

The story of 'brands'

brand¹ ~n [C] 3 a mark made or burned on a farm animal's skin that shows who it belongs to

brand² ~v [T] 2 to burn a mark onto something, especially a farm animal, in order to show who it belongs to **brand sth with sth** *Each cow was branded with the ranch's logo.*

branding iron ~n [C] a piece of metal that is heated and used for burning marks on cattle or sheep to show who they belong to

Read the extracts above from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English before you start reading the story of branding.

brands, shepherds and cowboys

Before farm animals were kept in enclosed fields, they were allowed to feed on open, common land. The group (or *herd*) of animals were supervised by a person (often helped by a specially trained dog [*see sheep dog*]) who kept the herd together and drove the animals towards areas where they could find fresh grass. Shepherds were 'sheep herds'. Cowboys were 'cattle drovers'.

Shepherds, cowboys and goatherds not only have to protect their animals from predatory animals such as wolves, they also need to protect the animals from people who wanted to steal them. But, if an animal was stolen, could the shepherd, cowboy or goatherd prove that the animal belonged to them? Farmers used a hot branding iron to mark or **brand** their animals.

branding criminals

In many societies around the world, particularly nomadic or travelling societies, when criminals had been identified, they would be **branded** in order to show that they were thieves and should not be trusted. If the society was not settled in one place, they could not put criminals into prisons. Branding was a logical way in which to punish the criminals and at the same time to protect the society.

tribal branding

Branding has also been used by tribes or family groups to identify all the members of that group. Branding was common in Africa and in many other parts of the world. In this case, although branding was very painful, it was not being used as punishment but to protect the society or group.

Branding in commerce

Caveat emptor

In British Common Law, one of the basic principles is expressed in the Latin phrase '*caveat emptor*' – **let the buyer beware**. What this doctrine means is that, in any commercial situation, it is the responsibility of the *buyer* (not the seller) to make sure that the thing they are buying is of good quality and is working properly. The seller is not obliged to refund the price paid, or replace the product if the buyer discovers that the product is faulty.

Over many centuries, this basic principle has been limited by other laws. Today, if you try to sell a product for doing a particular job, the law suggests that there is *an implied warranty* that the product is 'fit for purpose'.

Hallmarks and quality symbols

In 1300 King Edward I of England ordered that all items made of gold or silver, should be tested by the Goldsmith's Guild of London. The Goldsmith's Guild stamped a mark (a hallmark) on the item which proved that it was made of real gold, or real silver. Later, extra marks which showed the manufacturer, the date and city of testing and the purity of the gold or silver were added. These were the first 'official' quality symbols which were stamped on to products.

soap – one of the first 'branded' products

It is not easy to make soap. Soap manufacturers boiled oils and fats from animals and vegetables. They combined them with other chemicals to make soap. Soap from a good manufacturer is perfectly safe, but, in the past, many soaps were dangerous and damaged the skin or the clothes that were being washed.

When people lived in small family or village groups, they would usually buy products from people they knew and trusted. Later, people moved from the country to larger cities, where they could not possibly know all of the people in that city. They started to buy from shops rather than buying from family friends. Soap manufacturers started to produce small 'cakes' or 'bars' of soap. If you went to a shop to buy a bar of soap, you did not know who had made the soap and you did not know if the soap was safe or dangerous.

Some soap manufacturers started to make their bars of soap in special moulds, which marked the name of the manufacturer in the block of soap. They hoped that by marking their products in this way, they could convince the customers that their soap was safe to use. In this way, soap became one of the first 'branded' commercial products.



Pears, soap manufacturer persuaded Lily Langtry, a famous actress to provide a *testimonial* for Pears Soap saying “*Since using Pears soap, I have discarded all others.*” This signed statement was printed on posters showing the actress who was famous for her beautiful skin. This is one of the very early examples of *celebrity endorsement* of a product.

Brand identity

The first brands simply put a name on a product, it identified the product. A new fountain pen was not just a fountain pen, it is a *Parker Pen*. The first marketers, tried to associate certain ideas with the name of the product. Lily Langtry’s endorsement of *Pears Soap* suggested that customers who used *Pears Soap* could become as attractive as Lily Langtry. Cosmetics, which are simple, chemical products, are bought because of packaging and advertising rather than the actual quality of the product. Thomas A Barratt, one of the early advertising directors for *Pears Soap* said “*Any fool can make soap. It needs a clever man to sell it.*”

Brand Loyalty

Another important aspect of Lily Langtry’s endorsement “*Since using Pears soap, I have discarded all others.*” is **loyalty** -- in the phrase ‘discarded all others’. Miss Langtry is not only saying that she uses Pears Soap. She is saying she will continue to use Pears Soap. She will not use any other soap. Any company which is developing a brand also wishes to develop **brand loyalty**.

Aspirational brands – because I’m worth it

In 1973, *L’Oréal* created a campaign that empowered women to embrace their unique beauty and personal strength, and proudly express a sense of self-worth. The phrase “***Because I’m worth it***” became not only the cornerstone of their advertising campaign, but a guiding principle for the company and many women personally.

