

Successful Restaurant Branding

The 5 Things Every Restaurant
Owner Must Do To Bring In
The Perfect Customers
Without Spending More On
Advertising

Longitude^o



The Importance of Brand Strategy for Restaurants

Either you make the customer experience, or it gets made without you.

Decades ago branding was defined as a name, slogan, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these elements that distinguish one restaurant brand from another. From the public's perspective, the brand of a restaurant differentiated it from the competition. Today a brand is a bit more complex, and even more important in today's world of marketing. And branding is not just about getting your target market to select you over the competition.

We can all agree that restaurant branding matters. Everything communicates, whether by design or default. All the little experiences define the whole from every touch-point. Conceptualizing and realizing a top-tier dining experience requires more than putting together a tasty menu. You have to entice customers with a purpose and promise and to deliver on that promise. Wow, guests with your restaurant's particular panache.

Every executive and agency seems to throw around the phrase "restaurant brand" a lot and champion its importance. But when you ask them to define their restaurant brand – or even better, ask the entire executive team to define it independently and then compare their responses – it's alarming just how far the

stakeholders may be in their understanding of effective restaurant branding strategy and its application.

So what exactly is restaurant branding? Is it just the standard pretty logo and catchy jingle a traditional agency conjures up in their typical approach? Of course not. Great, powerful, and effective restaurant branding is all about marrying your marketing with your operations. The best restaurants don't simply copy trends or rely on tricky gimmicks. The best restaurant brands have a clear mission, purpose, and reason for being. These are based on research and innovation, operating on the belief that hospitality can help make the world a better place.

Your brand isn't your logo, it's your reputation. When you think of your brand in this way, it helps you to make a more human and authentic connection to your audience and customers. When you look at your brand as your reputation, you'll understand why it's important to bring alignment to your look, your message, and your actions. When these three things are in alignment, and functioning optimally, you will have a healthy reputation (brand).





**A first
impression will
make a lasting
impression.**

Get to Know Your Customers

Do you really know your customers?

A basic rule of marketing is that you start any branding, positioning, or marketing project with a single question.

Do I know my customers?

When thinking about how well you know your customers, it is not the idea of having data from their generic demographic snapshot, although that data will help. Think about the guest who loves your brand already.

Why did your restaurant strike passion in their choice? Why did they make the decision to eat at your restaurant? Would they visit again? If so, why? If not, why not? What are their hobbies and interests?

Ask them what the one thing is they enjoyed the most about their dining experience before they leave. These types of questions will help you better understand who your ideal customer is and what makes them tick.

The most effective and quickest way to sell more is to match your customers' needs and wants with what you offer. When it comes to

restaurants, this probably means your menu, service, location, interior design and so many other factors. All of these, and more, are what makes a restaurant truly unique.

Knowing your customer is a process that is not new to marketing nor the restaurant space.

Clearly understanding who your customers are, what they need, want, and like is critical to set your restaurant up for success. Take the time to develop customer profiles but go way beyond demographic information. Try to talk to them. Listen and document how they talk about your restaurant in their words. Repeat what you heard back to the customer and validate the message resonates. Try to get into the details of what they do professionally, what their hobbies and interests are, etc.

The more you know the stronger your customer profiles will be. This information results in a better alignment of your restaurant and what the customers are seeking when it comes to their buying decision for a meal.



Find Your Perfect Position

Discovering your unique position and compelling story

Positioning is vital to restaurants due to the competition being so fierce. There are likely many, many options to choose from when a customer is planning where to dine. What sets your restaurant apart? What makes yours the clear choice?

Without a clear positioning in the market, you won't have these answers. If you can't find a clear and compelling reason why someone should visit your restaurant, then it's very likely that customers will validate your findings.

A restaurant's position can be seen in two ways, the perspective of the restaurant's management and that of the customers. The restaurant's management needs to have a firm concept of the position set-forth. Its marketing and advertising efforts must clearly articulate not only what the restaurant offers but also how it's offerings are unique from the competition.


An example of a unique position of a restaurant that might come to mind could be the "blackout dining experience." There are restaurants where the entire dining experience is pitch black.

Obviously this is an extreme position to have as a restaurant, but how are you different? Being different is just as important and many times more important than being better.

To sum it up, if you need to have a truly unique position in your market. But not only that, you need to be able to back it up with the right actions as well.

If you can't find a clear and compelling reason why someone should visit your restaurant, then it's very likely that customers will validate your findings.



A photograph of a restaurant interior. In the foreground, a man in a grey t-shirt is seen from behind, holding a glass and working at a bar. In the background, several staff members are working in a kitchen area. A woman in a blue and white striped shirt is visible on the right side of the frame. The ceiling features a modern design with wooden slats and recessed lighting. A yellow circle highlights the text area.

