







*“To design is much more than simply to assemble, to order, or even to edit; it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade and perhaps, even to amuse.”*

PAUL RAND



## **FIRST MEDIA (FM) ON DESIGN**

Design per se is the process of evaluating, planning, collating, and formulating. There are various disciplines of design services in the industry; architecture, graphics, interior, etc. Despite the different skill sets required to carry out the various forms of design, several core competencies and even talent are required in order for one to excel in design. The skills and competencies which we speak about are not tied to technology or software innovations. These skills are more intrinsic and are applicable to all ages.

To illustrate this point; Leonardo Da Vinci is probably the most exemplary designer we can think of. His ability to dream, to overcome challenges with a creative flair made him stand out among the four Renaissance masters of Italy. His studious and detailed research into each subject matter allowed him to appreciate the challenges and problems, but also very importantly, to recognise the physical limitations and practical boundaries that he had to work within to develop a solution. Simply put, design is a thought process; it's not about working software applications or using technology.

To design, one must first have a problem to solve or challenge to overcome. To apply creativity, as well as good aesthetic taste, to a methodological and logical thought process to that problem or challenge is a task for designers. It has been observed that some individuals within our society possess a greater affinity to this calling than other. Some have called this artistic talent.

## DESIGN MANIFESTO

Nevertheless, even for those talented ones to shine, a fair amount of perseverance and diligence is mandatory.

The crafting of effective forms of communication has been the forte of First Media's group of design studios for the last 13 years. Through the years, we have inculcated a culture of growth and development for the customer, the company as well as all those who have worked under our roofs. This has enabled us to chronicle an impressive track record of achievement. In Singapore, we would like to think that we are probably the oldest and most established communication design group.

Our approach to design is a culmination of 13 years of experience as well as the distillation of the best practices from around the world. First, we recognise that the design business is a business of people. We believe in hiring the best professionals from all fields that are complementary to our business,

from business savvy account managers to award-winning creative personnel. From our experience, we can tell you that the pre-requisite for exceptional work is a team of talented and dedicated people. Talent begets excellence.

The importance of teamwork has been an overstatement, but allow us to put this into our perspective. We strongly believe in working in teams for several reasons. It has been observed in FM that many of our best works are a result of the confluence of ideas. This is the synergistic result of putting the best people to work together towards a common goal. In addition, having people with different backgrounds also helps us and our customers to minimise blind spots.

Within the company, we have also developed several sets of original philosophies when it comes to design. These philosophies serve as guiding principles for our conduct as designers:

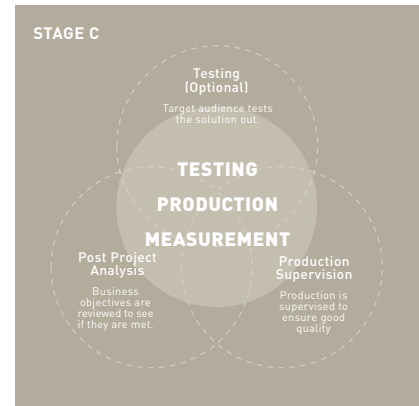
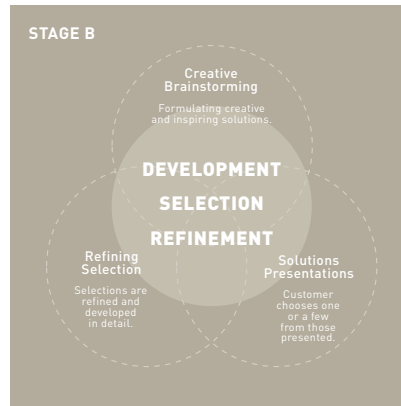
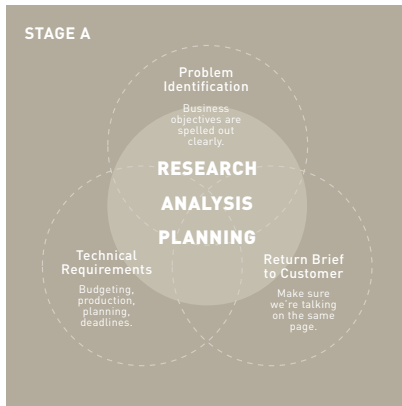
## DESIGN MANIFESTO

1. Whatever the solution is, it must be creative, alluring, and inspirational.
2. Creativity must be applied in a commercial, economical, and practical manner.
3. Solutions must be formulated to meet real-world challenges and business objectives.

One thing that we are strongly against is creativity for the sake of creativity. We are design professionals who help our customers solve problems, not artists. In the business of designing communication pieces, it does us no credit if our design wins awards but our customers fail to materialise good returns on their investments.

