



Measuring the Impact of Successful Branding

How can a Company Facilitate a
Successful Rebrand?

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Contents

List of Illustrations.....	i
List of Tables	ii
Abstract.....	1
Introduction	2
Literature Review.....	3
Methodologies.....	6
Discussion.....	7
Conclusion.....	9
Reference List.....	10
Bibliography	11

List of Illustrations

Image No.	Title of Image	Source	Page No.
Image 1	Dunkin' Rebrand	(Online) Hardy, 2022	Page 4
Image 2	Petco Rebrand	(Online) Hardy, 2022	Page 4
Image 3	Twitter Rebrand	(Online) Spangler, 2023	Page 5
Image 4	RNIB Rebrand	(Online) Anon, 2018	Page 7
Image 5	BBC iPlayer Logo	(Online) BBC, 2022	Page 8

List of Tables

Figure No.	Title of Figure	Source	Page No.
Figure 1	User Opinion of Twitter Rebrand	(Online) Whiteside, 2023	Page 5
Figure 2	User Loyalty to X	(Online) Whiteside, 2023	Page 5
Figure 3	Gantt Chart of Research	Author's Own	Page 6

Abstract

This paper highlights the steps a business can go through in order to best succeed when rebranding. By building a strong brand, businesses are best able to ensure the success of their company and increase profits as well as public image and user loyalty. By analysing branding literature and reviewing examples of successful and unsuccessful rebrands in the eyes of the media, we are able to evaluate the best steps to take when a company is having a rebrand, as well as the actions that should be avoided. The research revealed that established brands can be successfully reimagined, if done correctly, however, this risks completely removing a consumer's association to a brand, along with their brand loyalty, therefore all these aspects should not be changed at once. This research reaches several important conclusions, not only can it be used by companies who want to undergo successful rebrands in future, but it can also be used immediately to experiment with how the charity RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind people) could potentially rebrand if they decided to, to gain more recognition and brand loyalty, as well as creating a welcoming atmosphere.

Introduction

Many people may think that branding is not important as it only serves to deliver consistency to a more ever-present deliverable or service, similar to how a gift may be wrapped in wrapping paper. Contrary to popular belief, the language of branding can lead to a significant proportion of a company's success, not only through the consumers' view, but also through "turning employees into big believers and supporters of their own brand" (Davis, 2010). It feeds into the human psychology of association and can serve to deliver a message that tells a story of what the company is about (Marq, 2022). Successful branding comes with little recognition, yet unsuccessful branding can be very noticeable and damaging to a company's image, depending on its place in the media this typically leads to public outcry. Simply put, good design is unnoticeable, but bad design can lead to dire consequences.

A brand is an identity, it serves to create association with the brain to a certain mood or need. This can be communicated through "name, letters, numbers, a symbol, a signature, a shape, a slogan, a colour, a particular typeface" (Clifton et al., 2009). With a successful brand identity, the brain may begin to associate aspects of the brand with the company without seeing the whole thing, but what happens if your branding is unsuccessful? Perhaps the logo does not match the company identity, or the colours do not evoke the right feelings that a consumer would want to feel about the company, or even the designs are dated and no longer trendy. It is at this point that a company may begin to show interest in a rebrand, however, this decision comes at a risk. As the brand is meant to associate a consumer with the company, changing this association then risks the company losing this user's association to the brand, and thus no longer having a psychological connection with it. Historically many people are unhappy with rebrands and though typically these outcries die down after a while, it is left to wonder, do some of these rebrands leave negative marks on companies? What can be done to prevent this?

As a rebrand is of great risk to a company's identity this paper will cover several key objectives to better outline the research. As well as this it will uncover vital information to present the answer to our aim: 'how a company can facilitate a successful rebrand'. Firstly, the objective of the research is to first evaluate the importance of branding to a company, and its influence on a company's success, as this will show why a company may need to rebrand if their current branding is unsuccessful. Secondly, our objective is to find examples of successful and unsuccessful company rebrands, by doing this we can better understand what actions a company can take to make a rebrand successful, along with which actions should be avoided. The final research objective is to define what determines the success of a rebrand and whether it is determined by public image, change in sales, or awareness of the company, as it is important to outline the parameters of what we are defining as successful within a rebrand.

