

Building a Brand for a New Generation

Joel Schlaudt

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
Liberty University  
Spring 2017

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Monique Maloney, M.F.A.  
Thesis Chair

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Edward Edmund, M.A.  
Committee Member

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Donald Fowler, Th.D.  
Committee Member

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Brenda Ayres, Ph.D.  
Honors Director

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Date

### Abstract

In a segment of the market as highly competitive as is the coffee industry, it can be difficult to forge a new brand strong enough to stand on its own and unique enough to stand above the competition. However, by choosing the millennial generation as a target audience and strategically constructing a creative strategy to reach them on an emotional level, a brand concept emerges with the ability to connect with consumers in a new way, transforming a daily necessity into an emotional experience unlike that offered by any other competitor. A *Harry Potter*-inspired brand built upon a delivery model allows millennials to escape the monotony of their employment and be transported into a world of nostalgia and individual expression.

### Building a Brand for a New Generation

Coffee: it is a \$40 billion industry in the United States alone, according to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. What's more, Gallup studies have revealed that this already booming corner of the market is also the fastest growing segment of the restaurant industry (Saad). Statistics like these should both inspire and intimidate anyone considering a venture into this field of business, albeit only for educational or theoretical purposes. The extreme forces of competition and levels of expectation in the modern world market in general and within this area specifically, demand a cutting-edge concept and top-of-the-line strategy before the survival of the theoretical brand can even be considered. Dialing in on the appearance of such a company in particular, the public image portrayed by the brand would need to be one that went beyond mere aesthetic appeal to a new level of theory, strategy, and style, standing a full head and shoulders above its competitors. The attention of its intended market audience must be drawn in with a focused and tailored approach. That being said, I have crafted what I believe to be just such a brand presence for a theoretical company of my own invention and intend within this thesis to describe both the thought and creative processes that went into its creation.

Before any further steps can be taken, a target audience must be selected and analyzed to ensure the brand can be successfully marketed. Hill, O'Sullivan, and O'Sullivan term this "market segmentation" (54) and define it this way: "A market segment consists of buyers with similar needs and wants, and markets can be usefully divided up according to those buyer needs" (54). In this particular market, a new segment is on the rise: millennials. This term, describing young adults born between the years

1980 and 2000, fits remarkably well with research done by the Small Business Development Center Network which revealed that, “Coffee shop patrons are younger, more affluent, and educated and are 22 percent more likely to be aged 18-24” (Holmes). What’s more, this demographic makes up 23% of the American population (Ward) and one-third of the American workforce (Lewis), making it the largest living generation on the planet. In 2017, they alone are estimated to wield the spending power of over \$200 billion in the American economy (Solomon). In the words of Micah Solomon, “Millennial customers. . .are about to become the most important customers your business has ever seen.” They also have some very defining characteristics as a generation that play a major role in their consumer choices. These, however, are difficult to find discussed within any “scholarly,” printed resources such as books or printed journals as millennials are the Digital Generation—absorbed with blogs, technology, and the Internet—and have only recently become influential in the culture as adults. This lack of printed material is far from a negative thing, however, as Herbert Meyers and Richard Gerstman point out in their book *Branding@theDigitalAge*: “Online research has changed the scope of gathering information” (Meyers 105). In fact, it would be very unwise to attempt to research such a current and trendy subject without consulting Internet sources that have become the modern standard of research for anyone wishing to maintain relevance and stay abreast of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That being said, a few noted sources such as Forbes, Business Insider, and Fortune offer insight into the mindset and makeup of this generation through research published in their online magazines and articles. According to the business and financial news site Forbes.com, “Millennial customers crave the joy of adventures and discoveries, whether epic or everyday”

(Solomon). They're obsessed with technology, especially in mobile form, and care about the values of the companies they support. A company's values are so important to them, in fact, that more than 50% of the millennial generation claims to tailor their buying choices to brands and products that support causes they believe in (Solomon). They are the most educated generation to date, and they have a longing to travel, a desire they term "wanderlust" (Dua). They also are not as willing to sacrifice their personal lives for career advancement as their parents were, and they "expect a more flexible work environment than previous generations" (Abbot). Time magazine warns that they are egocentric and narcissistic but also nice and optimistic (Stein). "They want new experiences, which are more important to them than material goods," writes Joel Stein. All of these factors are important to note and take into consideration when tailoring a brand, especially if the consumer base is as conscientious about a company's values and strategies as millennials are. Each of these characteristics will affect their buying choices and should dictate how the brand is presented in order to reach them. My target audience, then, is millennials between the ages of 22 and 35, old enough to hold office jobs in urban centers yet still new enough in the workforce to be dissatisfied with the "daily grind" and seek an escape.