**To keep a
customer
demands as
much skill as
to win one.**

Are You Surviving or Thriving?

The common approach or the better approach

Remember, your brand is how you're perceived in the marketplace. And whether you nurture it or not, you will have a brand.

Your brand is made up of the sum of your guest interactions. Contributors to your brand include how you treat your guests, the environmental design, your logo and signage, your social media presence, and more.

The average person is exposed to 6,000 advertisements each day. Your brand has to rise above the noise and make an emotional connection with the consumer.

If you have a weak brand, you will experience some or all of these issues:

- **Your customers aren't telling their friends about you.**
- **Your messaging is all over the place and you keep trying things hoping something will stick.**
- **Your advertising efforts fall flat and don't get the results you need.**
- **You are not really known in the community for anything.**
- **You never know if you're going to have a good week or a bad week.**
- **You can't clearly articulate why you're better than the competition.**

And, if the day-to-day struggle doesn't sound bad enough, think about the larger implications of having a weak brand.

Do you want to be able to trust that your employees would run the restaurant operations correctly while you're gone? Employees don't take pride and ownership in working for a weak brand.

Do you want to feel good about your brand knowing that you're making your competitors jealous? If you have a weak brand, this isn't happening.

Weak brands are diluted at best, and repulsive at worst. But don't worry, there is a better way.

There are two components that make all of the difference. Establishing a Brand Strategy and Brand Identity.

Build the right strategy at the core of your business, then all of your business efforts are rooted in a cohesive, strategic way.

Becoming a strong brand takes the guess-work out of your marketing efforts and business decisions. You will experience clarity and confidence.

Use Design as a Tool to Communicate Your Strategy

Design without Strategy is Just Decoration

Without a strategy, design is merely decoration. A new logo will not change your brand. Wait, so design isn't important? That's not true either.

Design is how you can differentiate yourself. Design is how you can communicate your value.

Design is the easiest way to communicate that you are committed to quality and somewhere people can trust. Design is how you become recognizable and memorable. Design is how you can capture the interest of your target audience.

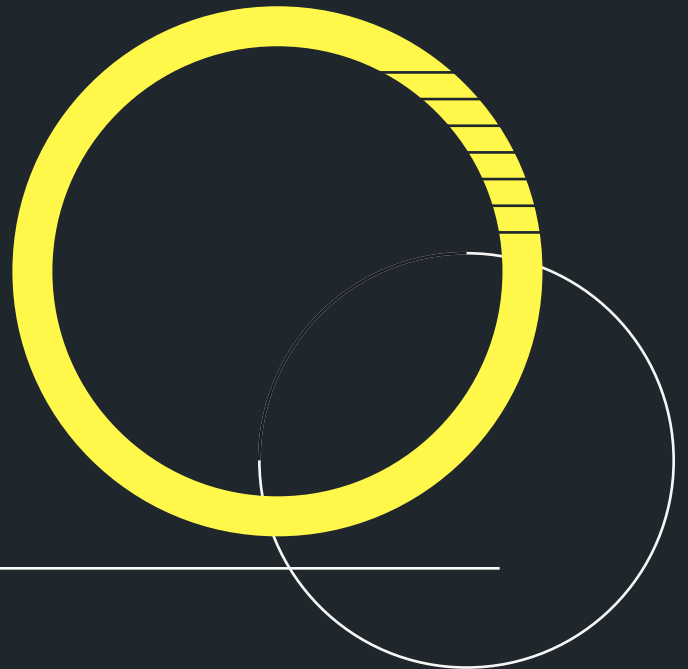
There are so many subtle cues in design that can communicate on a subconscious, emotional level. We live in a visual culture. People scroll social media for hours each day. Much of our perceptions are based on how things appear.

Good design plays a vital role in an elite brand.

Design is a tool that should communicate:

- What values are important to you as a brand.
- What type of experience your customer should expect.
- Why you're different than the competition.
- That you care about quality.
- That you care about the customer's needs.

Design isn't a necessary evil and it shouldn't be mere decoration. If done strategically, it will be a tool to carry out business objectives and increase your bottom line.



BrandGPS™

by Longitude°

Experts in brand strategy and identity. Specializing in hospitality.

As your partner, Longitude° understands that you're pouring your life into your work. You need the right look and a clear message to make a great first impression, attract more customers, and beat your competition.

This is why we created BrandGPS™ – a proven process to help you grow your business and build the reputation you want.

For questions reach out to:
jeremy@longitudebranding.com