By the end of the essay this research will be used to advise a potential rebrand for the charity RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind people). Currently, the charity is struggling with disassociation, many believe that they only support those who are completely blind whereas instead they seek to support anyone with vision problems. Additionally, I believe there to be some issues with the brand in terms of recognition, despite its place among the top charities in the UK. Though it may not need success in terms of financial gain, their brand is presently not very welcoming or comforting, especially for those seeking solace after receiving an unfortunate diagnosis.

Literature Review

This literature review will evaluate various sources on positive and negative branding decisions, giving us a better understanding into how a company can deliver a successful rebrand. The research begins by looking at our first objective; to evaluate the importance of branding to a company and its influence on a company's success. The first source by Murphy (1998) explains the author's view on branding to be oftentimes "tackled haphazardly and, at times, illogically", however, the most important aspect to get right regarding branding is the personality of the brand. By having an unstable brand, the consumer is unable to associate key aspects of the brand, such as design and advertising, with the company itself, which makes the association with the establishment unstable. The author details the most important part of branding to be the personality of the brand, which is how consumers see the brand. A brand personality can be defined by a company by taking actions such as defining a brand voice, and doing specific actions as a company, like donating to charity or hosting events that align with the personality you want to give off as a brand. By highlighting the personality of a brand, this shows the importance of creating a successful personality that consumers may use to associate the brand and company with, which then serves to boost business with the target audience.

By looking at a blog post about the importance of brand consistency by Marq (2022) it can be determined the importance of brand consistency, and the influence of this on a company's success. The post highlights the importance of brand association and consistency to show the connection between a consumer seeing visuals and associating it to a brand identity. The post goes further to say that by having brand consistency, this creates brand loyalty with the consumer, meaning they are more likely to trust your brand and use it in the future. This brand loyalty then leads to recommendations, meaning that they will suggest the product to family and friends, as they have a lot of brand loyalty towards it. From a survey, they estimate that by having a consistent brand, companies were expected to see a ten to twenty percent rise in growth and profits. The post then cites a "trickle-down effect" that can serve to boost brand status and awareness, however having "inconsistent branding jeopardizes all that".

In a blog post, Chinery (2019) writes that a large part of branding and brand recognition revolves around colour. Not only by evoking feelings through use of colour by using colour theory, but also through association. The author writes that a large part of brand recognition is through the use of colour. By using specific shades consistently in conjunction with other colours, brands can be identified without any imagery or context. The blog indicates that "using a signature colour can cause an 80% increase in a consumer's recognition of your brand", even going as far as to show that successful brands, such as Google, have a ninety one percent success rate when consumers try and guess the brand from the colours. By using colours consistently and correctly, companies can evoke feelings within their consumer and create association using minimal effort and design to reinforce the link in the consumer's head.

The next aspect to review is the research investigating some examples of companies that performed successful rebrands, by doing this it can better outline what actions are best to perform when creating a rebrand, what things are best to change, and what aspects are best to leave as is. Hardy (2022) outlines some popular rebrands and what he believes they have done correctly. The first example Hardy gives is the American coffee company formerly known as 'Dunkin' Donuts'. After being a well-established business for sixty-nine years, they made the bold and risky choice to rename the brand. Although all they did was shorten the business's name to simply be 'Dunkin'', this is still a large change

to the brand identity. The first reason Hardy cites for their success is their acknowledgment of the popularity of their coffee over their donuts. Hardy writes that “Dropping the donuts also helped with their brand positioning, immediately taking away the question – “do they only sell donuts?”” so by changing their brand, it allows more opportunity to expand their business to other opportunities. The author also writes that the branding change was successful due to it remaining very consistent in other areas, such as keeping the same colour scheme and curvy typography. The author cites the success of this rebrand to be due to the simplicity of the change. Clifton (et al. 2009) writes that “The name is also the one element of the brand that should never change” which goes to show that this decision by Dunkin’ was a bold risk, but the success of their rebrand shows that by being careful not to change their name too much, they have kept their brand image.