Occasional award-winning pieces are our cherries, producing works of high quality and standards is our priority to our customers. To achieve this on a consistent basis, we have formal methodologies and work processes in place.

## DESIGN MANIFESTO





### **RESPONSIBLE DESIGN PRACTICE AND A DESIGNER'S ROLE IN SOCIETY AND BUSINESS**

Design shapes perception. This has been regarded as the key success factor of many product launches. While a designer's role may not be as readily identifiable to the average individual as it is to the sophisticated corporation, the designer does have an enormous impact on our society. Designers create the look and feel of our world.

They are the arbiters of taste and lead the way in how we perceive what is good, tasteful, stylish. Virtually everything around us is created through design and the diversity and reach of the designer's influence is so vast that it can be difficult to comprehend. Designers help create

and interpret sociological trends. They create the mood and shape of our world. They must thus be aware of all things that affect change and style. Politics and finance, entertainment and literature, fine arts and history, food and music all play important roles in our constantly transforming environment. Professional organisations like the Designer Association of Singapore (DAS) has limited success in promoting the importance of design to the business community and the value of licensing graphic designers as a method of influencing public recognition.

Designers should not be contented with just pure creativity, indulging in the imagination and rendering skills, but must also have the ability to analyse, assimilate, and interpret the past and present structure of society in order to interpret the present and foretell the future.



### **FIRST MEDIA (FM) CODE OF CONDUCT IN THE DESIGN PROFESSION**

This code of conduct is crucial to set First Media apart from the multitude of design companies and exists for the benefit of its group of companies and its valued clients.

FM's code of conduct is set out as a platform for all responsible designers in practising behaviour guidelines for new and matured designers within its organisation. FM is also convinced that design practice in this market demands totally different business conduct and procedures.

As responsible FM designers, our primary responsibility is to our clients. In discharging that responsibility, we are expected to act in a competent, honourable, and professional manner when executing the projects. It is the group's practice to avoid simultaneously undertaking

projects that may have identifiable conflicting interests to their clients, without their knowledge or consent. As part of our professional conduct, it is also important for the group and the designers not to divulge any confidential information that may be detrimental to their clients' businesses. To prevent such issues from arising, a confidentiality clause of non-disclosure is usually dictated in our contract. Similarly, work of a confidential nature is not shown to others without prior written agreement from the clients.

In soliciting projects, FM companies promote their services by all normal commercial means such as self promotion or public relations activities which are legal, decent, honest, and truthful. They refrain from giving or receiving substantial benefits which might cause an obligation to any party in a contract. Lastly, FM companies uphold Singapore's copyright laws and respect the ownership of intellectual property.



### **MANAGING A RESPONSIBLE DESIGN PRACTICE — THE FIRST MEDIA WAY**

As a responsible practising design group, FM is committed to uphold its professional reputation in design standards, quality, and integrity. As a group, it is very watchful of its design business professionalism in upholding business values such as trust, reliability, and sincerity to all its clients, employees, suppliers, peers, and even competitors.

The value of credibility surpasses all other values, for word travels around in a niche market like Singapore.

For designers, corporate interest overrules self-interest — as employees, they should be loyal and responsible in order to protect the interest of the organisation. For trained account managers,

they are responsible first to the company and then to their subordinates, and should uphold professional ethics in the design projects they undertake at all times. They also have the moral obligation to ensure that their subordinates' welfare are being taken into account. To the list of vendors, it is demanded of them to reciprocate and be truthful and sincere in all their dealings with design agencies. In this way, harmony will prevail in the business relationships. This goodwill will be immeasurable in terms of the multiple benefits gained by both parties in the long term.

### **FIRST MEDIA'S KEY COMPETITIVE STRATEGY**

As part of FM's continuous pursuit of sustainable advantage over many other competitors, it adopts a transparent management style which recognises value and contributions based on merit and talent. The key in its management style is simply to disseminate to all its designers and managers of its corporate goals, business objectives, and strategies adopted.



*“Strong brands are enduring, and longevity is a much sought-after attribute in Asia — pursued and valued in all aspects of life, not least of all in business. When nurtured and well looked after, brands can insure corporate immortality.”*

PAUL TEMPORAL



## FIRST MEDIA ON BRANDING

First Media has spent much time discovering the reasons behind the handful of successful Asian brands. At the point of writing, we have identified two major factors hindering Asian businesses from growing strong brands of their own:

1. Lack of understanding by decision makers about branding. What is it all about? What are the benefits and strategic advantages of a strong brand? Is branding the same as or part of marketing? How do I build a strong brand? How do I measure brand equity? These are just a few of the questions that go unanswered.
2. Lack of available and affordable expertise. There are only a few notable branding firms in Asia. Many companies turn to advertising agencies. While some have specialised teams to tackle this issue, others pass off their work with only superficial understanding. Most of the branding firms operating in Asia are foreign (from Europe or United States), bringing along a hefty price tag for their services. For those who understand branding, it might be beyond their means, for those who don't, it might be highway robbery!

