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Research article

Analysis of the relevance of visual identity and branding in business ideas*

Análisis de la relevancia de la identidad visual y branding en las ideas de negocio

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Abstract

Using an analysis, this paper aims to identify the relevant aspects of Visual Identity and Branding in business ideas in order to improve their growth. We applied the mixed research methodology based on the development process proposed by Hueso and Cascant. The results reveal the phases proposed by Hueso and Cascant (problem, design, information gathering, analysis, interpretation and dissemination), for the purpose of collecting useful and helpful data for persons of interest and/or readers. The implementation of branding and visual identity whether in a large or small company was relevant, regardless of the scope, because these terms drive the success of the business model. It is concluded that any business idea aiming to position itself within the market through its own identity needs to create a visual identity. Likewise, branding is an essential practice for companies because it defines the brand's construction in its process, including graphic and communicational processes. All the elements that make it up add appealing and distinctive attributes, which help it be attractive and persuade

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consumers. This work suggests that every company is incubated by a business plan developed in the business idea process. Therefore, it is recommended to design a visual identity and branding strategy with the assistance of experts in the processes of creative development.

Keywords: Visual Identity, Branding, Business Ideas, Design

Resumen

El objetivo del trabajo es identificar los aspectos de relevancia de la Identidad Visual y Branding en las ideas de negocio a través de un análisis, con el fin de ser considerados para mejorar el crecimiento del mismo. Se aplica la metodología de investigación mixta basada en el proceso de desarrollo propuesto por Hueso y Cascant. Los resultados revelan las fases propuesta por Hueso y Cascant (problema, diseño, recolección de información, análisis, interpretación y diseminación), con la finalidad de recopilar datos que sean funcionales y de gran ayuda para las personas de interés y/o lectores. Resultó relevante la implementación de una identidad visual y branding en una gran empresa o Micro, Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas, sin importar el alcance, debido a que dichos términos impulsan el éxito del modelo de negocio. Se concluye que toda idea de negocio que desee posicionarse dentro del mercado a través de una identidad propia que la distinga de la competencia, para ello se necesita crear una identidad visual. Así mismo el Branding, resulta ser una práctica indispensable para las empresas debido a que en su proceso se define la construcción de la marca incluyendo procesos gráficos y comunicacionales, todos los elementos que lo conforman suman atributos susceptibles y distintivos, los cuales ayudan a ser atractiva una marca y logran persuadir en la mente de los consumidores. Este trabajo sugiere que toda empresa se incubada por un plan de negocios desarrollado en el proceso de la idea de negocio. Por lo tanto, se recomienda diseñar una estrategia de identidad visual y branding con la ayuda de expertos en los procesos del desarrollo de creación.

Palabras Clave: Identidad Visual, Branding, Ideas de Negocio, Diseño

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION. - RESOLUTION SCHEME. - I. Research problem. - II. Methodology. - III. Writing plan. - 1. Visual identity. - 2. Branding. - 3. Methodologies implemented from the business idea. - 4. Visual identity strategies. - 5. Branding strategies. - 6. Advertising strategies. - 7. Market positioning. - 8. Brand perception. - IV. Research results. - CONCLUSIONS. - REFERENCES.

Introduction

The relevance of graphic design in the business world presents different factors of value because it builds the image of brands or companies and helps them convey the essence with which they seek to be perceived. However, if these strategies do not have a professional plan, they can also affect the brand. "Visual identity is the construction of various graphic and visual elements to communicate the concept of a brand, its values and market positioning towards its audience. These brand elements include name, logo, product packaging and more" (Pérez, 2020, p. 1).

At present and throughout history, brands face an enormous challenge to make themselves known. First, they want their target market to know them and then try to make that target market their regular customers. It is common to observe that the main deficiencies are linked to identification, image, perception and persuasion. Within the business field, the brand design aims to boost positioning, increase sales and promote the development of both a Brand and a Visual Identity.

The objective of the present work was to identify the relevant aspects of Visual Identity and Branding in business ideas through an analysis to consider them to improve their growth. We applied the mixed research methodology based on the development process proposed by Hueso and Cascant.

Resolution scheme

1. Research problem

Is it relevant to consider Visual Identity and Branding strategies in business ideas and/or companies?

