

HOW TO ACHIEVE

**Brand  
Consistency  
to Gain  
Competitive  
Advantage**

*bitly*

**S**uccessful brands have something in common: They're consistent. Whether you're an influencer, startup or enterprise, whether your team is a team of one or 100, investing in making sure your brand is consistent across every device and channel will pay dividends.

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**23%**

**The average revenue increase attributed to always presenting your brand consistently<sup>1</sup>**

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A consistent brand can help remove friction from your customer touchpoints, directly impacting your teams' performance—from your marketing team's capacity to generate and nurture new leads to





your sales team's ability to quickly and effectively close deals. Put simply, brand consistency is an incredibly important factor to your bottom line.

Today's consumers can have complex buying behaviors. Before making purchasing decisions, they may research your brand, read reviews, chat with others—even try out your competitors. The less work prospects have to do to decide if your brand is trustworthy, the more your teams can focus on the solutions you have to offer them.

This is why maintaining a consistent, distinguishable brand experience across all of your communications plays such an important role in getting your customers to understand your value proposition and, eventually, decide to purchase.

<sup>1</sup> <https://bitly.is/32acytd>

# In this ebook, we'll cover:

-  What brand consistency is and why it's important
-  How it can impact your bottom line
-  Tips for maintaining a consistent brand across channels
-  Examples of businesses that have built strong, consistent brands

# Table of Contents

01	<b>What Does it Mean to Have a Consistent Brand?</b>	05 ▶
02	<b>Brand Consistency and Customer Loyalty</b>	10 ▶
03	<b>Building a Great Brand: The Keys to Establishing Consistency</b>	16 ▶
04	<b>What Consistent Looks Like: 4 Examples of Strong, Consistent Brands</b>	27 ▶

# 01

## What Does it Mean to Have a Consistent Brand?

We're going to cover what it takes to build and maintain a consistent brand, but before we do let's talk about what it actually means to have one.

Brand consistency is when your brand elements align with your core values and are delivered consistently across your channels and communications. This includes everything from the tone and voice you use in emails out to customers to the look and feel of your website.

### A clear, consistent brand can help you:

- ✓ Gain credibility
- ✓ Inspire trust & loyalty in your customers
- ✓ Boost your visibility within your market
- ✓ Justify charging a premium for your products & services
- ✓ Distinguish yourself from your competitors
- ✓ Establish a strong & consistent cross-channel customer experience

When we talk about establishing your brand, we're not just talking about creating a logo. We're talking about creating a brand strategy and sticking to it. To do this, you need to know your target audience, determine your mission and values, research your competitors, understand your value proposition, find and define your brand voice, develop the tools you will use to

communicate the brand (e.g., your logo, tagline, etc.), and so much more.

Throughout this process, you have to protect the brand you're building by making sure you're using these guidelines and tools to maintain a consistent customer experience across each of your communication channels.

