

# Branding, Identity & Logo Design Explained



## BRAND

perceived emotional corporate image as a whole.



## IDENTITY

visual aspects that form part of the overall brand.



## LOGO

identifies a business in its simplest form via the use of a mark or icon.

A logo is not your brand, nor is it your identity. Logo design, identity design and branding all have different roles, that together, form a perceived image for a business or product.

There has been some [recent discussion](#) on the web about this topic, about your [logo not being your brand](#). Although this may be true, I haven't seen any clarification of the differences between 'brand', 'identity' and 'logo'. I wish to rectify this.

**What is brand?** – The perceived *emotional corporate image* as a whole.

**What is identity?** – The *visual aspects* that form part of the overall brand.

**What is a logo?** – A logo *identifies* a business in its simplest form via the use of a *mark or icon*.

To explain this in more detail, let's start at the top – the brand.

**What is branding?**



Branding is certainly not a light topic – whole publications & hundreds of books have been written on the topic, however to put it in a nutshell you could describe a ‘brand’ as an organisation, service or product with a ‘personality’ that is shaped by the perceptions of the audience. On that note, it should also be stated that a designer cannot “make” a brand – only the audience can do this. **A designer forms the foundation of the brand.**

Many people believe a brand only consists of a few elements – some colours, some fonts, a logo, a slogan and maybe some music added in too. In reality, it is much more complicated than that. You might say that a brand is a ‘corporate image’.

The fundamental idea and core concept behind having a ‘corporate image’ is that everything a company does, everything it owns and everything it produces should reflect the values and aims of the business as a whole.

It is the consistency of this core idea that makes up the company, driving it, showing what it stands for, what it believes in and why they exist. It is not purely some colours, some typefaces, a logo and a slogan.

As an example, let’s look at the well-known IT company, Apple. Apple as a company, projects a humanistic corporate culture and a strong corporate ethic, one which is characterised by volunteerism, support of good causes & involvement in the community. These values of the business are evident throughout everything they do, from their innovative products and advertising, right through to their customer service. Apple is an emotionally humanist brand

that really connects with people – when people buy or use their products or services; they feel part of the brand, like a tribe even. It is this emotional connection that creates their brand – not purely their products and a bite sized logo.

For a more thorough understanding of branding, in simple terms, I recommend Wally Olin's: The Brand Handbook which I quote is “an essential, easy-reference guide to brilliant branding”.

### What is identity design?



One major role in the ‘brand’ or ‘corporate image’ of a company is its identity.

In most cases, identity design is based around the **visual devices** used within a company, usually assembled within a set of guidelines. These guidelines that make up an identity usually administer how the identity is applied throughout a variety of mediums, using approved colour palettes, fonts, layouts, measurements and so forth. These guidelines ensure that the identity of the company is kept coherent, which in turn, allows the brand as a whole, to be recognisable.

#### **The identity or ‘image’ of a company is made up of many visual devices:**

- A Logo (The symbol of the entire identity & brand)
- Stationery (Letterhead + business card + envelopes, etc.)
- Marketing Collateral (Flyers, brochures, books, websites, etc.)
- Products & Packaging (Products sold and the packaging in which they come in)
- Apparel Design (Tangible clothing items that are worn by employees)
- Signage (Interior & exterior design)

- Messages & Actions (Messages conveyed via indirect or direct modes of communication)
- Other Communication (Audio, smell, touch, etc.)
- Anything visual that represents the business.

All of these things make up an identity and should support the brand as a whole. The logo however, is the corporate identity and brand all wrapped up into one identifiable mark. This mark is the avatar and symbol of the business as a whole.

### What is a logo?



To understand what a logo is, we must first understand what it is for.

A logo is for... *identification*.

A logo identifies a company or product via the use of a mark, flag, symbol or signature. A logo does not sell the company directly nor rarely does it describe a business. Logo's derive their meaning from the quality of the thing it symbolises, not the other way around – logos are there to identify, not to explain. In a nutshell, what a logo *means* is more important than what it *looks* like.