An aspirational brand is a brand which not only defines the product. It also defines the person who owns, buys and uses that brand. For consumers in Europe or the USA, *Rolex*,



Longman.com

Harley Davidson, Moët & Chandon and *BMW* are probably aspirational brands. *Nescafé, Walmart* and *Ford* may have many loyal customers but they are aspirational brands which define the owner.

The danger with advertising aspirational brands for prestige products is that they may become super-aspirational brands. Customers may aspire to own the brand but believe that it is far beyond their financial means. The car manufacturer *Rolls Royce*, suffers from its 'exclusive' image, an image which excludes many potential customers.

Own brands

Many large retailers sell products which are similar to famous branded products under the retailer's brand name. 'Own brand' products are very important in commerce. Many manufacturers do not sell any products to the public under their own name. They sell bulk stocks of the product to retailers who then sell the product as a 'own brand'. (See Schur Inventure in Company of the Month archive.)

Brands and slogans

A slogan is a short phrase written by an advertiser which attempts to define the qualities of a product. *Avis* says "We try harder." *The Independent* newspaper says, "It is. Are you?" *Nike* says, "Just do it."

Slogans, have also been used successfully by politicians. Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, became associated with the phrase, "You've never had it so good." The right-wing US Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater used the slogan "In your heart, you know he's right." Lyndon Johnson, opposing Goldwater, gave the reply, "In your guts, you know he's nuts."

Later, another candidate, Walter Mondale, used a slogan from advertisements for a hamburger chain. Criticising the amount of meat in other hamburgers, the advertiser asked "Where's the beef?" In a debate with his opponent, Gary Hart, Walter Mondale said, "You talk a lot about your 'new ideas', but I ask myself, "Where's the beef?"

The world's greatest political slogan

The world's greatest political slogan may have started as a spontaneous remark by the comedian, Mort Sahl. It summarises in a few words most of what we have said about brands. It speaks about trust and belief. Criticising a politician and suggesting that the politician was neither honest nor trustworthy, Mort Sahl asked, "Would you buy a used car from this man?"

Exercises

1) According to the text are these statements TRUE or FALSE?

See answers below.

- | | |
|---|---|
| a] A sheep dog is a specially trained sheep. | F |
| b] Predatory animals kill other animals. | T |
| c] Cattle were branded with the animal's name. | F |
| d] Criminals were branded as a punishment. | T |
| e] Branding of thieves was a logical alternative to prison. | T |
| f] Tribal branding only happened in Africa. | F |
| g] Caveat emptor means that sellers never give refunds. | F |
| h] An 'implied warranty' means an item will do the job it was designed to do. | T |
| i] Most British made silver items are stamped with a hallmark. | T |
| j] Soap was one of the first branded products. | T |
| k] A testimonial about a product is a statement of brand loyalty. | F |
| l] Lily Langtry endorsed <i>Pears Soap</i> . | T |
| m] Brand identity is not important for products like cosmetics. | F |
| n] If you are loyal to a brand, you usually buy it. | T |
| o] Aspirational brands are always the most expensive brands. | F |
| p] 'Own brand' products are cheap, low quality copies of famous brands. | F |
| q] "Where's the beef?" was originally a political slogan. | F |
| r] Mort Sahl was a famous used car salesman. | F |

In the case of the false statements, students might suggest a true statement.

2) **Can you match these slogans with the companies which used them?**

This exercise might be done individually but would lead to some valuable discussion if done in pairs or groups.

See answers below

1] A diamond is forever. [i]	a] The New York Times newspaper.
2] Free Enterprise with every copy. [e]	b] Fiat Strada cars.
3] All the news that's fit to print. [a]	c] Interflora
4] Put a tiger in your tank. [h]	d] Kellogg's Rice Krispies breakfast food
5] Hand built by robots. [b]	e] The Economist magazine.
6] No FT, no comment. [g]	f] MG cars.
7] Say it with flowers. [c]	g] Financial Times newspaper.
8] Snap! Crackle! Pop! [d]	h] Esso petroleum
9] Where do you want to go today? [u]	i] De Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines.
10] Safety fast. [f]	j] Access credit cards
11] It's good to talk. [q]	k] American Express credit cards.
12] We try harder. [n]	l] Apple Macintosh computers.
13] Your flexible friend [j]	m] AT and T telephones
14] Probably the best beer in the world. [r]	n] Avis car rental.
15] Don't leave home without it. [k]	o] B M W cars.
16] Reach out and touch someone. [m]	q] BT British Telecom
17] Think different. [l]	r] Carlsberg lager.
18] The ultimate driving experience. [o]	s] Coca-Cola
19] Go to work on an egg. [t]	t] Egg Marketing Board.
20] The pause that refreshes. [s]	u] Microsoft computer software.

Following the 'fun' exercise above, ask for some serious discussion of these slogans and how they relate to the brand images of the different products and services. There are no 'correct' answers.

3) **Discuss. Which is your favourite slogan from the list in Exercise 2? And which slogan most accurately reflects the brand?**