With the target audience decided upon, it becomes necessary to develop an effective strategy to reach this audience in the way that best relates to them and touches them in a way no other competing brand does. "Emotional Branding," as Marc Gobe terms it, is a way of connecting brands to their customer base via the power and sensitivity of human emotion. Gobe states that, "Emotional Branding brings a new layer of credibility and personality to a brand by connecting powerfully with people on a

personal and holistic level...It elevates purchases based on need to the realm of desire”

(ix). This, then, is exactly the aim of my design style and my entire marketing strategy: to take a necessary element of everyday life in modern society and transform it into an experience above and beyond mere need. This experience is what I want to focus on in my planning; I want to transport the mind of a consumer away from a daily, boring schedule at a typical office job and into a realm of fantasy, wonder, and nostalgia. These deep emotions are exactly the type Gobe is referring to in his writing; they reach out from the company to consumer, sharing a bond of pathos and common experience that makes the customer experience warm, personal, and human. Interestingly, research has shown that the emotional portion of the brain is almost always one step ahead of rational side of the brain when it comes to processing information (Hammond 32). Hence, we think faster with our emotions, and activating positive emotions within consumers at a time they are making buying decisions could be extremely beneficial to a company. But it is one thing to state that these emotions will be evoked and something completely different to actually conjure those feelings within a consumer group. I believe, given the demographic of consumers, the most effective way to stir these particular emotions is through the realm of fantasy and imagination—more specifically, through referencing the hit-series *Harry Potter*.

Despite the fact that it was marketed as a collection of children’s books, the best-selling series sold over 400 million copies worldwide, making it the third most read book in the world (Polland), and was turned into 8 blockbuster films that grossed nearly \$8 billion at the box office (“Box Office History”). Besides its popularity, it is interesting to note the timeframe in which the series was introduced: late 1990s and early 2000s. These

were the years when the millennial generation was going through childhood and adolescence—exactly the age group that *Harry Potter* was intended for. Needless to say, the series remains very popular among millennials even today, largely due, no doubt, to the fact that it was introduced to them as children. It would seem, then, to be the logical choice for reaching this age demographic with the emotions mentioned above. A fantasy series lends itself naturally to feelings of wonder and the sense of escaping into another world, and given the emotional connection millennials have with the series as a part of their childhoods, nostalgia would play a major role in connecting them to the brand as well. Of course, in developing the foundations of the brand, no direct elements could be copied over from Rowling's works or the film adaptations, and the style must be restricted to "inspired by" or "reminiscent of" *Harry Potter*. However, this can still accomplish the same results with obvious puns, clever spinoffs, and similar aesthetics without infringing on copyright laws. It could even add an additional attraction by the humor and wit necessitated by such a strategy.

In addition, taking this approach to a coffee brand could be very effective because of the uniqueness of the idea. Current trends dominating the coffee industry include chalkboards, hand-lettering, and earth tones. The strong, blackletter style necessitated by the *Harry Potter* concept would stand out in sharp contrast the soft and organic feel of its competitors. This would definitely play into the brand's favor, not only by catching the eye but also by helping to build a cohesive brand identity. Singularity is one of the core concepts listed by Giep Franzen and Sandra Moriarty in their discussion of brand identity. "Singularity: an identity is unique. It belongs to something or someone. Identity is linked to whatever or whoever possesses the identity and offers a certain degree of



distinction” (110). This uniqueness would not only make the brand itself stronger but would also cut back on the “threat of substitution,” making it less likely that a consumer could find a similar product or experience somewhere else (Pringle 65). This fantasy-inspired approach seems the obvious choice, then, to create a distinct identity within the industry, making it memorable for consumers and attracting attention from potential customers.

