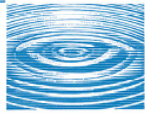




KING-CASEY



# King • Casey REPORT

Insights and Trends in Retail Branding, Merchandising and Design



## 3-Dimensional Branding

Developing a Customer Experience that Drives  
Brand Equity and Sales

# 3-Dimensional Branding

Developing a Customer Experience that Drives Brand Equity and Sales

A KING-CASEY REPORT by Howland Blackiston, Principal, King-Casey

## The “Sea of Sameness”

Have you noticed? There is a similarity among many restaurant brands. The environments look alike. How effectively do they differentiate their brand from the competition? Not very. Do they communicate a distinctive brand positioning? Not really. The same is true with many retail stores. One drug store chain looks much like the next. One super-market brand is not very different than its competitors. The interiors (and often the exteriors) are typically anonymous and interchangeable.

## “3-D Branding”

### The Strategic Differentiator

At King-Casey we overcome the “Sea of Sameness” through 3-D Branding. This strategy results in a unique and proprietary environment and customer experience that differentiates a brand from its competitors. We achieve this by visually communicating the essence of a brand by integrating brand positioning, identity, trade-dress and architecture. In this sense, we develop a 3-D interpretation of a brand. Everything the customer sees and touches is unique to this particular brand. The environment itself communicates to customers the brand’s personality and distinctiveness in the marketplace. Brand leaders understand that great branding is much more than a great logo.



“Sea of Sameness”

These images show Buffalo Wild Wings prior to King-Casey’s 3-Dimensional Branding. These customer zones are virtually “unbranded”. Inside and out, there is little that visually differentiates this Buffalo Wild Wings from any other restaurant brand. The result? A lost opportunity to differentiate the brand.

## “Brand-Store Connection”

With 3-D Branding the customer experience at the store level becomes a unique reflection of the brand. Note that any restaurant or retail store is actually a collection of many individual “customer operating zones”. Customers behave differently in each zone. Their needs and expectations are different. By identifying these zones and understanding how customers behave in each zone, we craft zone-specific design solutions that

distinguish a brand from its competition. The brand becomes integrated with each and every zone (inside and outside of the store). Customers can see and feel what makes the brand unique. The decor, architecture, in-store communications and trade-dress reinforce the brand positioning. This level of brand integration and attention to detail is often overlooked. Many do nothing to blend the brand positioning with the customer experience.

### 3-Dimensional Branding: Designs that Differentiate

King-Casey developed a 3-Dimensional brand strategy for Buffalo Wild Wings, a chain of casual dine restaurant/sports bars. No matter where customers look they get a sense of the brand's personality, atmosphere and "retail promise".



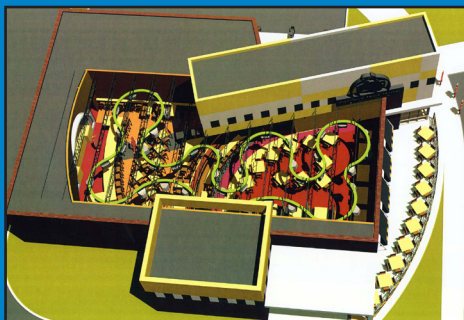
King-Casey's recipe for Buffalo Wild Wings' 3-D Branding uses a bold yellow and black exterior design inspired by the logo. The result is an architectural design that can be recognized from over half a mile away, drawing in customers and clearly standing apart from other restaurant concepts.



Buffalo Wild Wings' distinctive black and yellow trade dress is carried throughout the interior to create a totally integrated 3-D branded customer experience. Improved communications are also branded and re-designed to improve the customer experience and increase the ease and speed of ordering.



A multitude of design details reinforce elements of the brand's trade dress. Wherever the customer looks, there is no doubt that they are in a Buffalo Wild Wings. 3-D Branding results in a unique, proprietary environment that is difficult for other brands to "copy".



The new interior was divided into distinctive customer zones, each tailored to the unique preferences of different target audiences (e.g., family zone, singles zone, quiet zone, entertainment zone, etc.) The essence of the brand is visually communicated in each zone by integrating positioning, brand identity, trade-dress and architecture.

### Our Five-Step Process

So how does one go about developing a 3-D Branding strategy? The solution involves a systematic, five-step process, as follows:

