

9 ways to differentiate your brand

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Denise Lee Yohn

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If you want to build a great brand, focus on being different.

The level of competition in the business world today means that simply being better than others does not create a sustainable advantage. Being different makes something more salient, more memorable, more of a personal expression -- and it makes it more difficult to compare or confuse it with other options.

Check out these nine ways to differentiate your brand.

To learn more from Denise Lee Yohn or to book her to speak to your organization, see her [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

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Transcript

In today's competitive business environment, if you want to stand out from the sea of sameness in your category, your brand must be different. Simply being better than your competitors no longer creates a sustainable advantage. It's too easy for another brand to come along and do it better than you.

Your brand must be different, and it must be different in ways that are important to your core customer target. When you do something different simply to capture attention or provoke a response, you might generate some short-term interest, but it will only last until the next brand does something even more shocking.

What's more, trying to one-up your competitors usually leads to commoditization -- meaning, all brands start to seem alike, and customers end up making purchase decisions based only on price or availability. When competition is high, strengths matter less and differences matter more.

The best way to establish differentiation is to leverage one or more brand differentiators. A brand differentiator is a unique feature, aspect, and/or benefit of your product or service that sets you apart from competing brands.

Consider the following 9 ways to differentiate your brand:

1. **Target market** – You can differentiate your brand by specializing in serving a specific customer segment. For example, in the video streaming business, Disney+ is differentiated from other services because it specializes in content for families.
2. A second way to differentiate is by owning an **attribute**. An attribute is a descriptive quality or characteristic of your product or service. The key is to identify an attribute that your competitors can't or aren't talking about and deliver on that attribute so clearly and consistently that your brand becomes synonymous with it, such as Ivory soap owning the attribute of purity.
3. **Ingredients or specifications** are another source of differentiation. Does your brand have or use elements that no one else does?
4. **Methods** – If you have a proprietary method by which your product is made or service is delivered, that can be a powerful differentiator. The craft beer brand [OEC](#) uses a unique fermentation process invented in Kenya, which involves burying barrels underground. Now that's different!

5. **Claims** about your product or its performance can be another point of differentiation if you have definitive evidence to back them up. Subaru can claim to be “built to last” because 97 percent of Subaru vehicles sold in the last 10 years are still on the road today.
6. You can use the **heritage or story** of your brand to differentiate it – like the way Levi’s uses its origin as a work pant for laborers back in the late 1800s.
7. **Proprietary technologies and/or patents** are also persuasive differentiators. Just be sure to explain their value if your customer target wouldn’t immediately understand it.
8. **Endorsements**. Thanks to the growth of influencer marketing, the power of endorsements has increased, whether it’s Oprah including your book in her book club or a beauty influencer like Ashley Quiroz posting on Instagram how she uses your makeup.
9. And the last way to differentiate your brand is your **people** -- that is, if your company has a different way of recruiting or engaging employees, or if the employees themselves are different. For example, employees at In-N-Out Burger are renowned for being happy and helpful.

Any one of these differentiators or a robust set of differentiators form the basis for how you establish and maintain competitive advantage. When it comes to your brand, better is unsustainable but unique is unstoppable.