

Brand Visual Identity And Why It Has To Be Consistent

First impressions last.

In this fast-paced digital age, it seems like if you can't catch someone's attention in the first three seconds, you're out.

One of the many elements that brands use to make sure they get noticed at the get-go is through their **visuals**. These businesses and companies were able to craft their own **visual identity** through a process called **branding**. Visual identity is just a small part of branding but if you want to know more about branding, you can check out our previous blog [post](#).

Now, if you look at the visuals closely, you will notice that each one of them, though different in form, feels and looks like they are a part of a whole. It's not a coincidence. In fact, it's deliberate.

A lot has been said on how to create a unique visual identity for your brand. But in this case, we want to encourage you to make your visual identity consistent.

To preface this, we'll take a closer look first at what makes a visual identity for a brand...

The Brand's Visual Identity

Your **visual identity** is all the imagery and graphical components that express and embody who you are as a brand. It is everything that your customers physically see, from the logo to the design and layout of a website. With your visual identity, you can communicate with your customers without the need to use words.

As the reflection of who you are as a brand, it's important to make sure that your visual identity is well-thought and well-researched. This is to make sure that every single imagery and visuals that you present to your customers is in line with the overall identity of your brand.

Elements Of Your Visual Identity

Your visual identity is made up of different elements that you can mix and match to elevate your brand even further. These elements will help tell the story of your brand as your customers encounter it in various touchpoints.

Graphics

What do you think when you see a dynamic ribbon design? Do you know that distinctive white 'wave'? *Coca-Cola*, right? How about those stylized 'flower' patterns? It's *Louis Vuitton*.

It's still easy to recognize which brands these forms, shapes, and icons came from even without seeing their actual brand logo. These visual assets are also known as **graphics**, which are illustrated and designed for easier brand recognition. Of course, this can only happen if you use them consistently on your social media marketing materials, packaging, advertising newsletters, and other branding materials.

Typography

We know what you're thinking: *"Oh, cool! This one's easy! That's just choosing what kinds of fonts you will use."*

Well, yes...and no. Choosing your fonts is just part of what **typography** is all about. As a whole, it's actually how text is arranged to make it legible and engaging at the same time. This includes your layout, spacing, sizes, hierarchy, colour, and the integration of the type across various mediums. When used consistently, it will effectively deliver your brand message while impacting the experience your customers will have with your brand. You wouldn't want to check out a brand with hard-to-read fonts on their website, signages, or documents, right?

Color Palette

Colour is one of the most fundamental elements of art and design. When used, however, to its full potential, your customers will be able to recognize your brand by colour combination alone. A good example is the simple yet effective use of red and gold by the fast-food chain McDonald's.

By maximizing the associations and meanings attached to each colour, you can mix and match them to make a palette (or combination) that fits your brand message. At the same time, you can communicate this same message across your touchpoints when these colours are consistently and properly used.

Imagery

Using imagery has always been in the arsenal of brands. With powerful images, brands can connect to people on a deeper level which sometimes even logos and graphics can't do. Customers can understand the brand narrative better while stimulating their thoughts and imagination using these images.

Companies like Philip Morris have maximized the use of images such as their iconic 'Marlboro Man.' It was used as a marketing strategy to refocus the brand to be a "men's cigarette" from being a "feminine" one. They used the image of a cowboy from the Marlboro country as a symbol of masculinity, power, and independence. So that's why men who saw the Marlboro ads were sold into the idea that the cigarette was made for them.

Logo

This one's probably a no-brainer for you. Logos are the standard bearer of a brand's visual identity. It lives and breathes in every single touchpoint of your brand. So needless to say, your logo matters a lot and should be given careful thought when conceptualizing your logo.

Why Do Visuals Need To Be Consistent For A Brand?

Again, **consistency** is key in taking your brand image further.

Now, consistency does not always mean sticking to a single set of colour palettes typography or any visual identity element. What matters is that the set of visuals you have leaves the same impression and evokes the same emotional response from your customers. A good example of this is the fashion brand Moschino. They don't follow the conventional three-color palette rule like other brands. Yet, you can always tell that it's them because

their bright, bold, and wild visuals consistently evoke the brand's main message: "change," "uniqueness," and "fun."

When you can craft and apply that kind of consistency to your visual identity, your brand will reap the following benefits:

Better brand recognition.

Have you ever listened to a song so many times that you're able to recognize it just by its first few notes? In some ways, that's what happens when you have a consistent visual style across your touchpoints. It doesn't matter where and how your customers will come into contact with your brand. As long as it follows your visual identity, your customers will immediately recognize that it's your brand.

This is also why we would caution you from deviating from your established visual identity. Customers can identify your brand even just by seeing your visual elements like your logo. It's like spotting a long-time friend even when you don't see their face. But change even the slightest detail about them like their hair colour or the way they dress and it's suddenly hard to identify them. Similarly, with your brand, watch out for these kinds of changes. Make sure that they make sense, and it fits with the entire identity of your brand. Your customers may notice the slight change but it's not too much that they still recognize the brand itself.