Image 1: 'Dunkin' Rebrand'

Source: (Online) Hardy, 2022

Another branding change that Hardy (2022) cites to be a success is the rebrand of the American pet retailer 'Petco'. Petco decided to change their name and by doing so, felt the need to change their branding to match their new formal company name. Instead of being known as simply 'Petco' they are now referred to as 'Petco, The Health + Wellness Co', and with their name change, also comes a new corporate identity of formality. Whilst the previous logo design reflected the more fun element of the company, they have now opted for a simpler logo to reflect both modern times, and the more serious nature they want to exude from their brand. Interestingly, their new logo does not feature the new full name, and so the choice to rebrand after a name change was definitely a risk they chose to take to refresh their company brand. One of the key changes to their branding is the colour scheme, dramatically changing from a bright red and blue to a more muted dark blue to better reflect the importance of health within their brand by using colour theory. The author writes that “Their brand identity went through a complete overhaul, changing everything from the typography they use to their colour palette, packaging design, and even their brand mascot characters!” showing that a company can have success from a rebrand by changing many elements of it. As a tip regarding the success of this rebrand, the author suggests “Sometimes you have to do unpopular things” and goes on to say that many people did not like the rebrand, however this could just suggest a shift in the target audience.



Image 2: 'Petco Rebrand'

Source: (Online) Hardy, 2022

In contrast to looking at examples of successful rebrand, it is also important to look at examples of unsuccessful rebrands to understand what is important to avoid when having a rebrand. One large example of an unsuccessful rebrand that affected many millions of people when Elon Musk, after buying 'Twitter', rebranded it to 'X'. Though a rebrand does not change the experience a user may have on the app, it marked the moment Musk took over Twitter, which was widely seen as a negative

to the service. Part of the reason the Twitter rebrand to X is so substantial is that the impact Twitter had in people's vocabulary has now vanished. People would say 'Tweet' to mean posting on the app, and everyone understands what this means. By rebranding to X, and taking away the bird theming, Musk has taken away a uniqueness the app had to stand out with and has instead made it have the branding of any other app of modern times. Though many unsuccessful rebrands may be up for debate due to the nature of personal opinion, there are many facts to show that this rebranding decision was a large mistake. Opinion | Elon Musk's Twitter Rebranding and Other Updates (2023) wrote that "Musk's rebranding of Twitter has cost the company anywhere from \$4 billion to \$20 billion in brand value... Twitter is now valued at \$15 billion to \$20 billion, a drastic drop from the \$44 billion Mr. Musk paid to acquire it" which goes to show, from a financial standpoint, the decision was a huge mistake. It is not only important to look at finance, but also at the opinions of the user base, Whiteside (2023) shows in the table in figure 1, that it is of the user opinion that though the majority of people were indifferent to the change, there was still a large portion of people who had a dislike towards it. When totalled, 31% of people had a negative reaction to the change, and though 39% of people say they do not care, this does not consider the subconscious effect it has on the recognition of the brand. In terms of opinion, the least amount of people said they were excited about the change, at 10%, showing that overall users did not enjoy this change. It is important to note that a very small amount of people had not heard about the change, which goes to show that Musk succeeded in raising awareness about the new brand, however, as seen on figure 2, there are more people who have said they would use the app less, leading to a loss of users leading to a loss in profit. This totals a result that equals an unsuccessful rebrand.



Image 3: 'Twitter Rebrand'

Source: (Online) Spangler, 2023

The social media platform Twitter has changed to X, what do you think of the change?

	Total	Australia 🇦🇺	UK 🇬🇧	USA 🇺🇸
Positive	22%	20%	18%	25%
Negative	31%	32%	34%	30%
I didn't know about the change	8%	9%	5%	9%
I'm excited about the change	10%	9%	8%	12%
I like the change	12%	11%	10%	13%
I don't care/makes no difference to me	39%	40%	42%	37%
I dislike the change	20%	20%	25%	18%
I am unhappy about the change	11%	12%	10%	12%

Figure 1: 'User Opinion of Twitter rebrand'

Source: (Online) Whiteside, 2023

Will this affect your use of the social media platform?

	Total	Australia 🇦🇺	UK 🇬🇧	USA 🇺🇸
Yes, I will use it less	23%	27%	21%	22%
Yes, I will use it more	10%	8%	9%	13%
No, it will make no difference	66%	65%	70%	66%

Figure 2: 'User Loyalty to X'

Source: (Online) Whiteside, 2023

Methodologies

To research this topic, I considered it important to review both primary and secondary sources to best understand the media view of the issue, and other authors' views on it, as well as understanding the view on a person-by-person basis. However, I think it is best to delay the primary research study into the second half of this project in semester B for this research to be influenced by what I have learnt through my secondary research, as well as giving it more opportunity to influence my project through user opinion. When conducting my primary research, I will be using a survey to gain quantitative data as to how many people recognise brands before and after their rebrand, as well as evaluating how well established RNIB is as a brand for it to risk changing. Quantitative data is more useful when applying large numbers to a study. When doing secondary research, I made sure to use a variety of different source types, however I leaned heavily on more websites, blogs, and online sources to gain a better opinion of the media's view, as well as an educated view of a consumer, as opposed to an academic view who may be disjointed from the topic. This also meant the sources were more relevant and up to date of current topics, whereas the book sources were relied on for more establishing definitions that would not be out of date.