2. Methodology

It started from a methodology with a mixed approach, that is, we combined qualitative and quantitative techniques based on the methodology proposed by Andrés Hueso and Josep Cascant from the Development and Cooperation Group of the Universidad Valenciana from Spain (2012, p. 1) in a concept of methodology stating that "quantitative research is based on the use of statistical techniques to know certain aspects of interest". Hueso and Cascant propose a graph with development points to specify a mixed investigation from a realistic and specific epistemological perspective. From this, it was possible to contrast the relevant Visual Identity and Branding approaches within business ideas. The points applied and analyzed are as follows:

- **Problem.** The main problem that was detected and led to the emergence was to carry out an analysis and identify in depth the reasons for the lack of interest on the part of entrepreneurs in the creation and implementation of Visual Identity and Branding in the development of their new business ideas and even in already active businesses, questioning the lack thereof and bringing with it problems in the medium and long term in the results of perception and positioning within the market.
- **Design.** At this point, the main question of the analysis was designed, which is summarized in the following question: What are the most relevant aspects of Visual Identity and Branding in business ideas? Responding to the research subtopics.
- **Information collection.** "It is estimated that in Mexico there are a total of 4 million 169 thousand 677 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MIPyMES), classified in the sectors of manufacturing, commerce and private non-financial services" (INEGI, 2020). In Mexico, the backbone of the economy is found in these companies. According to Forbes (2021) data, there are about 4.2 million MSMEs, which contribute around 52.00% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generate 70% of formal employment in society.
- For his part, Schüler (2020, p. 9), based on their analyses carried out by the company Ana Cuoto Branding, states: "Globalization has increased competition, and today, demonstrating a brand differential becomes necessary, as well as having an objective that goes beyond positioning."
- The company Ana Couto Branding, conducted research (available in Portuguese) with customers and discovered that when a brand manages to connect with its customers through its purpose truly, price perception can change: 67.00% of people said they were

very willing to buy a product from a brand that is connected to their purpose and that is why they would pay a higher price for their products (Schüler, 2020, p. 10).

- Analysis. In the data analysis, it was deemed important to make clear the data above and percentages, in addition to the total number of companies existing specifically in Mexico, since these companies underwent a business idea and therefore designed a development process of a business plan in which the creation of a Visual Identity and Branding strategy should have been included.
- Interpretation. The main variant for creating a new business was defined in this phase. As a result, the entrepreneur was deemed the most important element given that, as it is logical in the research for creating a new company, a business idea is needed, and these ideas come from “entrepreneurs”. For this reason, the entrepreneurial values of Steve Jobs were analyzed, being one of the most important entrepreneurs of modern times, according to Ryan Himmel.
- Dissemination. Regarding the dissemination of information, that is, the extension of data within the business world, it was concluded that, as in the previous recommendation, according to what was learned about the values applied by one of the most important entrepreneurs, it is recommended for an entrepreneur about to launch his business idea or in businesses that have already been launched and where the lack of such values is detected.

3. Writing Plan

3.1 Visual Identity

“Visual Identity is a set of graphic elements that align with the message that a brand communicates and ensures that its image is coherent and consistent” (Miller, 2019). Visual Identity considers the communication of a brand's concept as its main objective. Pintado & Sánchez (2013), regarding a contribution to the definition of the term, state that:

Visual Identity is the symbolic translation of an organisation's identity, embodied in a system made up of a series of rules for its correct application in different situations. Likewise, the organisation presents two preferential options for identity: unique or diverse. Each is based on creating an identity from the entity or the product they propose, ending with the visualization and execution strategy (p. 211).

About the above, Díaz (2018) mentions:

Visual Identity comprises graphic elements that seek to achieve a purpose within Branding jointly. Every company is like a person, and every brand becomes its face, suit and way of presenting itself and interacting with customers. However, large firms know very well how important a good Visual Identity is for a company if it wants to convey its essence through a strong, authentic and corporate image; giving the company personality and differentiating it from its competitors are the three main objectives and functions of the vertebral axes of the term (p. 7).

