hand, or brilliant blues and vibrant oranges on the other, will not work.



BRAND TOUCHPOINTS

Touchpoints are important ways to create an overall brand experience. A touchpoint is wherever a customer interacts with a

brand, such as its advertising, retail presence, or Internet site. The design and implementation of each of these points is part of designing a single, coherent brand.

TV is limited in terms of its color palette and screen resolution, and has a problem displaying certain colors. A loud blue, for example, will often glow unattractively onscreen, and there can also be problems if blue- or green-screen processes are being used to superimpose other images, such as computer-generated backgrounds.

In some cases, the density and luminosity of certain colors has to be toned down for broadcast, so your design's color scheme will have to accommodate that in advance. Again, we will come back to these issues in future chapters.

In summary, then, it's clear that all the processes of, and considerations behind, creating a brand from scratch must be learned before creating a design blueprint. In the following chapters we will review all the elements of creating or managing a brand and how to implement these principles in the overall design scheme.



21

2 British bookstore chain WH Smith has created sites on interactive TV as well as on the Internet appropriate to their products.

3 | 4 Domino's Pizza successfully uses its primary colors on its iTV site to reflect the "fast food" nature of its business, while Bertelsmann's more refined site aims to reflect its diverse print-based business.