To illustrate this concept, think of logos like people. We prefer to be called by our names – James, Dorothy, John – rather than by the confusing and forgettable description of ourselves such as “the guy who always wears pink and has blonde hair”. In this same way, a logo should not literally describe what the business does but rather, identify the business in a way that is recognisable and memorable.

It is also important to note that only after a logo becomes familiar, does it function the way it is intended to do much alike how we must learn people's names to identify them.

The logo identifies a business or product in its **simplest** form.

**Summary:**

**Brand** –The perceived *emotional corporate image* as a whole.

**Identity** – The *visual aspects* that form part of the overall brand.

**Logo** – *Identifies* a business in its simplest form via the use of a *mark or icon*

# BRANDING?

I can't tell you how many times I've heard the phrase: *Your logo is not your brand*. This is repeated often enough that I have to guess there are people out there, who think a logo is a brand.

On the other end of the spectrum there are people arguing that a brand is so much more than a logo, that a logo is inconsequential. So I wanted to show how I define, understand and use the terms logo and brand, as well as some other related key words.



## *WHAT IS A LOGO?*

A logo is the graphic symbol that represents a person, company or organization. If the logo is well-known enough, such as the Nike swoosh, you may even see a logo used without the name of the business that it is associated with. Normally, most marks have a typographic part that more clearly spells out the name of the organization.

### **What is a wordmark or logotype?**

A logo can also be purely typographic. It is called a logotype or wordmark when only the letters of the name make up to the logo (there is no additional symbol). A great example is Coca-Cola's red scripty type. Some people also refer to the logomark as the word portion of a logo that also has a symbol.

Sometimes the graphic symbol and typographic word mark are very separate ([see the logo for Retail Association of Maine](#)). With other logo designs, there is not a clear separation of logo symbol from typography, ([see the Maine Auto Service logo](#)).

## *WHAT IS A BRAND IDENTITY?*

Once a logo has been designed it gets applied to many different applications. These can be as simple as the logo placed in the top center of a piece of paper and calling it letterhead. If all you do is essentially rubber-stamp your logo onto different things, you really have not developed a full brand identity.

A brand identity is the larger, distinct visual look that is associated with a company. Read here about [8 Essential Elements to a Comprehensive Brand Identity](#). That is a brief overview of the elements that can be put together to make your brand's identity more robust than just a logo.

When a brand identity really works, you should be able to recognize the brand even if you don't see the logo. For example, [Netflix's red envelope](#) is a simple yet powerful example of a brand identity.

Many people have heard about the importance of using their logo consistently. But there should be a consistency to elements beyond your logo.

The tricky thing is that while your logo is unfailingly unchangeable, your brand identity must have both consistency and flexibility. Creating a brand identity that is distinct yet varies based on it's form, is a challenge but can big dividends in your brand's value. The elements that can be part of a full brand identity could be fonts, colours, imagery, and even the voice of the writing.

## *WHAT IS A BRAND?*

What is included under the term brand is much harder to define. It certainly encompasses the logo and the full visual position created by a strong brand identity. But it also includes many other areas that are not part of the strict design side of a business. These may include your content, messaging and storytelling. Customer service and the client experience also a part of a brand. The idea of a reputation is a critical part of defining the word brand. Some people summarize this into the very abstract idea of a promise.

You will also hear some people (including me) use the word brand almost interchangeably with company or organization. It can be a way to talk about product or service; individual or organization; company or non-profit without getting caught up in listing all those particulars. For example, people will say: "A great way to promote your brand is using social media."

I like to think of a brand as a combination of how you define and promote yourself and how others define and view you. You never have complete control over your brand because it is not wholly generated internally.

- See more at:

<http://www.visiblelogic.com/blog/2013/02/logo-brand-identity-brand-what-is-branding/#sthash.5eGYyQeG.dpuf>