As it is based, the main objectives of Visual Identity are intended to create internal positive benefits in a company. However, this term is developed within the context of corporate identity. Anagrama Comunicación & Marketing (2017) expresses:

Visual Identity is an essential element for any company. It is the first contact that a potential client has with a company or business. Thanks to Branding, companies position themselves in a certain way in the minds of consumers and manage to differentiate themselves from others. For an identity to work efficiently, a series of factors must be taken into account, such as coherence; a brand's visual identity must represent the company's values, mission and target. Likewise, being unique since corporate identity helps brands differentiate themselves from their competition. The best timeless visual identities are the ones that last the longest over time without being modified. For this reason, we must avoid fads and stick to the essential characteristics of the company in the conceptualization and design process. Factors that intervene when implementing and creating a Visual Identity will enable its good development.

According to Avance Comunicación (2019), in the process of creating a Visual Identity, different stages are derived:

- First, the briefing is introduced in the initial phase; at this point, the idea is to establish some basic guidelines to direct the image creation process well. In addition, the references of the sector that study the competition give an approximate idea of the sector in which they will work.
- The second stage is called the creative phase. The composition, colour, and shape are estimated based on the preliminary sketches at the moment of creating the corporate identity based on the briefing and the competition study. All the proposals are considered in selecting ideas, and those that do not comply with the values pursued are discarded. The different selected graphic solutions are presented, and the options are evaluated.
- In the final phase, a book of Branding applications and regulations is created, intended to define the bases and communication norms of the company.

The mentioned phases are within the process of creating a Visual Identity. However, it is important to clarify that the follow-up points may vary according to the work style of each graphic designer. In regards to the implementation of design and Visual Identity, Van de Weerd (2015) comments:

Design is essential in developing the visual strategy, which is created to convey to the consumers the philosophy of the startup, company and corporation. It helps position the business in the market, defining how the company is seen and understood from the outside and playing a fundamental role in how consumers remember a company (p. 2).

3.2 Branding

In regards to Branding, Endor (2020) says:

Branding represents an exhaustive work by companies. It is a dynamic process of generating strategies that help sell the company's products more effectively. Said process is a collaborative task for the marketing department. However, it involves the entire organization since any point of contact between the client and the term represents a possibility of branding and improving the image within the market (p. 11).

According to the author, the process above can be made by referring to the strategic construction and administration of encompassed links, including consumption, satisfaction and benefits provided to the market. Gili (2009), in response to questions about the term, states:

Branding systematically matches a purposefully created symbolic identity with key concepts to raise expectations and satisfy them. It may involve identifying or defining these concepts; it almost always involves the creative development of an identity (p. 248).

Martínez (2013) says:

Branding is a complex marketing activity or exercise; it is a philosophy that needs to be integrated at all levels of business activity. Branding is a brand-building process that requires being present at all contact points in the company and its distribution chain (p. 4).

Branding is defined as a foundation for a company's management because it allows the fulfilment of the objectives in the brand/client relationship. Rueda (2021) states that:

The difference between having a well-defined and coherent Branding and not having it is having a brand with a long useful life, capable of being recognized by your customers and allowing you to meet a series of commercial objectives for your business (p. 25).

In addition, this will allow you to create content knowing what to communicate, in what form and how to take care of the brand over time. Regarding the subject, Montgomery (2020) establishes:

The objectives are variable and are adjusted according to the needs of the company or business, so before establishing any objective, an analysis of the current situation must be carried out and based on this, some of the main objectives of Branding can be established: Achieve positioning, generate connections and experiences, develop loyalty, as well as humanize the brand. The main objective of Branding can be boiled down to positioning itself in the minds of consumers (p. 5).

As mentioned, the objectives of Branding are intended to positively benefit a company or business through compliance with the elements that are involved in its development. Valencia (2020) says that:

Companies continually generate Branding actions because every interaction with the market is commercial Branding. Defining a plan will give the company a map of the business strategy and the actions to be carried out. To do this, we can develop a corporate identity manual that brings together everything related to a brand, from the values they seek to associate with the company to the tone and design of the messages (p 1).

It is visible that the creation of commercial Branding involves important stages. Therefore, it is necessary to make the meaning of said concept clear. On neglecting the determining factors of identity and communication of corporate brands, Chaves (2019) comments:

The strategic management of Branding is the professional field in which the myths and superstitions born within creativity are inevitably dissolved. The effective operating parameters in identification appear clearly, that is, the effective functional dimensions, not the theoretical or fictional signs (p. 6).