Better retention in customer's minds and memory.

Brand recognition and retention go together. It just takes a while to get your brand to stick in the minds of your customers. There are still other factors that affect this, but your visual branding is one of the best ways to get your customers to remember who you are.

But fear not! Because when you continue to deliver consistent and cohesive brand materials that are in line with your visual identity, this will slowly sink into your customers. You wouldn't be able to memorize the lyrics of a song in just one sitting, right? It requires multiple listening, and, in time, you would be able to know the lyrics by heart even if you hear them sung by different artists.

In the same way, your customers need to see your brand's visual identity over and over to make the association of the visual information to your brand. So, the next time they encounter any of your marketing collaterals, they will be able to unequivocally say that it is you. Think of how you immediately identify that it's McDonald's whenever you see the colour red combined with the golden arches. Whether it's in their French fry packaging or their Happy Meal box, you know that it is theirs just by looking at the colours and the graphics on the packaging.

It also helps that customers have emotions and thoughts associated with your brand. Customers won't be able to make those associations if your visual identity is not consistent across your touchpoints or if you keep changing them. Any changes to your visual identity, even as small as changing the colours of your brand, can derail the process of easy retention.

Communicates credibility and establishes trust.

Would you trust a brand that's messy and disorganized? Of course not.

When customers begin to observe and scrutinize your visual elements, they inevitably draw conclusions and assumptions about your brand. If all your brand materials are of the “same quality and style,” then it communicates that your business runs like a well-oiled machine. It projects a sense of seriousness and trustworthiness. At the same time, it assures your customers that they will have a consistent *experience* of the brand wherever they choose to purchase your products or avail of your services. In turn, this feeling of assurance makes it easy for your customers to recommend you to their friends and family.

Allows you to reach your ideal customer better.

Your ideal customer is the profile or persona that your business wants to target. Without this, nothing about your visual identity or marketing strategies will make sense. You must keep in mind that the logo and graphics you design, the colours that you choose, and all other visual aspects of your brand are for your customers. To learn more about how ideal customers work and why you need them, you can check out our [blog post](#) about it.

With that being said, communicating a cohesive brand message to them through your visuals will more likely grab their attention. Even if they ignore you at the beginning, with enough exposure to your brand materials, they will eventually come around and consider buying your product.

Better brand experience.

The quality of the brand experience that your customers will have in one touchpoint should be consistent in every single touchpoint where your brand and your customers intersect. And one big factor in creating that cohesive environment and experience is your visual identity.

Your visuals set the tone for what your customers can expect from your brand. When everything's a mess and inconsistent, it will be hard to lure in your customers even if you have a stellar product or service.

Better storytelling and transparency that will resonate with your customers.

Sometimes, while watching a movie or reading a book, the protagonist suddenly breaks character, or a scene comes up that has no relation to the previous scene or the entire movie in general. It's so jarring and feels out of place that it takes you out of the story. You're not as immersed or as invested as before.

It's no different when your customers suddenly see inconsistencies with your visual identity. Visual inconsistencies are like plot holes that ruin the story of your brand. Now, when you do have a consistent visual identity, it's easier for your customers to understand and follow your brand narrative. Nothing will feel out of place, and they can establish a better emotional connection with your brand.

Avoid confusion.

Ultimately, a consistent visual identity avoids confusion and provides clarity. Your customers won't have to second-guess themselves if what's in front of them is really from your brand. It allows your brand to express itself clearly to your audience without having to seem like a teenager having an “identity crisis.”

A consistent visual identity shows your customers that you are sure about who your brand is and what it stands for. Because of that, you give your customers the assurance that you will not take advantage of them or lead them astray.

With all of these in mind, does it mean that you must stick with your current visual identity for all eternity? Honestly, no.

A change in your visual identity can be good for your brand. Even big companies do it. Tech giants like Google, Apple, and Windows have been doing it for years. As times change, their visual identity evolves as well. They understand that people's needs and perceptions change over time and with it, their ideal customer should change too. If you are unable to communicate to your customers that you're ready to meet their current needs, the competition will eat you up.

Now, say you want to change some of the elements of your visual identity, you must keep in mind that the change should not be drastic. Slowly ease your customers into the new elements and give them time to get used to it.

It's best to communicate to your customers that **"it's still us, but you can get to know a different side of us that you may have not yet seen or heard before."** Nothing you craft for your visual identity is set in stone. You can still change or improve on them to better communicate your brand message to your customers.

A brand's visual identity holds a certain power over its customers. More than just having the same colour palettes, imagery, or typography, you maximize that effect by delivering a consistent impact and emotional triggers to your customers. Once you can apply this to your visuals, your brand can stand out and be recognized in a saturated market.