

Apple

ABOUT

Category:

Electronics & technology – computers, mobile phones, tablets, wearables, media players, software, home appliances; Media & entertainment – streaming services; Retail – electronics & technology stores, e-retail

Owner of the brand:

Apple Inc.

Key competitors:

Samsung, Microsoft, Google

BRAND STRATEGY ANALYSIS

Brand essence

Creating a better world through technology and design.

Brand values

Innovation, design, creativity, humanity, simplicity.

Brand character

Aspirational, creative, premium, edgy, cool, stylish, human.

Dominating archetype



The Creator

EVIDENCE

Comments

1

Apple is the most valuable brand in the world and one of just a few companies, which have been valued above \$1 trillion. It was founded in 1976 by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne, who sold his 10% share to the first two co-founders just 10 days later. After years of prosperity, Apple reached the brink of bankruptcy in the 1990s. Steve Jobs, who rejoined Apple in 1997 (having been forced to leave in 1985), is universally believed to have rescued the company and shaped its unique corporate culture for many years after.

There is a widespread misconception that Apple became such a successful business thanks to its focus on innovation and the latest technology. Although it has been a highly innovative organization, it has not invented any new products and all its best-selling devices (e.g., iPhones) were just improved versions of products already present on the market. Its secret to success lies elsewhere.

2

The key factors that have contributed to Apple's long-term success can be traced back to the values Steve Jobs instilled in the company's approach to product development and marketing, when he was still the CEO. Dedication to the best in class design, human-centricity (rather than technology-centricity) and a relentless focus on simplicity have made Apple one of the most desired brands in the world. Equally, the company's ability to create a seamless, vertically-integrated ecosystem of devices, software and content making it difficult for any Apple user to quit Apple has contributed to its tremendous financial success.



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While Steve Jobs was admired for his charisma, inventiveness and marketing genius, his successor, Tim Cook, has been praised primarily for his business acumen and a more sustainable, less hands-off management style¹.

3

Apple in its official communication channels (e.g., on its website and social media) positions itself primarily through its past achievements (“Apple revolutionized personal technology”², “The people who work here have reinvented entire industries with the Mac, iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch, as well as with services, including Apple TV, the App Store, Apple Music, and Apple Pay”³) and its set of beliefs, which in fact haven’t changed since Steve Jobs’ tenure (“Continually reimagining what’s possible to help us all do what we love in new ways”⁴, “Strengthening our commitment to leave the world better than we found it”⁵).

4

For many years, Apple was a challenger brand on a mission to revolutionize the personal computer market. This positioning was in particular visible in the 1984 Macintosh ad⁶ (directed by Ridley Scott) and then reinforced in the famous “Think Different” campaign⁷, which honoured “the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the trouble-makers, (...), the ones who think differently”⁸. Although Apple’s core belief (“people with passion can change the world for the better”) hasn’t changed, its communication strategy and messaging have. Apple outgrew the challenger’s role, expanded its product portfolio significantly and became one of the market leaders.

5

As a result, the brand had to apply a more mainstream approach to its communication: it moved from symbolism to more literal messaging and from image-driven communication to product campaigns showcasing the benefits of its flagship products. Still serious about changing the world, Apple placed a stronger emphasis on innovation and creativity and started behaving more like a Creator than an Outlaw brand. It’s also apparent that the recent Apple’s adverts build a warmer image of the brand and are more human and humorous than they were in the past, when their tone of voice was more uplifting and aspirational.

Apple's approach to communication is unique in a few respects. First, the company builds a premium image of its brand in an unprecedentedly consistent way – it doesn't offer any discounts and never leads its communication with the price message. It is famous for its secretive culture, which is especially apparent in how it launches new products and services – always creating a sense of mystery leading to a big revelation. Another unusual strategy the company applies is consciously building the distance between its brand and consumers (more in line with the approach employed by luxury brands rather than tech companies) – Apple's presence on social media is limited as it prefers to communicate via big, above the line campaigns (often using celebrity endorsement) and tightly controlled PR activities. The brand focuses only on selected markets (in particular the US and China) and doesn't invest extensively in local activities, which are often limited to events at local Apple stores (e.g., tech camps for kids or iPhone photography lessons) and website translations to local languages.

Tagline

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Official brand statement

“Apple revolutionized personal technology with the introduction of the Macintosh in 1984. Today Apple continues to be a global leader in innovation with products like iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple Watch. Our five software platforms (iOS, iPadOS, macOS, watchOS, and tvOS) provide seamless experiences across Apple devices. Breakthrough services include the App Store, Apple Music, Apple Pay, and iCloud. And Apple keeps pursuing innovation with products like HomePod, Apple Fitness+, and Apple Card. Apple's more than 160,000 employees are dedicated to making the best products on earth, and to leaving the world better than we found it.”⁹

“We're a diverse collective of thinkers and doers, continually reimagining what's possible to help us all do what we love in new ways. And the same innovation that goes into our products also applies to our practices — strengthening our commitment to leave the world better than we found it. This is where your work can make a difference in people's lives. Including your own.”¹⁰

Interesting facts

Steve Jobs, today strongly associated with the “Think Different” campaign, in fact didn’t appreciate it at all. Rob Siltanen, who was the Creative Director and Managing Partner at TBWA/Chiat/Day working on the Apple pitch in 1997 said that Jobs “was blatantly harsh on the commercial that would eventually play a pivotal role in helping Apple achieve one of the greatest corporate turnarounds in business history”.¹¹

There are many lofty stories about the history of the Apple logo but the reality was much more mundane. The name was inspired by Steve Jobs’s visit to an apple farm when he was on a fruitarian diet. Jobs thought the name “Apple” was “fun, spirited and not intimidating”.¹² The logo was designed with a bite so that a small logo looked like an apple and not a cherry.¹³