To help plan my research, I made a Gantt chart to best allot my time across the project. I left plenty of time to create an idea as this tends to be where I spend the most time in a project. One issue I did run into was it was a little difficult to try and write the abstract before anything else, however this was then alleviated by the compiling time I allotted myself. In future projects I will make sure to better understand which parts of an essay I am best at writing first, such as the literature review, or the methodologies chapter. One attribute of the Gantt chart that was useful was the large amount of time dedicated to finding and reviewing my research idea and question, as I ended up rethinking my topic quite a lot, and frequently found that the topic I had chosen was not the best, which left me a large amount of time to find this idea that I was both happy with, and that there was a large amount of research I could reference.

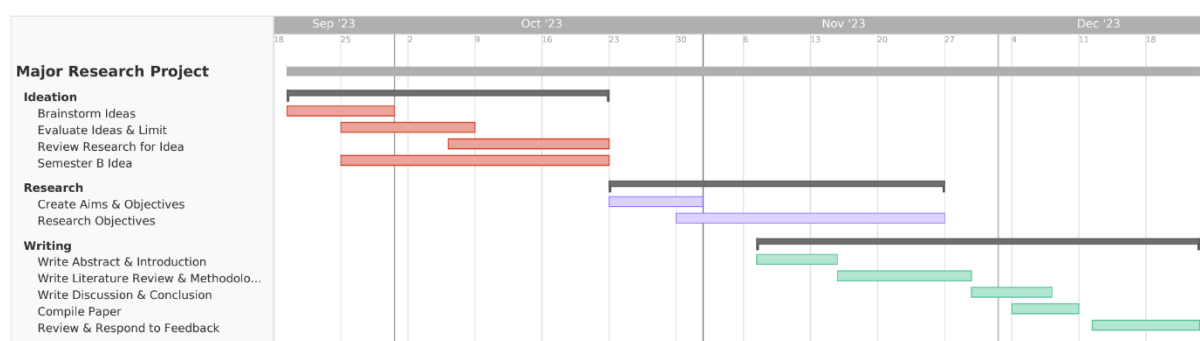


Figure 3: 'Gantt Chart of Research'

Source: Author's Own

Discussion

From researching, it is easy to see that branding is clearly important. This ranges from improving profits, user loyalty, and brand image, and so by having a good brand, this leads to easier success for a company, however, a poor brand can just as easily be the cause of a business's failure. So, if a company finds out their brand is not helping the business and popularity of their company, what is the best action they can take when creating a rebrand? Research of successful and unsuccessful rebrands suggest that it is important to maintain your unique status as a brand, and not to deviate too far from how the media views you. This can be seen, first, by looking at the Dunkin' Donuts rebrand. Though they started as a donut and coffee establishment, it was clear that people preferred their coffee, and by taking the 'Donuts' element away from their name, they were able to expand their pastry selection whilst still making it clear they were focusing on coffee by retaining the 'Dunkin'' in their name. In contrast, when Twitter changed its name to X, one of the reasons was to expand the use of the app to include banking among a variety of other activities, similar to Dunkin' wanting to serve a larger variety of pastries. However, a large part of the failure of the Twitter rebrand was due to no sense of familiarity. The branding, logo, style, and use of the App completely changed and by all intents and purposes this was now a completely different app, the only thing retained was the posting history and its users, some of which quickly fleeing the platform. Dunkin' performed well in this area by first keeping part of their name the same, assuring customers that they were still serving the beloved coffee and secondly by retaining all their other branding elements such as colour and style. When looking to rebrand a company, it is vital that this research of other rebrands is taken into consideration. In regards to rebranding the charity RNIB, it is important to take into consideration that some aspects of the brand must stay the same to best resonate with consumers and users.

When looking to rebrand RNIB, it is important to note the reasons for this change, the first being a difference in goals. In 2018, the company did go through a rebrand, following a change to be more welcoming to partially sighted people along with blind people as well as altering some elements to adapt to more modern branding appeal. Overall, for inclusivity, it is not that large of a change to simply alter a slogan.