*“Buildings age and  
become dilapidated.  
Machines wear out.  
People die. But  
what live on are  
the brands.”*

SIR HECTOR LAING

### **TERMINOLOGY**

#### **What is a brand?**

A brand is simply the imagery, mark, or symbol that represents an organisation, range of product or services.

#### **What is brand identity?**

Brand identity is the special blend of positioning and values that gives a product or service its unique character.

#### **What is brand equity?**

Brand equity is a set of assets linked to a brand that adds to the value provided by its products or services.

#### **What is branding?**

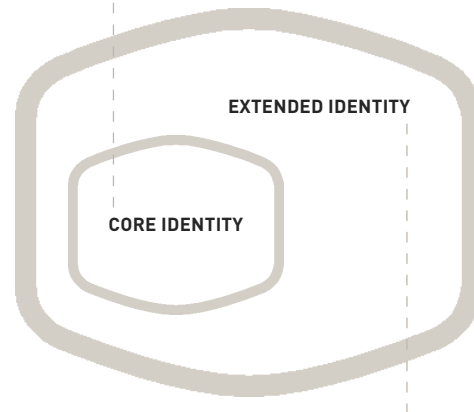
Branding is the development and management of brand and brand identity to increase brand equity. If exercised correctly, it serves to improve customer loyalty, perceived value, competitive advantage, and profitability of products and services represented by the brand. Branding should never be confused with marketing. Where marketing deals with the offering in terms of product,

positioning, pricing, places and promotion of products or services, branding deals with the intrinsic values of the symbol that represent the brand.

*“...how is it that a region (Asia) which has such high brand appreciation, produces few international brands of its own?”*

FELIX HERNBERGER

The core identity represents the timeless essence of the brand. It is central to both the meaning and success of the brand, contains the associations that are most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets, products, or services.



The extended identity includes elements that provide texture and completeness. It fills the picture, adding details that help portray what the brand stands for.

**IMPORTANT AND IMPERATIVE**

Brands create value and assets.  
Brands provide direction and focus.  
Brands build loyalty.  
Brands provide competitive advantages.  
Brands cannot be replicated.  
Brands improve profitability  
Brands increase market share.  
Brands improve ROI for marketing.  
Brands build empires.

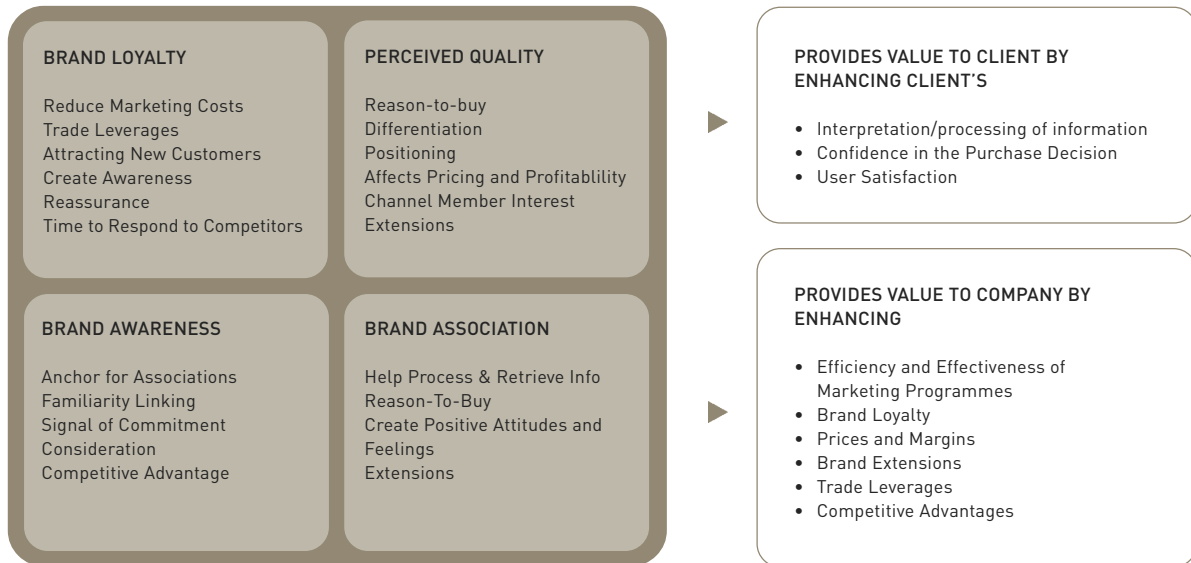
A good brand will reinforce and improve the consumers' purchasing behaviour, and the brand becomes a valuable asset. However, its asset value derives more than just from its ability to attract sales. The very fact that consumers perceive a brand as embracing a set of values which they can reject means that they will reject, or tend to reject, alternatives which are presented to them that perhaps may not possess all of these values.