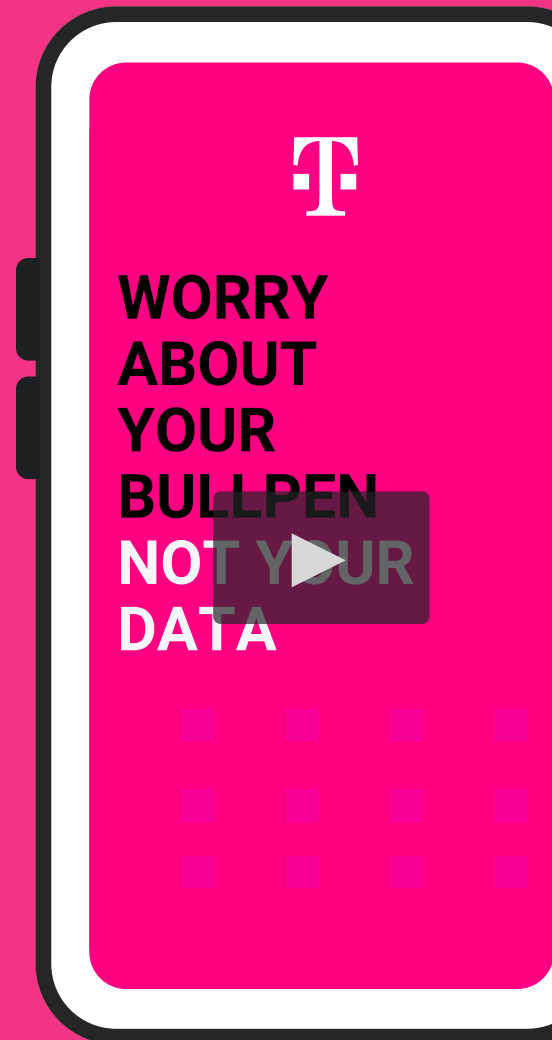
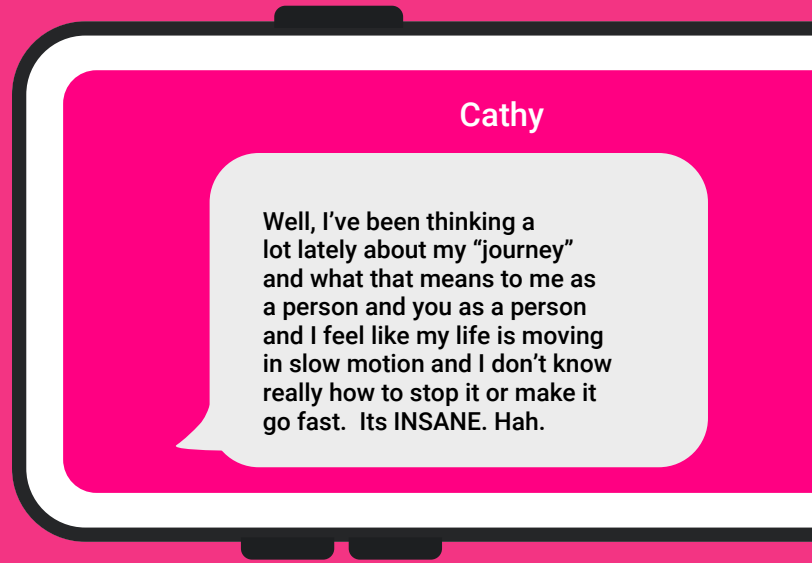
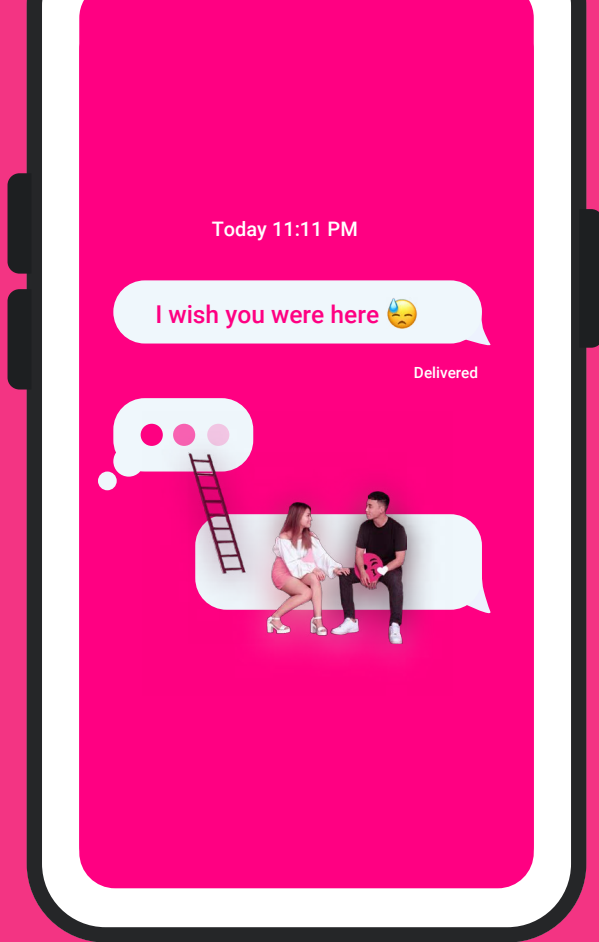
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## Consider the cellular company T-Mobile.

**T-Mobile** has invested in creating a brand that appeals to a younger audience that is interested in having more control in the products and services they pay for, such as mobile phones and cellular contracts.

The company has rebranded several times since late 1990s. Today, the brand feels approachable, accessible and fun. It often taps into the interests of their Millennial and Gen-Z audience, tying topics like sports and long distance relationships back to data plans and text messaging.