So far, all that has been laid out has been fairly abstract and lacked any concrete description or visualizations. However, in order to more effectively present the project, a written summary of the work must be established. This branding project, done in a style reminiscent of the *Harry Potter* stories, will consist of a main logo with subsidiary and secondary logos included. An identity package—containing business cards, letterhead, and envelope designs—will also be presented, containing the logo and complimentary to its style. The logo and its subsidiaries will also be incorporated into the other elements of the brand, such as packaging and labels. Packaging pieces will include a sleeve for coffee cups, a carrier for cups and orders, labels for bottled servings of the product, and a tin design for the individual sale of ground coffee beans. Pictures of the artwork and the elements mentioned above are included in printed form at the end of this paper. Also, due to the importance of the brand’s online presence, a mockup of the company app is included. Because of the obvious limitations of presenting a functioning customer experience program such as an app through a printed medium, this is accomplished through several screenshots demonstrating the basic function and overall appearance of the app’s main tenets.

With such a unique brand concept, an equally distinctive marketing model must

be put forward to propagate the brand itself. To ensure the effectiveness of the model, the target audience must be revisited and, if necessary, refined since, as Al and Laura Ries put it, “A brand becomes stronger when you narrow the focus” (Wheeler 99). Our consumer demographic was determined to be young working professionals between the ages of 22 and 35 who have a desire to escape the daily monotony that often accompanies typical office employment. Suppose, however, that the distinction of this consumer group was sharpened even further: those who not only desire to escape monotony but are unable to physically step away from their places of employment. It is a commonly known fact that younger, newer professionals often must work harder than others toward the beginnings of their careers to ensure future success and continued employment. However, according to the research done on millennials in the workplace, this generation is reluctant to sacrifice their personal lives to make career advancements. What if a brand were to cater to this refusal to compromise coupled with the desire to advance? What if it could allow the consumer to work hard and make some sacrifice while still maintaining individuality and feeding the millennial desire to escape? Such a proposal may seem far-fetched, but the solution is nearer than it may seem: delivery.

A marketing plan centered around a delivery model offers several distinct advantages to make it stand out in the crowded market and appeal to millennial consumers. First, it is a relatively new idea in this particular segment of the market as most food delivery has previously been restricted to pizza and Asian cuisine. However, with the growing demand for coffee and the escalating expectation of convenience in the culture, this barrier could soon be breaking down, and this theoretical brand could be at the forefront of the movement. Second, a delivery-based approach would also necessitate

a technological-centered approach, something near and dear to millennials hearts. For a product to be delivered, the order would have to be placed online or through the company's app, incorporating mobile technology into the backbone of the company's structure. This would appeal to millennials by demonstrating the relevance of the company and granting a sense of ownership by the obviously tailored approach. Additionally, this would ensure that the brand could survive in the current market and in the long-term since, as Padmasree Warrior—chief technology officer for Motorola—states, “Seamless mobility . . . that's where we think the future is headed” (Mathieson 19). And finally, a delivery model would focus the brand onto those millennials who have the desire to work hard and long to succeed but are unwilling to sacrifice their individuality and personalized work environment to do so. A uniquely styled brand that appeals to their childhood and yet delivers to their place of adult employment, would allow consumers to feel that they had not lost touch with who they are as human beings or become faceless cogs in the machine of corporate success.

On a more practical level, reaching this particular type of consumer would be accomplished through radio advertisements placed on streaming services such as Pandora or Spotify, which are often utilized by those seeking individual expression and escape from a monotonous job in the first place. Ostensibly, catering to such a consumer base with the stated marketing plan would then create a reputation among the brand's patrons of committed, hard-working professionals who do what it takes to succeed without giving up their individuality. This phenomenon can be termed “shareholder value,” defined by Kartikeya Kompella as “how strongly employees and customers feel about their brand” (134). With this positive stereotype established, a larger pool of consumers would then

begin buying into the brand hoping to buy into the reputation as well, causing exponential growth reliant on its positive public image, similar to the patterns displayed by companies such as Apple or Starbucks. Of course, more than merely adding new customers is required; consumers must be maintained. This is brand loyalty: “the idea that consumers will develop a bond with the brand that will strengthen over time. . .” (Levine 194). Building such a bond goes back to the idea of emotional branding and creating a connection between company and consumer as we have already discussed our brand does.

However, to further this emotional connection, it would be wise to tap into the vein of personal conviction and values. As previously mentioned, millennials care very deeply about the values of the brands and companies that they choose to patronize, desiring to “integrate their beliefs and causes into their choice of companies to support, their purchases and their day-to-day interactions,” as Micah Solomon of Forbes.com puts it. To further the relationship and loyalty between customer and company, then, it would be vital to maintain a strong ethical standing and to champion hot-button issues dear to the hearts of millennials that are inherent in the coffee industry. Examples include protecting against deforestation in the countries where the coffee is being produced, supporting the farming communities that provide the company’s coffee beans, and maintaining a level of purity from dangerous pesticides or artificial fertilizers. The values exhibited by such behavior in a large company—personable, authentic, caring—would not only attract consumers if effectively displayed through the marketing but would also build a rock-solid base of customer loyalty and brand identity.