#### 1.) Assess What Equity You've Got.

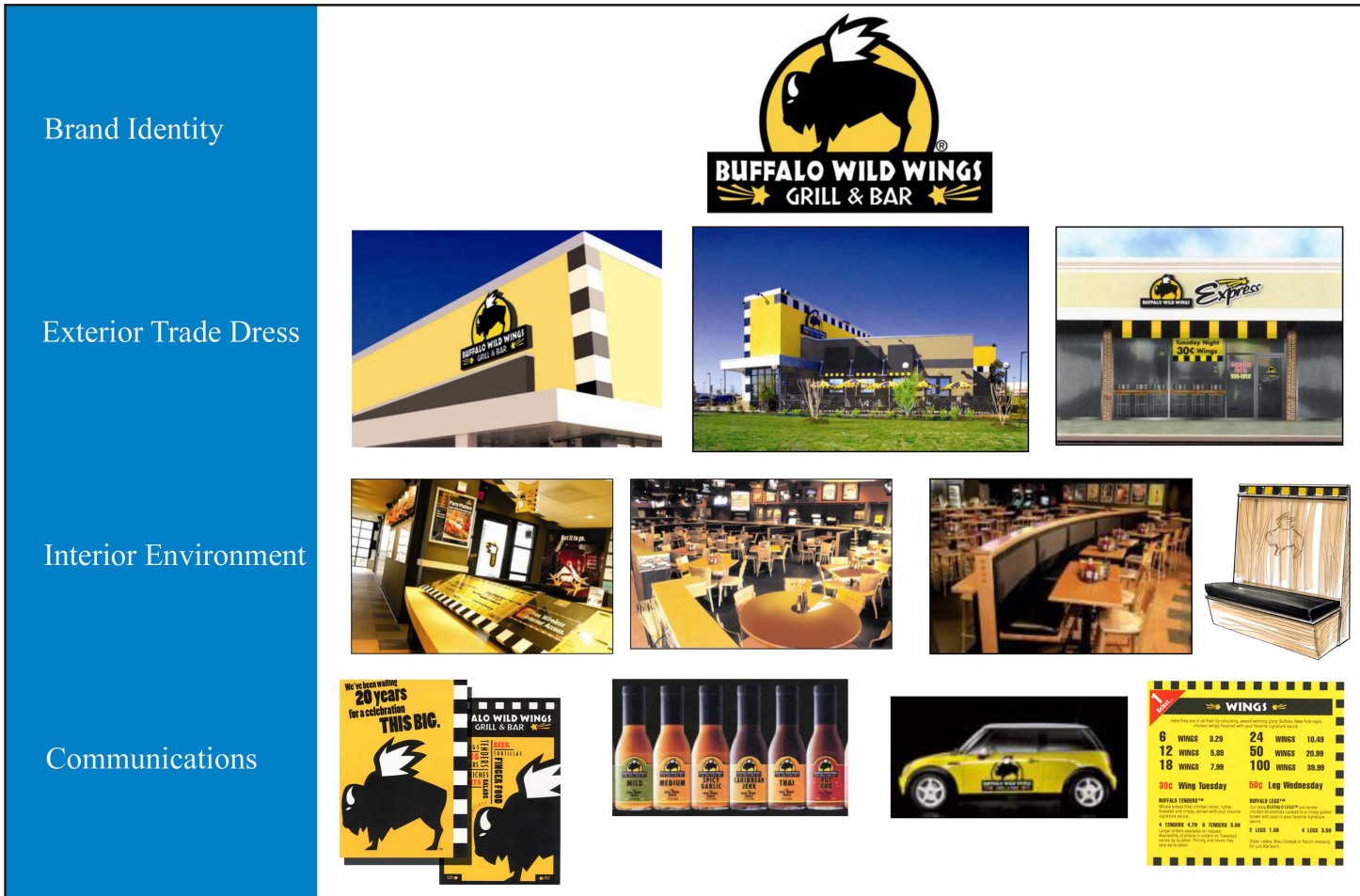
What is the equity currently in your brand? What do customers say about you? About your identity? About your stores? How would you describe what makes you unique and different? What is the feeling or personality of your brand? What are the "attributes" (words and phrases) that best describe your brand? In the case of the Buffalo Wild Wings example to the left, brand attributes include "fun, excitement, social and casual". It is useful to secure objective feedback from customers, lapsed customers and non-customers. How do they see a brand? Do they agree that your 3-D Branding reinforces your brand attributes? Have them evaluate and critique each key zone (both interior and exterior). Here is where interviews, surveys and customer research is particularly useful.

#### 2.) Identify What Has to Change.

Based on this assessment, what is it about your store design that needs changing? What needs improving? Where does your store design fall short when it comes to reinforcing and supporting your brand attributes, personality and brand essence?

#### 3.) Benchmark Best Practices.

In all likelihood, someone out there does a better job of 3-D Branding than you do. Why re-invent the wheel? Identify who are the leaders when it comes to 3-D Branding (they may be outside of your industry). Find out what they do well, and how they do it. The benchmarking process allows companies to make huge business improvements by "adapting" best practices that have already proven to be both successful and doable. What you learn will guide your own 3-D Branding strategy and optimize your store design.



Brand Identity

Exterior Trade Dress

Interior Environment

Communications

**Designing to a Brand Hierarchy.** Map out how your brand is currently being applied to your retail environment. What’s working well? What’s not? Then develop design solutions that collectively result in a 3-Dimensional expression of your brand positioning and brand essence. In this example, we see how Buffalo Wild Wings’ new designs strategies integrate the brand with the store’s exterior trade-dress, departmental wayfinding, department environments, product merchandising and customer communications.

**4.) Develop a Brand Hierarchy.** By prioritizing brand attributes and key branding elements you can begin to systematically develop a design strategy that results in a unique customer experience. Customers can see and feel what makes your brand unique. For an example, see Buffalo Wild Wings’ Brand Hierarchy Chart (above image).

**5.) Validate Design Solutions.** Before implementing design changes or building prototypes, it is a wise idea to validate your new strategy and execution of it. These new design solutions may look great to you and your colleagues, but how will your customers react? Secure objective feedback from customers, lapsed customers and non-customers. Have customers validate whether your new strategy reflects and reinforces your brand attributes.

King-Casey is a pioneer in retail consulting and design. For more than half a century, we have been building competitive brands for a broad array of retail and restaurant companies by dramatically improving the customer experience at every point of contact. King-Casey provides a complete range of services including assessment, research, branding, visual merchandising, retail and restaurant store design, architecture and rollout. We develop innovative, turn-key solutions that result in increased customer loyalty, higher sales and greater ROI.

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