By using a consistent color palette in its communications—the varying shades of pink have become synonymous with T-Mobile’s brand—the mobile company stands out from its competitors, establishing a strong presence across its channels. You won’t miss their posts as you scroll through your social feeds!

T-Mobile has extended its tone of voice and brand look and feel across all of its communications, including its commercials. In 2019 the company ran multiple ads during the Super Bowl tying together research on its younger audience with the brand’s playful tone and distinctive look and feel. One ad poked fun at long texters, while others used humor to announce partnerships with the Millennial and Gen-Z-friendly companies Taco Bell and Lyft.



**We’re always trying to keep things fresh. We’re a brand that really likes to go big and sort of stand out.<sup>2</sup>**

Nick Drake, EVP of Marketing & Experience, T-Mobile

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<sup>2</sup> <https://bitly.is/2lYrPOx>







## **Remember: Your brand is more than just its logo.**

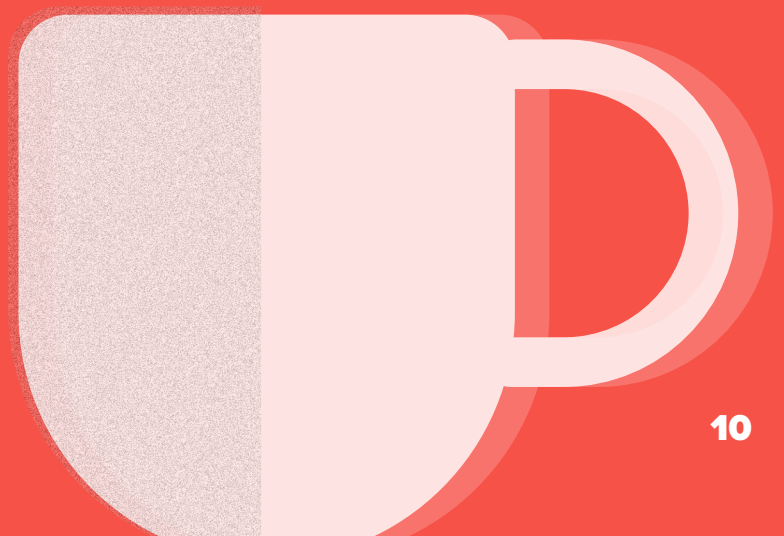
How your brand appears across its devices and channels plays an important role in how your customers and prospects perceive you. Whether they're aware of it or not, consumers make careful considerations about the brands they're scoping out. *Is this brand competent? Can it be trusted? Can I connect with its mission and values?*

While your prospective customers ask themselves these questions, you have an opportunity to position your brand—through its tone of voice, messaging, look and feel, and other brand elements—to give them the confidence to answer these questions with a resounding “yes!”

# 02

## Brand Consistency and Customer Loyalty

Consider this: You just touched down in a country you've never been to and you're in desperate need of a caffeine fix to help push you through the jet lag. As you walk through the airport, you have a choice to make: You can grab a cup of coffee at an unfamiliar cafe or you can order your usual at a nearby Starbucks.



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## **The greatest negative impact of inconsistent brand usage is the creation of confusion in the market.<sup>3</sup>**

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In the last chapter, we talked about the benefits of establishing and maintaining a consistent brand. Now let's talk a bit about what's at stake if you present your brand inconsistently.

### **An unclear, inconsistent brand can lead to:**

- A poor customer experience
- Miscommunication about your business
- An inability to build trust with customers

Your customers' time is valuable (and limited). You don't want to waste it with them trying to work out what you do, or whether you have a solution to a challenge they're trying to solve. At best this is a little frustrating and at worst you lose business to a competitor brand if your prospect or customer decides to look elsewhere for answers.

<sup>3</sup> <https://bitly.is/32acytd>



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**By investing in building a consistent brand, you can leverage it to help you take control over your customer experience.**

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Your brand and customer experience are linked. If a person has a positive experience with your brand, they're more likely to trust it. And if they're more likely to trust your brand, they're more likely to do business with you.

