

ESL Brains

How brands influence our thinking

1. Read the quote, explain what you think it means and say to what extent you agree with it.

“Branding is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.”

— Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon

2. Discuss the questions.

- What brand first comes to your mind when you think of the items below?
 - a soda
 - a laptop
 - a gaming console
 - sportswear
 - a cup of coffee
 - sunglasses
- Have you chosen the same brand as your classmates? If so, discuss why that might be.
- Are you a loyal customer of any particular brand? If so, say why.

3. You are going to watch a video in which experts talk about branding. Read the quote from the video and choose one option below. Then, watch the first part of the [video](#) [<https://youtu.be/4eIDBV4Mpek>] (to 02:26) and check your answer.

“Coke is just soda, Tylenol just acetaminophen, and Levi’s are just jeans. Yet consumers go out of their way to select these specific brands over others.”

Consumers choose certain brands over others because...

- A. our brains are influenced by persuasive advertising, leading to irrational spending choices.
- B. they want to define who they are and connect with others in a certain way.
- C. they value expensive products more than cheap ones.
- D. they identify with the brands their family has traditionally chosen.

4. Watch the rest of the [video](#) (from 02:26) and take notes on the following topics.

- A. The experiment on Apple users and Galaxy users

- B. Making informed consumer choices

C. What brands are compared to and why

5. Discuss the following statements and ideas and say to what extent you agree with them.

- We relate to brands in the same way we relate to people.
- Without being fully aware of it, we choose brands to express our personalities, values or lifestyle through them.
- Brands can fulfil the need for connection and belonging just like communities and institutions used to.
- I am aware that I automatically lean towards certain brands when making a purchase.
- As consumers, we don't really understand the brand-building strategies that underlie our perceptions of brands.

6. Match the sentence beginnings (A–H) and endings (1–8) to complete each of the brand-building strategies.

- A. Foster loyalty by delivering...
- B. Weave a genuine narrative by telling...
- C. Forge strong emotional bonds by nurturing...
- D. Strengthen relatability by showing...
- E. Align with social values by contributing...
- F. Serve a niche by targeting...
- G. Leverage market buzzwords by using...
- H. Ensure reliability by being...

- 1. ... a compelling story that shares values the targeted audience cares deeply about.
- 2. ... deep connections with customers through experiences that resonate on an emotional level.
- 3. ... consistent quality and encouraging support from customers.
- 4. ... to positive change in the world.
- 5. ... a segment of the market with their needs and preferences.
- 6. ... consistent and meeting expectations.
- 7. ... how products have positively impacted the life of real customers.
- 8. ... trendy terms that generate interest and increase brand visibility.

7. Read the statements in ex. 6 again and say which three strategies contribute most to a brand's success. Give examples by considering popular brands.
8. You are going to read a text about a rising phenomenon among consumers, often referred to as the alone-together paradox. Say what you think this paradox might be. Then, read the text to check your ideas.

Brand-businesses are facing a growing trend where customers seek to minimize interpersonal interactions, particularly in service-related settings – a phenomenon known as the Hermit Consumer. However, despite this desire for disconnection, the human need for connection remains strong. If brands want to win customer _____, they must understand this alone-together paradox. The challenge lies in actively _____ a connection with consumers while respecting their new desires. The fast-food sector has managed to meet this preference by targeting the drive-thru _____. While consumers may prefer the solitude of their car, they still need to belong, but this “belonging” is done differently as customers seek to validate and share experiences of their drive-thru visits on social media.

Along with the drive-thru, kiosks at fast food restaurants also _____ with the desires of the hermit consumer, allowing them to place an order on the screen, without the need to talk to anyone. By _____ technology, kiosks and drive-thrus have successfully managed to satisfy the dual need for disconnection and digital recognition.

Source: [Branding Strategy Insider](#)

9. Read the text again and complete the gaps with the correct form of five of the words in the boxes.

align forge leverage loyalty narrative niche relatability weave

10. Complete the statements with your own ideas. Share them with a partner and see if they agree.

- The Hermit Consumer phenomenon can also be seen...
- When making a purchase, I feel anxious or pressured if...
- Another way brands have adapted to changing consumer preferences to enhance customer loyalty is...
- Between maximizing convenience or forging strong emotional bonds among customers, I'd rather brands...
- When it comes to reliability, from my experience as a consumer, I'd say leveraging technology...