Commercial Branding is about building a brand that collects and conveys all its information, from its products, values and beliefs, in a clear and accurate concept. It is considered that it should be able to stand out among other companies that offer the same thing and do it in an easily recognizable way so that when a person thinks of a product or service, the first thing that comes to mind is the brand (Pérez, 2020). According to the contributions of each author, commercial Branding can be pointed out as the set of key aspects within the company that facilitate its differentiation within a specific item.

In an environment of high competition, where the consumer has a wide range of information and choices, products tend to be perceived as commodities; therefore, companies need to generate a differential value that will translate into relevant Branding for their segments in commerce. In a sector saturated with similar products, Branding makes a real difference. Caro (2016) says:

Through commercial Branding and the value of brands, the company obtains clear benefits, including differentiating its products from competitors and obtaining trust, reputation and values that are the basis of long-term relationships with clients. All this generates repurchase and recommendation: keys to the wealth of a brand (p. 7).

It is visible that commercial Branding fulfils an important role within a company or business.

3.3 Methodologies implemented from the business idea

Arreguin (2019), in the company creation, it is relevant to mention where it was born and the process and methodologies that arose from the business idea. It arises in San Francisco, a city oriented to the future, always looking at opportunities and thanks to an unmet need in 2007 due to the saturated hotel offer caused by the International Design Congress. Chesky & Gebbia began by renting mattresses for those who needed to book a hotel. They shared an idea with several people who thought it was ridiculous, as usually happens with those who do not understand or are unable to grasp the concept. This comment would begin a long road of painful rejections and ridicule.

It marked the beginning of Airbnb, the company Chesky now runs, a company currently valued at \$30 billion in the private market, with 140 million “guest arrivals” (company term for registering guests). Travellers who book on its platform) and an inventory of 3 million accommodations. In the methods, technology is considered by occupying sociology and global culture to consolidate a world-class company, which is a benchmark for this century and continues to evolve in its market. Today, after 12 years, the team of more than 2,500 people work under the highest standards to remain at the forefront, with a diversity in the accommodation market that goes from the most modest houses to the most opulent castles. They are selling the experience of living as a local while being a tourist. The most consistent observation of those who know Chesky is that he possesses an extreme level of curiosity, described as an obsession with constantly absorbing new information.

3.4 Visual Identity Strategies

The company's Visual Identity has gone through different stages, although always with changes that comply with the guidelines. From its inception, the identity suffered from a certain amateurism; as Andrew Schapiro, Airbnb's director of design, explains, the logo "was created without a real understanding of what Airbnb really was" (Faura, 2014) (figure 7). In Airbnb's Visual Identity, throughout the company's history, we can see that there is only one redesign, carried out in 2014 when the original blue logo designed in 2008 was changed to a completely new graphic style.

Figure 7. Airbnb graphic branding redesign

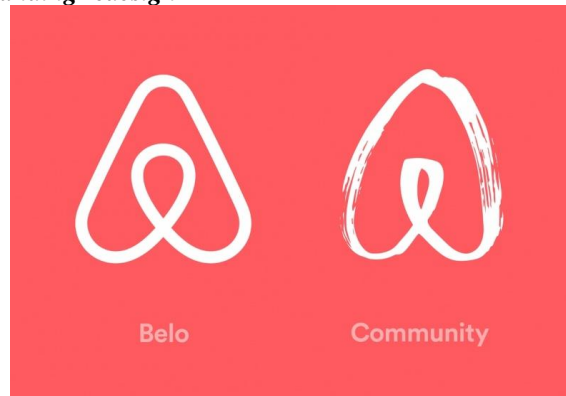


Source: taken from www.google.com

3.5 Branding Strategies

In his research on the renewal of the Airbnb brand, Faura (2014) reports that the company's directors decided to hire the London agency DesignStudio to help redefine Airbnb Branding and create a new Visual Identity that will last over time. The main objective set for the development of the redesign was to completely transform the identity to project the new situation of the company, increasingly global and in permanent expansion (figure 8).