In fact, consumers have come to expect a consistent, distinguishable brand experience. In one study, 90% of people surveyed said that they expected brands to use the same branding across all of their platforms and channels.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, however, only a quarter of companies say they stick to their brand guidelines, leading to inconsistent brand presentation across channels.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bitly.is/2HxXbTj>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bitly.is/34cRhkc>

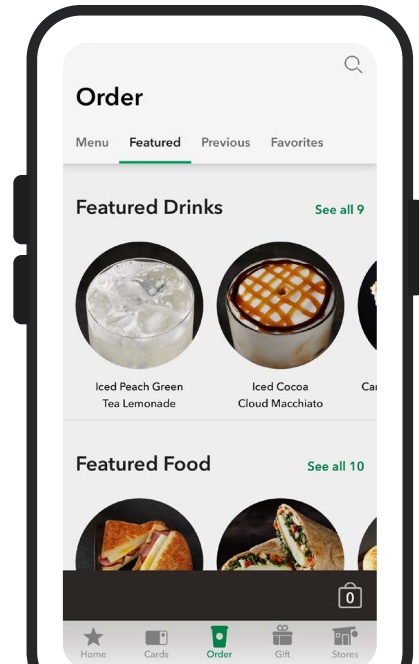


# Consider this example

**Starbucks** is one of the most known brands in the world. Its logo is iconic. And while its global expansion is impressive to say the least, Starbucks didn't become known across the world overnight. The company's first global brand campaign launched in 2014, long after the brand had established itself as the world's largest roaster and retailer of specialty coffee.<sup>6</sup>

Before expanding onto the international scene, Starbucks had established a strong, consistent brand back home in the United States.

No matter which of its thousands of locations customers visit, they know



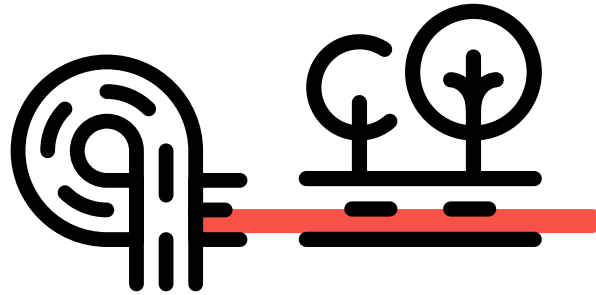
what to generally expect from the products, the service and the space. There will be WiFi. There will be indoor seating. Their go-to Starbucks drink will likely be on the menu. And the baristas will write their name on a paper cup to add a personal touch.

<sup>6</sup> <https://bitly.is/2ML9PTw>

**Today, Starbucks continues to push its brand forward, taking advantage of new and emerging customer engagement platforms.**

It has developed a strong presence on social media and has also invested in mobile marketing, particularly its rewards program which is tracked through the company's mobile app. It has maintained an undeniably "Starbucks" look and feel, benefitting from the trust and credibility it has built with its customers as it continues to expand into new markets and territories.





## **Remember: It's a journey, not a destination.**

The trick to achieving brand consistency is to remain, well, consistent. And that's easier said than done. There's a lot of upfront work that goes into it. Later in this guide we'll go over what that work entails, but for now it's helpful to understand that achieving brand consistency isn't a destination, it's an ongoing journey of establishing, positioning and protecting your brand.

# 03

## Building a Great Brand: The Keys to Establishing Consistency

Now that you know more about the importance of establishing and maintaining brand consistency, it's time to take a look at the current state of your brand.

If you're reading this ebook, chances are you think your brand can be doing better in the consistency department. Perhaps your communications have a disjointed look and feel, or your messaging doesn't feel consolidated across every device and channel.

In this chapter, we'll talk about how you can begin to piece together a fragmented customer experience, so your brand can engage and inspire your audience to take action.

We know that consistency not only makes your brand recognizable, it helps to make it memorable and a part of your customers' lifestyle. Now let's take a look at some ways you can achieve that consistency.

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**In this chapter, we'll be discussing four key criteria to building and maintaining a consistent brand:**

- ✔ Understanding your mission
- ✔ Setting up a brand style guide
- ✔ Creating easy-to-use processes
- ✔ Using branded links





## Understand your mission

A consistent brand can't be achieved without a consistent customer experience. So if your internal teams don't share a common understanding of your mission and values, your customers' experience of your brand could be a mixed bag.

So, start there. This is foundational to all that follows.

Ask the following questions:

- Why does your brand exist?
- What has it been created to do?
- Is everyone in your organization aligned on that mission?



## Consider these examples

When you think of **Walt Disney** and **Lyft**, do you see alignment between their mission statements and how they present their brands to the world?



