

Managing multiple brands



By [Anton Ressel](#)

3 Dec 2013

For many of us, nurturing and growing just one brand is enough to keep us busy 24/7, especially when thrown into the pot of operational issues, orders, financial recordkeeping, marketing, sales etc. Imagine that you had two, three, five or even ten brands to nurture and market - you may start to feel like the Old Woman who Lived in the Shoe...



Shoppers at Canal Walk Shopping Centre in Century City, Cape Town, South Africa. Ensuring your brands are top of mind with these shoppers comes down to one consistent and powerful message from the Top, and target-market appropriate messages for the sub brands/products themselves. (Image: Henry Trotter, 2006, via Wikimedia Commons)

Fortunately, there are a few tried and tested strategies to make managing multiple brands a lot less challenging. In addition, it is a space that allows for quite a bit of creativity and out of the box thinking and that is always great, especially for those of you who have that Right Brain way of thinking.

What are multiple brands?

To start, let's assess what we are talking about when we speak of multiple brands, sub-brands and the like. Think of a company like Reckitt Benckiser (RB). You may or may not have heard of them, they are the 'parent company' of such famous brands as Vanish detergent, Nurofen pain pills, Clearasil, Strepsils and Dettol, amongst many others. Their umbrella brand (namely Reckitt Benckiser itself) is marketed under the slogan 'Health. Hygiene. Home.', while their sub-brands are marketed in their own individual ways depending on a number of factors, such as target market, desired brand position, pricing strategy and so on. I would imagine that their total marketing budget for the year is more than the GDP of many countries, and over and above that, consider for a moment the resources and focus needed to market vastly different products globally to completely different target markets, such as pain tablets versus French mustard...

Clearly RB is an extreme case. However, in your own reality you may be faced with the challenge of having to market several very different products or services under an 'umbrella' or parent brand, so how do you best go about it to ensure no brand dilution or worse, the creation of confusion in the marketplace. Let's explore some multiple branding dos and don'ts:

Look after the Mother Ship

It all starts with the core brand in my eyes. This is where you build credibility as an honest/trustworthy/funky/hip/cutting edge/innovative/conservative/progressive or whatever other kind of business you want to be portrayed as. Look at financially focused businesses such as Old Mutual or Allan Gray. Their core focus is always on establishing a desired brand position in the eyes of their overall target market - whether it be trustworthy, reliable, progressive or whatever. Below that come the various products and services that they offer, and these are marketed in ways appropriate to the audience (consider the different approach between selling a student loan product versus a Retirement Annuity as but one example).

So, the lesson is - one consistent and powerful message from the Top, and target-market appropriate messages for the sub brands/products themselves.

Be consistent

A second important lesson is to remain consistent in your messaging as much as is feasibly possible. We instantly recognise a Nando's advert, no matter what the product being promoted, because they have an overall brand style and approach and stick to this, whether they happen to be selling a new healthy meal or a super-hot version of one of their existing products.

In my own experience with a craft and design business I started with two other partners, namely Streetwires, we developed several range categories into which our different products were categorised, such as the Street, Collection and Signature Series ranges. The branding and visual identity of each product category was slightly different but still instantly recognisable as Streetwires. For example, the Street range was branded brightly (the packaging was loud and fun and in your face), while the Collection range was done in a much more refined manner with black, silver and white being the predominant colours used on the packaging. The actual logo never changed, however, and that is where the consistency comes in. In this way, we were able to market a R15 beaded keyring to one demographic, and a R5,000 sculpture to another without creating confusion or weakening the brand position of either of the products or product ranges.

Cross-pollinate

A final opportunity that multiple brands offer is the chance to cross-pollinate. This means helping boost the profile of one brand while promoting another, either through co-branding (as an example, every single RB product has the parent company logo on it somewhere) or through other means of association. Let's imagine you are a product designer and are launching a new range of textile products under the brand name Township Textiles. It would be a perfect opportunity to also promote your own design skills, by co-branding the textile products with 'Designed by Joe Bloggs' or whatever your design consultancy is called, and having appropriate marketing materials for both at any launches etc. In this way, you add credibility to both and detract from neither.

A last word on multiple brands, they make the most sense when your core brand is well established and ideally has some brand equity. If Nando's decided to open a bunch of pizza outlets under a different brand we would probably be quite receptive, or at least interested, since the core brand is so trusted and respected. Sometimes, staying focused on building your core brand and simply having product categories but no sub-brands is the right approach, it all depends on how much time, money and energy you have.

ABOUT ANTON RESSEL

Anton Ressel is an experienced business development consultant, mentor and SME specialist. He is the Senior consultant at ED and CSI specialist agency Fetola (www.fetola.co.za), a winning mentor on the SAB Kickstart Entrepreneur Competition, and a published author across multiple publications. His passion is helping small businesses become big ones. Follow @antonres on Twitter.
■ Learn to say 'No' - 9 Feb 2015
■ Service is still the secret... - 24 Jun 2014

- The Great Online Marketing Lottery - 14 Jan 2014
- Managing multiple brands - 3 Dec 2013
- Brand Madiba and the lessons you can apply in your business - 22 Aug 2013

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>