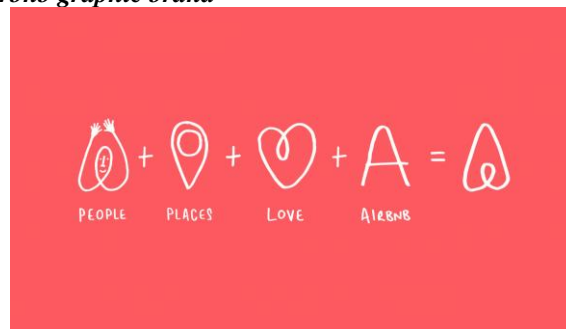
Figure 8. Airbnb graphic branding redesign



Source: taken from www.google.com

From the visible symbolic meanings, the creators (Design Studio) expect the connotations to transcend until they become a sign adopted and shared as a philosophical representation (figure 9). Two brand versions were created, which are known as Beló and Community:

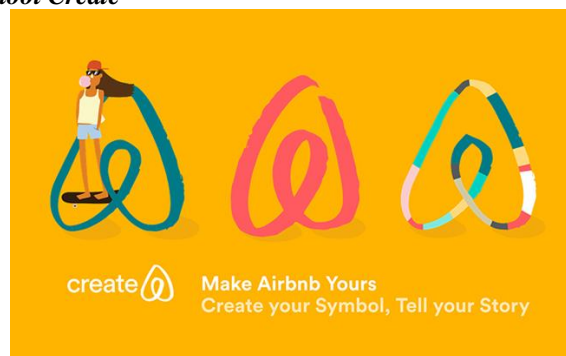
Figure 9. Versions of the Airbnb graphic brand



Source: taken from www.google.com

The Bélo version is aimed at official communications, and the version is called Community, in which users can share and customize. The brand has also launched an interactive tool, Create, to create your symbol version. (See figure 10). As it is visible, the dynamic used by the Create version is an advertising strategy to create experiences and bonds with users.

Figure 10. Examples of the tool Create



Source: taken from www.google.com

3.6 Advertising Strategies

Piñeiro (2019), in his analysis of the Airbnb success story, comments:

One of the things that most represents the company is the constant publicity of its digital content, a fact to which it contributes with advertisements published in different social media. Such is the case of the contract established with “Google”, a company that agreed to place advertisements graphically in the searches carried out by its users. However, these ads are displayed on Google and on different open pages linked to said service, increasing its demand and popularity globally (p. 5).

As the author comments, these company strategies have increased its recognition within the market over the years.

3.7 Market positioning

In regards to the positioning within the analysis of the Airbnb business model, Maldonado (2018) comments:

While hotel chains follow a pattern corresponding to the traditional hotel model, Airbnb follows a multi-client/multi-market business model. In other words, for Airbnb, the tenant (client) is just as important as the host (accommodation). Therefore, it is important to start with the analysis by segments. Airbnb exists in over 34,000 cities and 190 countries, so the offer is infinitely wider than any international hotel chain. In market segments, it is considered that the most innovative one is the ability to offer accommodation related to any interest. The host can be anyone, regardless of their profession or job, which means they can reach any customer profile, offering the service. Hotel chains remain in a rather geographic, demographic and/or socioeconomic segmentation, while Airbnb allows segmenting by psychographic and behavioural criteria, making it more sophisticated (p. 3).

As observed in the figures analyzed, the company has a high level of recognition in the market, leading Airbnb to its geographical, social and economic positioning.

3.8 Brand Perception

Airbnb is one of the cases of an innovative service platform that emerged within the shared economy. Its business model focuses on accommodating travellers and tourists (Guttentag, 2013). Airbnb is associated with innovative brands that convey novelty, such as startups and sharing economy platforms. It is a dimension related to symbolic and experiential benefits. They help consumers build or express their identity; for example, they may be helping people express their identity through their accommodation. It is a brand that generates outstanding experiences and is used on special occasions or events that stimulate social situations (Maehle, Otnes & Supphellen, 2011). According to the authors, the Airbnb brand has a successful business model and achieved its Branding objectives, being a company positioned and perceived as one of the most innovative brands in the hotel and lodging industry.

4. Research results

In developing a Visual Identity and Branding, relevant data was gathered to support the development of a business idea. Said authors with experience on the matter substantiated information. According to the analysis carried out to obtain information about the strategies applied by international brands previously mentioned, Airbnb and Apple are the most relevant, the latter founded by the businessman Steve Jobs. Based on the Visual Identity and Branding strategies of the Airbnb company, it was speculated that the implementation of the strategies of the terms leads to a successful business model for the future and growth of the company. On the other hand, Jaén (2019) argues that:

Branding is building a brand image that considers who we are, what we do and how we do it. I have started with "what we are" because branding is fundamentally a process of building bonds of trust between us and our target audiences (potential customers, internal audiences, prescribers...). The importance of the brand and branding in business management is huge (p. 28).