The mission of The Walt Disney Company is to entertain, inform and inspire people around the globe through the power of unparalleled storytelling, reflecting the iconic brands, creative minds and innovative technologies that make ours the world's premier entertainment company.



We envision a world where cities feel small again. Where transportation and tech bring people together, instead of apart. We see the future as community-driven — and it starts with you.

Getting every team on the same page when it comes to your mission and values becomes even more important as you scale. In other words, to scale your business, you have to scale your mission and values, too. According to a Gallup study, businesses with employees that align with company values outperform competition by 20 percent.<sup>7</sup>

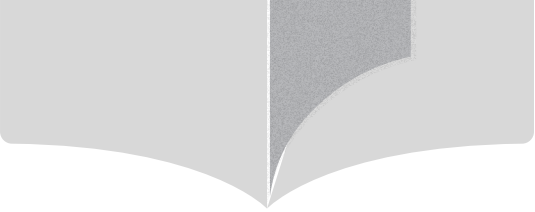
<sup>7</sup> <https://bitly.is/30TpeEJ>



## **Set up a brand style guide**

Achieving brand consistency is impossible if your visual design elements are presented inconsistently across your advertisements, newsletters and other communications.

When your branding is consistent across channels and devices, its perceived value increases. In fact, the impression your prospects have of your brand could make or break a deal before they even make contact with you.



A style guide helps set a standard for how your internal team uses your brand to achieve business goals. It's the glue that holds your brand together and it outlines the “dos” and “don'ts” related to how to best present your brand.

**Include these 5 elements in your style guide:**

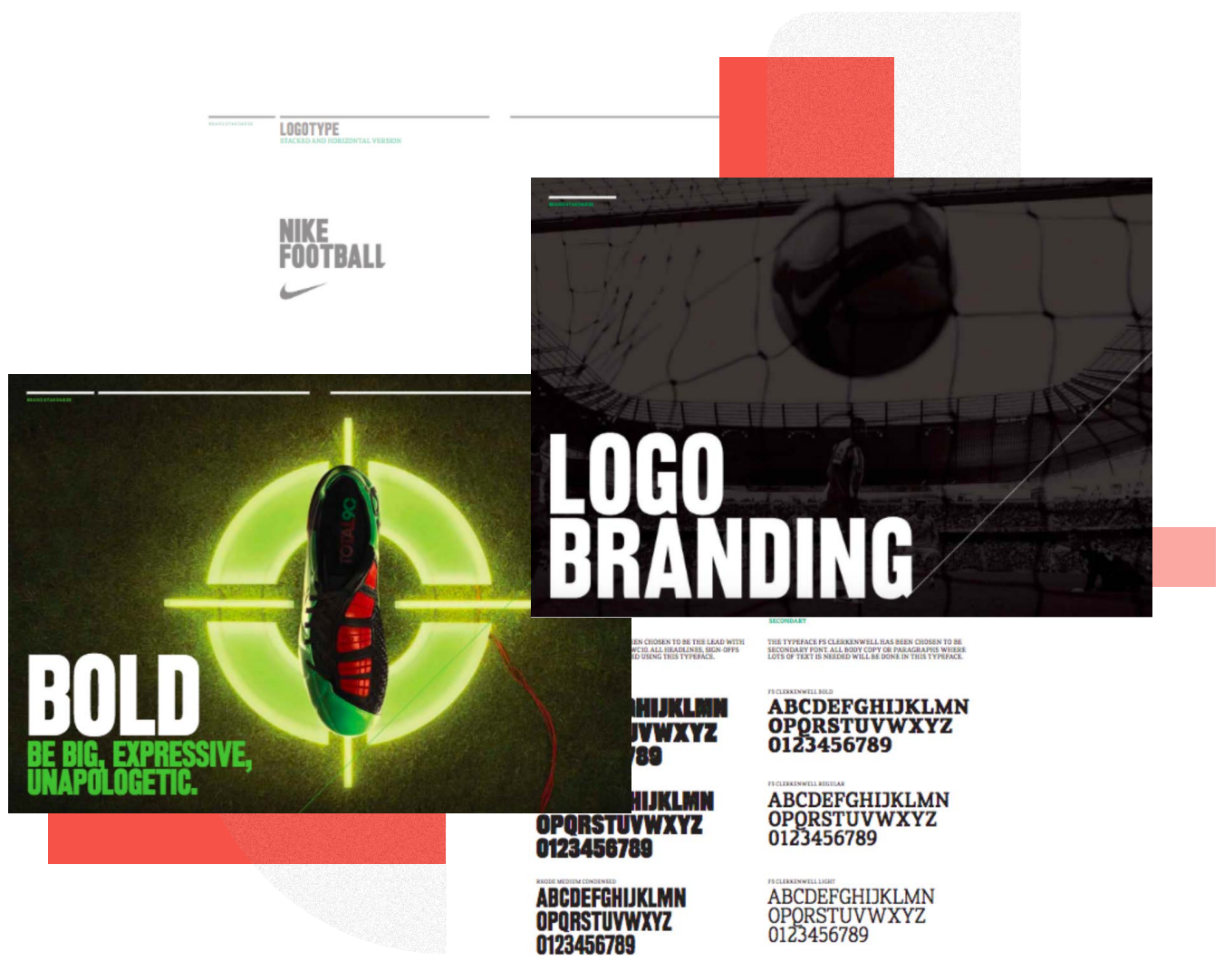
- Typography
- Logo variations
- Imagery
- Color palettes
- Taglines