In addition, the value-centered approach could actually offer a supplementary

competitive edge in the market. Of course, the delivery model previously discussed would remain the company's primary defining feature given its uniqueness in the industry, but this new conscientious approach would open several new avenues for competition. For instance, choosing to market beans grown through natural processes without harmful pesticides and fertilizers would not only allow the company to take better care of the earth at its farming and production locations but would also allow the beans produced to be marketed as "all-natural" or even organic. This certainly offers a leg-up in a market where the demand for healthier foods has become a new trend that could even be described as a craze. Taking a step back to view this value-centered approach holistically, then, it becomes obvious that it would be of an enormous advantage to the company in several ways. Not only would the responsible and caring vision of the brand attract consumers, build loyalty, and establish the brand as a genuine contender in the market, it would allow for a new competitive facet within the brand's products themselves, allowing them to be marketed as natural and pure to a highly health-conscious generation. All things considered, a marketing plan that took this approach would undoubtedly meet with remarkable success in both establishing a presence among millennial professionals and in growing a consumer-base through its reputation among a narrow target audience.

All said, it is no easy task to establish even a theoretical brand in the thriving segment of the market devoted to coffee. However, with an accurate understanding of millennials as the rising group of consumers and a creative strategy to reach them on an emotional level by appealing to their desire to escape the monotony of everyday life through fantasy and nostalgia, I believe a viable brand construct can and has been put

forward. When this is compounded with an effective incorporation of mobile technology and operated within a delivery model as outlined above, the strategy is complete, and a solid brand concept is fully outlined and ready to be expressed through artwork and physical branding design.

#### Primary Logo



Secondary Logos



Business Card (front and back)

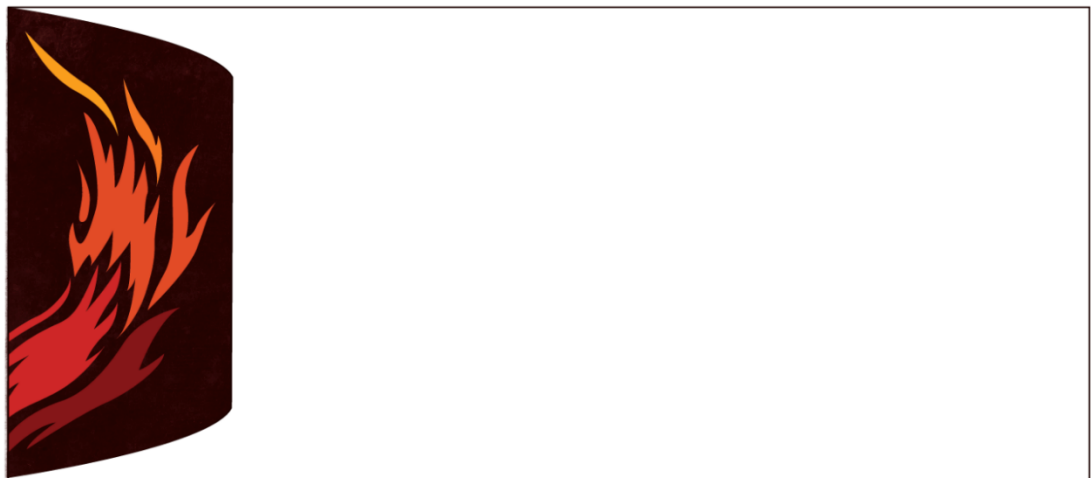
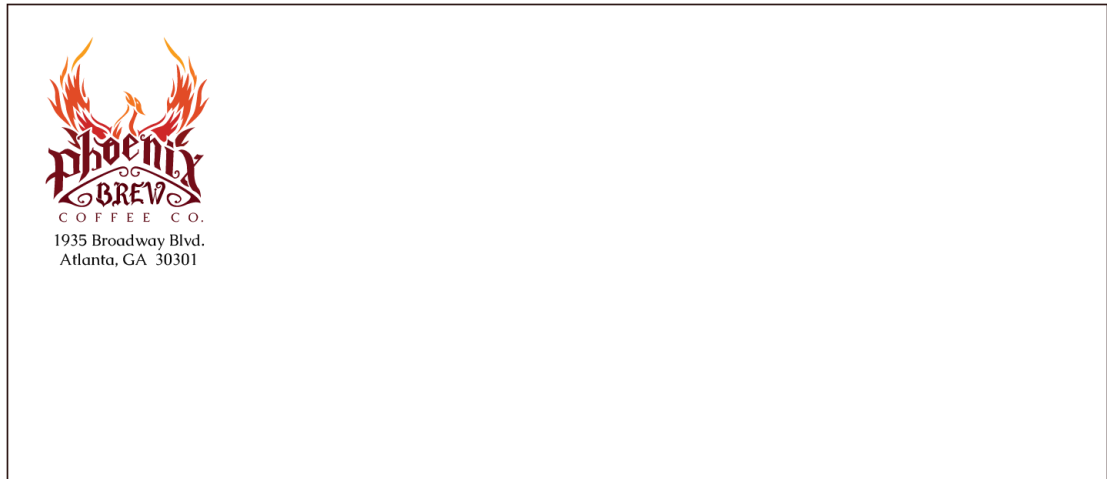