However, it is important to mention that graphic design experts must carry out the elaboration of a good strategic Branding plan that includes adequate development for the Visual and corporate Identity of a company. According to the characteristics of the entrepreneur Steve Jobs, we should not only consider the organizational or graphic part of a company or business idea. The entrepreneur must consider the values that support the company since they are relevant to the perception of a brand.

The brand is the element that generates this emotional bond. It is not the product or the company; it is the brand that represents the user experience with the product and the company. The importance of the brand is in its ability to evoke emotions and be remembered (Jaén, 2019). Therefore, based on the analysis, implementing a Visual Identity and Branding in a company or MIPyMES (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises), regardless of the scope, was relevant because these terms drive the success of a company's business model (figure 12).

Finally, all the elements that make up the strategies and creation of a Visual Identity and Branding are the joint result of its implementation: the key aspects and factors determined in the development process regarding the results obtained in the methodology above, proposed by Hueso and Cascant (2012). A series of applied phases result (a. Problem, b. Design, c. Information gathering, d. Analysis, e. Interpretation, f. Dissemination) to collect functional data and be of great help to persons of interest and/or readers, in addition to analysis with information based on authors, as well as showing case examples of entrepreneurs and companies from the real world of business.

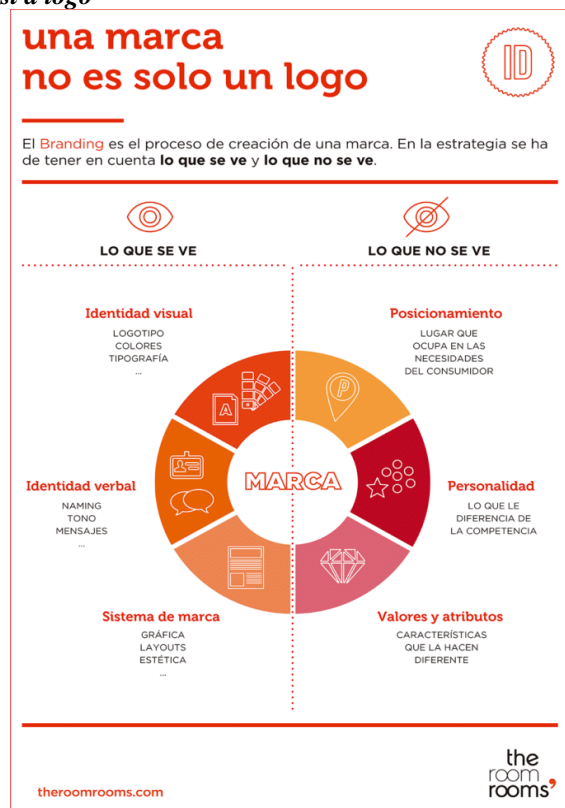
Conclusions

Any business idea or company that wishes to position itself within the market through its identity that is distinguished from the competition must create a Visual Identity. As mentioned above, creating a term strategy consists of a process formed by a set of aspects. It is important to mention that a brand's image is relevant to identifying a company, given that the design, colours, and elements state what the company wants to convey and how it wants to be perceived by the public.

A good Visual Identity and Branding strategy will lead the company to project a solid and representative image, maintaining congruence between design and product. Likewise, Branding turns out to be an essential practice for companies because the construction of the brand is defined in its process, including graphic and communication processes; all the elements that make it up add susceptible and distinctive attributes, which enables a brand to be attractive in order to persuade the minds of consumers.

Branding constitutes differentiation as an intangible part of a company, giving value to the brand, credibility and uniqueness. The brand goes beyond just considering the graphic design, creating an emotional bond with the product/customer to lead the company to a successful positioning. Future experiences will be created, positively impacting the company's perception. Differentiation and having a defined image are determining factors for a business idea's growth or a company's life. For this reason, it is relevant to consider implementing a Visual Identity and Branding strategy.

Figure 12. *A brand is not just a logo*



Source: taken from www.google.com

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