



Brand Advertising

What is branding, and why does it matter?

by Shaz Memon

Branding permeates all areas of our life – we are influenced by it in our purchasing choices and lifestyle habits and instinctively respond to it. As a concept, it has grown up a lot since the advertising revolution of the 1950s.

When it comes to the way we live now, that decade was arguably the most influential by far. With the onset of television and other technological innovations, advertising made great strides in reaching out to a public seeking to identify familiarity in products, companies and services that could consistently meet their expectations, demands and needs.

Since then, we have all become a

marketing analyst at its most basic level. Branding is a concept familiar to us all, on which we base our assumptions about companies; it is a phrase frequently used – and not just within the marketing departments of big businesses.

Everyone has a view on the John Lewis Christmas TV advert, the pros and cons of the redesigned brand Mini, the impact of David and Victoria's behaviour on 'brand Beckham' and so on.

But, what exactly is 'branding'? And why does it matter?

In essence, branding is the public face of a company supported by the perceptions and experiences consumers have of it. According

to marketing guru Jay Baer: 'Branding is the art of aligning what you want people to think about your company with what people actually do think about your company. And vice versa.'

Today, the internet encourages us to think how we brand ourselves – both as a business and an individual.

Now an integral part of any marketing campaign, the branding of a business needs to meet criteria across all platforms, all devices and with an online presence that reflects and amplifies the patient experience of any good dental practice.

While the impact of good branding might arguably be impossible to measure in itself,

the reality is that more than ever consumers are turning to their smartphones for research and purchasing – and that includes dentistry.

This means a big step change for those yet to dip their foot into the world of mobile digital branding.

Smartphones offer infinite possibilities for potential patient engagement – just as well, with a recent survey revealing that one in five consumers simply ‘cannot live without their mobile phone’.

Branding is not just about the logo you choose and the colour scheme of your signage and website.

Branding should be an extension of you and your business and should capture the essence of your practice ethos. Does what the patient see, hear and experience from the moment they walk through the door support and encapsulate your branding – online or otherwise?

To reiterate, you need to speak to your audience in a consistent and constant voice – whether that’s in your social media activity or in the way the team on reception answer the phone or greet people at the door.

Below three areas to consider:

1. Identity – let’s begin with the area most of us consider when discussing branding. It is worth investing in a design team au fait with dentistry to help create your ideas and commit them to paper. Consider several options and do the litmus test with friends and family. The colours, the fonts and the design of a website speak volumes about a business. Who is your audience? To whom

are you trying to appeal? What language are you using? Are you based in a city or a village environment? What is the local demographic? It is no good appealing to young mums with friendly fonts and blogs about teething and pre-school dental care if yours is a practice based in the heart of the city with young professionals as potential patients. This practice demands totally different aesthetics and language in order to appeal. Take a look at your closest competitor – how do you measure up?

2. Freshness and consistency – is your branding the same on all platforms? Dental professionals are busy people and marketing can often fall by the wayside, with neglected social media accounts and a website that hasn’t been updated since it was created. Carry out an audit of your website. Does it need a new look and improved functionality? Is the branding consistent with your business environment? Does your team understand what your branding is trying to convey? It’s all very well increasing footfall with a great website and social media activity – but are your messages conveyed in person? Demonstrating an online commitment to oral health education is great – but do ensure the team understand that this is a key part of the business ethos. Their behaviour needs to reflect this.

3. Price – all businesses aim to offer a quality service. But the truth is, there are different perspectives on dental care and patients do like to have choice. For example, are you a practice that offers high-end orthodontics or

a GDP that offers more budget systems? Are you a dental spa – with perhaps additional aesthetic treatments – or more of a general family practice? Again, your practice ethos should be reflected in your branding and vice versa.

Brand recognition is an accepted part of modern life. One study reveals that even pre-schoolers recognise ‘child-orientated’ brands, such as Disney, Pepsi and McDonald’s – its famous golden arches now said to be more recognisable around the globe than the Christian cross.

Brand interaction ranges from a potential patient visiting your branded website to another downloading your branded app or opting into your branded SMS texts to, ultimately, presenting in your chair.

Keep the (branded) flag flying and the conversation going, keep messages constant and support your brand with a high standard of care, exemplary team behaviour and support it in your products and service as well as online so that one reflects the others always and in all ways.

Shaz Memon is the creative director of Digimax and Digimax Dental and has worked with leading dental and non-dental names. Digimax Dental uses non-dental industries to infuse creative expertise into dental marketing. Some of Digimax’s clients include House of Fraser, McDonalds, Formula One, James Caan and Caffè Concerto. Shaz specialises in offering bespoke, creative, high-end design solutions that encompass branding, website design, top Google rankings, eMarketing and more – just for dentists. ■



For more information, go to www.digimax.co.uk
or www.digimaxdental.co.uk