# Letterhead





Envelope (front and back)



Packaging Element #1



Packaging Element #2



Bottle/Label



Cup/Sleeve



Carrier





App Screens 1 & 2

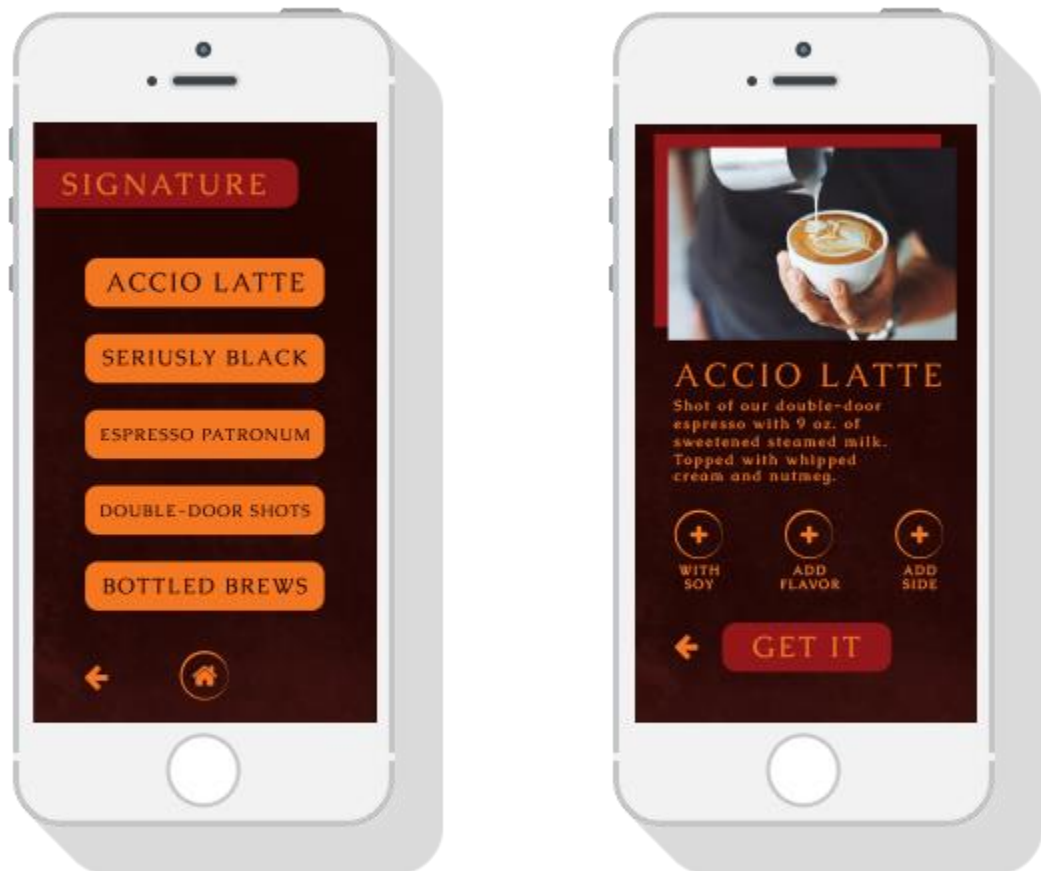


App Screens 3 & 4





## App Screens 5 &amp; 6



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