A case in point; in this instance, water. Isn't it absurd to bottle carbonated water in France and ship it across the world? Doesn't it make more economical sense to produce

them in the country of consumption? And yet, many millions of these little green bottles make their way across the globe each year.

Another case in point. In Singapore, owning a car can be an exorbitant affair. Almost any model of car can get you from point to point in a very efficient manner. Why is it that consumers are willing to fork out double the amount for a continental four-wheeler over a Japanese make that serves the exact same mechanical purpose but differs greatly in price? More than attracting sales, good brands improve profitability.

**BRAND EQUITY SYSTEM**



Brand equity is a set of assets and hence, the management of brand equity involves investment to create and enhance these assets. This diagram provides a compact overview of how brands generate value. Each brand equity creates value in a variety of different ways, so one must be sensitive to the way strong brands create value.

**BRAND DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY**

Building successful brands takes more than just creating an appealing imagery for the logo or trademark. Behind the creation of every well-known international brand that you can bring to mind, thousands of hours were spent in research to understand consumers, competitors and the market. Usually, rigorous testing is also conducted prior to the launch of brands and products. Without values and associations, imagery becomes empty husks that will not stand the test of time.

First Media has developed a unique methodology for the development of brands. Our strategic partnerships allow us to offer multi-disciplinary expertise encompassing evaluation, analysis, strategy formulation, and positioning of corporate brands as well as its implementation to all forms of packaging, environmental graphic and corporate communications collateral.

The development process can and will, at many a time, become confusing and frustrating for many people. This is why we have a strong methodology to spur us forward in an organised and effective manner.

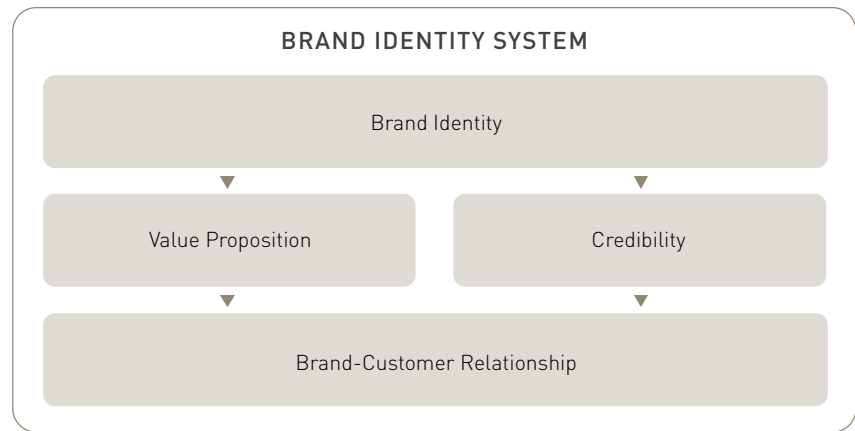
**STAGE ONE**

This stage deals more with research to understand customers, competitors, and markets to identify needs and desires. Without proper research information, it is not possible to move to stage two.



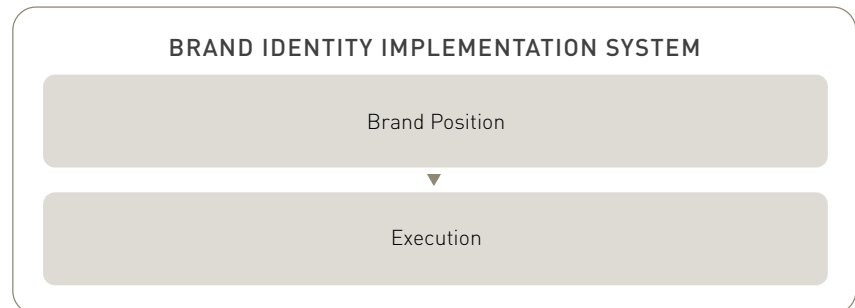
**STAGE TWO**

In stage two, we focus more on developing/identifying values and associations for the brand. Once this is accomplished, a value proposition statement can be formulated and the brand-customer relationship can be defined.



**STAGE THREE**

In this last stage, development will be done for the imagery to incorporate all the values that have been defined in the previous stages. Also, the positioning of the product will be dealt with in this stage.







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