Having a set of guidelines in place helps *align* your internal team and *empower* them with the assets they need to share communications in a way that is true to your brand.



# Consider this example

**Nike Football** is a sub-brand of Nike. In its style guide, Nike outlines its design principles—“11 design commandments”—for everything they create.



# IMAGE CREATION

USING THE VECTOR PIXELS SCRIPTOGRAPHER  
PLUGIN FOR ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR TO CREATE

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## **How Nike Football approached its style guide**

The 92-page guide is extremely comprehensive. Among other brand elements, it includes logo branding guidelines, typeface examples—even a section on the brand’s photography principles.

Depending on your brand, you may only need to cover a quarter of what Nike included in its style guide. But it’s a great model to look to for inspiration. Few brands have as strong a presence as Nike, or do as good a job at communicating their brand elements consistently.



## Create easy-to-use processes

Creating a brand style guide is a huge step in the direction of getting everyone in your organization on the same page when it comes to presenting your brand consistently.

At Bitly, our design team has set up an extensive set of resources for people across the organization, such as branded presentation decks and business letter templates.

For other visual needs, the marketing and design teams have a recurring, bimonthly meeting to discuss upcoming projects and tasks that require cross-team collaboration.

Regular marketing-design team syncs help to:

- ✓ Get project stakeholders on the same page
- ✓ Tighten up the look and feel of customer-facing materials
- ✓ Group related projects together to achieve consistency
- ✓ Make sure your deliverables meet your org's standards

Prior to the meeting, the teams make sure to update our project management tool (we use Jira) with information on each of the design asks. Then, we use the meeting to discuss those requests, ask any open questions and align on timelines.



## Use branded links

Links are ubiquitous. So much so that you probably don't realize just how often you share them and how integral they are to your day to day operations—and your customers'.

You share them across all of your devices and channels, from email to your website and social media, from your offline to your online experience. Links thread together your customer journey and play a critical role in how they engage with your brand.



Branded links have the same functionality as long links, but they're shorter, keep your brand front and center and provide critical data on the performance of your content and customer communications.



## **Branded links help:**

- ✓ **Drive results:** Research shows that branded links drive up to 34% better results vs. non-branded links.
- ✓ **Build trust:** With more clicks, comes more recognition—which in turn leads people to have more confidence in your content, further accelerating their engagement with it.
- ✓ **Take control over your communications:** You are fully in charge of how your links look and where they link to.

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## **Branded links help you drive up to 34% higher click-throughs than unbranded links.**

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At Bitly, getting started with branded links is a quick, painless process. You can discover, set up and start using your ideal custom domain, for free, within minutes—all without ever leaving the application.



When your brand elements are consistently presented, over time they become rooted in your customers' minds. A logo, a mascot—even a color threaded across your channels—can start to feel synonymous with your brand itself. (Think of the rainbow lettering in Google's wordmark, for example. If you swapped out the letters for something else entirely, you'd probably still think "Google.")

This can be a huge advantage in your market. If your customers remember your brand over your competitors, they're more likely to think of you as established. And instead of focusing on whether or not your brand is reputable, they can focus on your products and services, and the solutions they offer them.

