



Let Design Do The Talking For Brands

This article is by Denise Lee Yohn, a brand-building expert, speaker and writer. She is the author of [What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest](#) (Jossey-Bass, January, 2014.) Read more by Denise at <http://deniseleeyohn.com/bites/best-bites>.

Every single encounter that people have with your brand will either enhance its value or diminish it. Design is one of the best ways to ensure you're making deposits in your brand bank. Whether through product design, Web design or retail design, great brands create extraordinary experiences – brand “worlds” of sorts – that appeal to all the senses and use details and decor to help express their brand personalities.

The Details Speak Volumes

Managers of great brands are always looking for ways to express their brands in the finest details of execution. They know that all the little things they actually do—or don't do—for their customers will mean more to them than the big things they claim through their marketing messages. After all, not many advertising campaigns can compete with an impressive one-on-one brand experience that's been designed down to the last detail and appeals to the human senses. Not surprisingly, some of the most memorable brand experiences are created by superior design elements.

Because well-crafted design elicits emotional responses, great brands use packaging design to stand out in the crowd and make powerful first impressions. The best packaging designs are not only emotionally appealing to customers; they also convey the unique meaning and value of the brand. Packaging design alone can facilitate an emotional connection and bonds customers to brands.

For example, Chobani, a rising star on the packaged-goods horizon, uses design to stand out on retail shelves and make the simple act of eating yogurt a memorable experience. Chobani CEO [Hamdi Ulukaya](#) explains that as a start-up, Chobani couldn't afford to advertise, so the product packaging became almost as important as the yogurt itself. He wanted Chobani to look as good as it tastes, so he decided to use packaging sleeves that project sharper colors than labels that are painted on. He also veered from the standard size

and shape of most packaged yogurts and designed a European-style cup that's shorter, fatter and looks bigger than others.



Chobani. (Photo credit: bpende)

“People say, ‘It’s yogurt—who cares?’ But there’s emotion to it,” he says. “You can make this a moment: the opening of it, the eating of it, the experience. I spent so much time on every single detail.”

And it shows. Chobani is No. 3 in sales among all yogurt brands and has garnered 12.5 percent of the overall yogurt market, which according to *The Washington Post* earned \$4.2 billion in revenue in 2013.

Total Immersion by Design

When you step inside a Trader Joe’s store for the first time, you immediately know that you’re not in a “regular” grocery market. It’s more like stepping into a different world.

From the hand-written signs to the rustic wooden display cases being stocked by tattooed employees in Hawaiian shirts, Trader Joe’s uses many aspects of store design to make a strong emotional connection with its customers. Everything in the store is set up so that customers experience the quirky personality and sense of discovery that the Trader Joe’s brand represents. And Trader Joe’s uses the same design criteria for its direct mail piece, the Fearless Flyer, which is just as unpretentious as its stores. The brand’s signature design language elevates shopping at Trader Joe’s. It’s not a trip to the grocery store; it’s a cultural experience.

Trader Joe’s and Chobani demonstrate how great brands maximize the opportunities to appeal to their customers’ senses and create strong emotional connections through design. Creating a “brand world” means carefully choosing and integrating every element. You must, in Ulukaya’s words, “Seek perfection.”

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