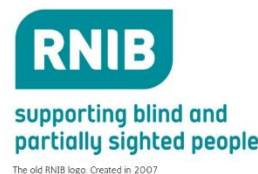


Image 4: 'RNIB Rebrand'



Source: (Online) Anon, 2018

How many slogans do you know for brands? And how much would you say it alters your view of that company? The influence is very little, considering that the name of the charity still features the word "blind" and not anything about partially sighted people. Whilst the new slogan is more inclusive, it just does not do a lot. In circumstance, if a person had recently been diagnosed with a condition that affected their sight, they may go to RNIB's website to seek help, however clarity is key when it comes to sensitive issues, and they may turn away when met with confusion. In terms of changing a branding message, this situation is similar to 'Petco' who dramatically changed their branding style, whilst keeping the same name. Whilst the situation is not exact, some elements can be pulled from this. Although RNIB have changed their colour scheme, their overall style has stayed largely the same in terms of a modern clean look, which is important for a sight loss charity.

When looking at how to best create a rebrand, it is important to identify the issues of the current one. It has already been mentioned that the name is not all-encompassing, but there are also other issues. One element to look at, as highlighted by the research of Chinery (2019) is the importance of the colours in the colour scheme and a large part of brand recognition revolves around colour. When comparing the colours of the new logo in image 4 and the logo in image 5, there is clearly a correlation

with the three colours used being pure black, pure white, and a bright pink of similar hue. Whilst it is not easy to come up with a completely original colour scheme, it does create brand confusion and can weaken the uniqueness and association with your brand.



Image 5: 'BBC iPlayer Logo'

Source: (Online) BBC, 2022

Another issue regarding the branding of RNIB is the focus of the blindness element. Other charities, such as 'Shelter' and 'Samaritans' choose to show the positive side of their work and how they help people, rather than focusing on the negative element, and when being diagnosed with a sight condition that may result in blindness, it's not nice to be reminded of that, as many people may be sensitive and scared of this outcome. By looking at the work of (Marq, 2022) we can identify this as an inconsistent brand. They want to show themselves helping people, but instead associate the brand with the potential negative sides of the charity. This lowers a person's connection with the identity of this charity as well as showing little brand loyalty, which may stop people from continually donating.

When looking for a way to alleviate the issues within this brand, it may be best to look at changing the name to best represent something more inclusive, but still keep the core ideas of the name in there, so it could still be associated with its old name, similar to both the situation with Dunkin' and Petco where Dunkin' kept the first portion of the name and Petco, whilst changing their full name, kept the same name in their new logo. Another issue to address would be within the association with the colour scheme, so alterations would need to be made to this. By changing such large elements to the brand such as this, it would be important to review and recreate large portions of the branding guidelines for the company, which will be integral to remain consistent due to the important nature of visual accessibility within the charity.

Conclusion

To draw the research to a close, it is important to reflect upon whether it has led to an answer to the research question. How can a company facilitate a successful rebrand? There are many answers, and a lot depends on many factors such as the already established popularity of the company, what is the need for a rebrand and what elements are they trying to change. One advisory piece that can be given to any company looking to begin a rebrand is to keep some aspect of your brand the same. The point of a brand is to create a consistent connection between visual and auditory stimulus and the brain thinking of that company, so by having a rebrand, that connection is broken. This rule was followed by Dunkin' by keeping the iconic and memorable part of their brand name, it was followed by Petco by keeping the same name altogether, however, when looking at the Twitter to X rebrand, no aspect remained the same, and so there was nothing familiar for users to attach to.

It is also important when rebranding for a company not to forget the core principles that are integral to a brand. There is no use in rebranding with the knowledge that the brand will not be successful. This means that the new rebrand will need to remain consistent when used, have an identifiable colour scheme with colours that evoke feelings of colour theory, and have a clear brand personality that they can assign other elements to. By using these elements, a company will be able to have a set of guidelines and remain consistent both tonally and in design to best connect with an audience and ensure consumer loyalty and continued service.

Along with other factors specific to the brand, this rule can also be followed when looking to rebrand the charity RNIB, and when going into semester B, it can be assured that the brand will remain familiar, which is especially important when considering a lot of the target audience for some of the content relies heavily on auditory stimulus.

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