

Rebranding is not a trend; it is a need for alignment in the lifecycle of a brand. Hence, companies like Godrej, Ceat, Bajaj Electricals, Shoppers Stop and VLCC have changed their appearance to reposition themselves in the evolving competitive era.

# Corporate India chasing a brand new image with trendy logos

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THE 112-year-old Godrej logo is now a vibrant mix of red, yellow and blue. Similarly, the rhino running next to Ceat's logo for 50 years is now no longer a part of the company's logo; the tagline is gone and bold 'T' is now a symbol of its much talked about toughness. Also, Bajaj Electricals has a new logo indicating its multi-product profile. Not far behind are relatively younger brands like Shoppers Stop—now without an apostrophe and a recognisable circle—and VLCC, which highlights its association with natural products with a new green logo.

The adage 'old is gold' seems to have lost its meaning in this era of revival for survival, at least for the India Inc, where five big brands have gone for a younger and vibrant look.

## NEED TO REINVENT

Companies who have gone in for a makeover say fierce competition, plummeting sales revenues and need for marketing innovation made rebranding inevitable for them.

Harish Bijoor Consults brand specialist & CEO Harish Bijoor explains the need to rebrand a company's image. "The younger generation feels jaded with old images and fonts. So, the brands want to have shades of contemporary design and style. Each brand is dictated by the whims and fancy of its customers," he says.

A makeover may include essential changes to the brand's logo, advertising theme or even the brand philosophy. Sometimes, it is just the need to connect with the changing times that a brand may want to change its look.

Take for instance, Shoppers Stop, which aims to strike a chord with the younger generation by upgrading its appearance, along with customer services. Shoppers Stop GM (marketing) Sheetal Choksi says: "We recognised the changing aspirations of our customers and, hence, decided on a makeover." A new classy box has now replaced the old round black-and-white logo, and the apostrophe in its name is also missing. In addition, the store has replaced its older tagline 'Shopping And Beyond' with 'Start Something New'.

On the contrary, Bajaj Electricals felt the need to sport a new logo to create an identity different from its parent company, as the company believes that it is a different entity with different set of stakeholders. So, Bajaj Electricals has now been registered as a new brand—BAJAJ written in vermilion orange and a new logo: a forward-looking eye, which represents the company's eye on the future and readiness to accept challenges.

## TIME FOR CHANGE?

Samsika Marketing Consultants MD Jagdeep Kapoor points out the situations that justify the makeover. These include setting up of a new entity by a company which needs a new identity, M&As and when a company wants to give a new direction to itself and establish a new connection with its customers. This may be done by adapting a theme either contemporary or modern and still not lose its pedigree.

Mr Bijoor feels no matter how successful a brand is, rebranding can help it reach new heights. "Brands have an opportunity to showcase their newness to customers by rebranding themselves. A logo can be perennial provided it's contemporary. However, in the current context, a brand cannot



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V-P, CEAT

remain insulated for more than 25 years.”

It is perhaps for this reason that Ceat decided to bid adieu to its 50-year-old rhino in the logo. The company feels the new logo is younger in its approach and connects better with today's consumers. Says Ceat V-P (sales & marketing) Arnab Banerjee: "The

old logo and the tagline worked wonders for the company in an era where the chief requirement from a tyre was to handle overloading. However, now the transportation game has changed. A tyre is now associated with mileage, cushioning, speed and parameters like cost per km, so the change in

company's marketing approach was inevitable." The company is said to have spent Rs 40 crore in rebranding.

Meanwhile, beauty and health care brand VLCC spent Rs 4 crore to get a new lush green and aqua blue logo called VLCC Natural Sciences for its personal care division in May this year. VLCC Personal Care CEO Harmet Pental says: "In an audit, we had found that customers recognised the brand, but were ignorant about the fact that it offered products to suit skin and hair problems. So, we decided to go for a re-positioning exercise wherein the brand is promoted as a natural-products company that provides solutions for skin, hair and other cosmetic problems."

## IT DOESN'T ALWAYS PAY

There have been some rebranding fiascos in the past to take a lesson from. Like the Air India rebranding exercise in the late eighties didn't take off as desired. Air India introduced a new 'sun' livery that was mostly white but had a golden sun on a red tail. The new logo, however, had to be dropped after it was applied to around a half of Air India's fleet as customers complained about phasing out of the classic colours. As a result, after two years the old scheme was returned. Since then, Air India has been opting for only minor updates and facelifts.

Coca-Cola's attempt to introduce the new Coke in 1985 was a major flop as it was sweeter than the original, much to the dislike of Coca-Cola lovers. The company had to rebrand itself and launch Coca-Cola Classic, which had the taste of the original cola.

"Rebranding is a powerful weapon like bhramasra, which should be used once in a while. It should justify the reason to enhance the brand equity and help a brand

reach the next level rather than being a lad," says Mr Kapoor. Mr Bijoor stresses on the need to understand market demands and preferences. "Rebranding success depends on how well you gauge your customers' aspirations," he says.

Agrees Ashwini Deshpande of Elephant Design (the company that gave Bajaj Auto a facelift). "Rebranding is not a trend; it is a need for alignment in the lifecycle of a brand. It has been done whenever the brand sees a gap between the product or service and its perception with the intended audience. If the gap is wide, it affects adversely on existing and prospective investors, employees, users/consumers and ultimately the bottom line."

## LESSONS TO LEARN

Consider GE, which used the technique wisely when it decided to reposition itself in 2003. It wanted to be known as a provider of more than just lighting and appliances and raise awareness of such GE businesses as wind power, water technologies, security systems and jet engines. A series of advertisements using humour and innovation showcased its different businesses.

Whereas Xerox only changed its logo that has helped it to position itself as a global company with human connections. The company recently unveiled a new logo, which is a lowercase treatment of the Xerox name in vibrant red, alongside a sphere-shaped symbol sketched with lines that form an 'X'. Says Xerox India executive director (production systems group) Vipin Tuteja: "The new brand has given Xerox a contemporary look, which is relevant to the business today—a less formal, livelier image with strong association to our heritage."