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### **Brand consistency checklist:**

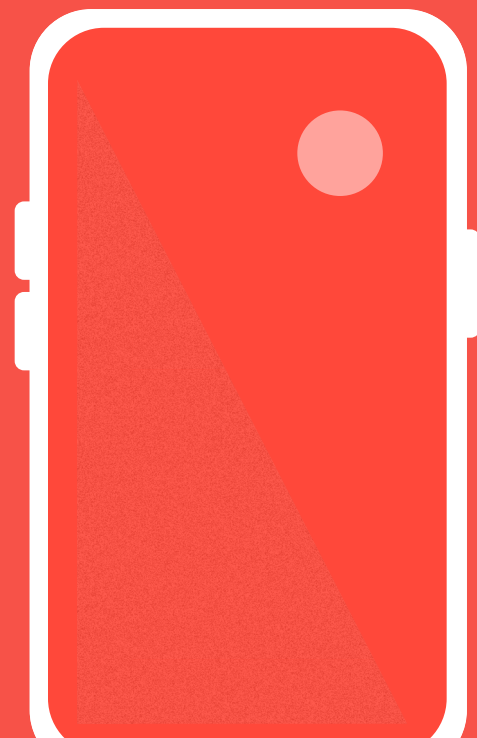
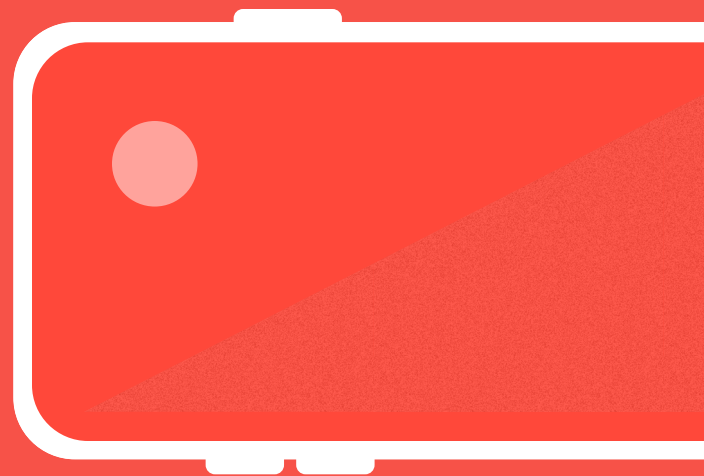
- ✓ Invest in making sure your company remains firmly rooted in its values.
- ✓ Empower your company with design elements they can use in communications to customers.
- ✓ Sync regularly with your design team to align on upcoming projects and tasks.
- ✓ Share branded links to optimize your customer touchpoints.

# 04

## Examples of businesses that have built strong, consistent brands

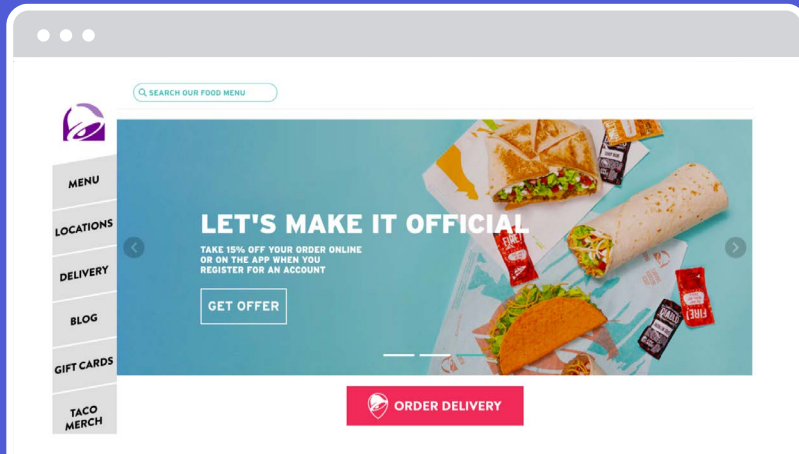
So what does it look like to have a consistent brand? The answer is, it depends! But as we mentioned throughout this guide, the visuals, voice and messaging that you use can tie together your brand's look and feel across its different channels.

The examples below illustrate this perfectly. Each shows that how you present yourself or business across your website, social channels, mobile app, e-newsletter and other customer-facing communications helps to paint the broader picture of your brand for your audience—and that's key to ensuring consistency in how your brand looks, as well as how people experience it.

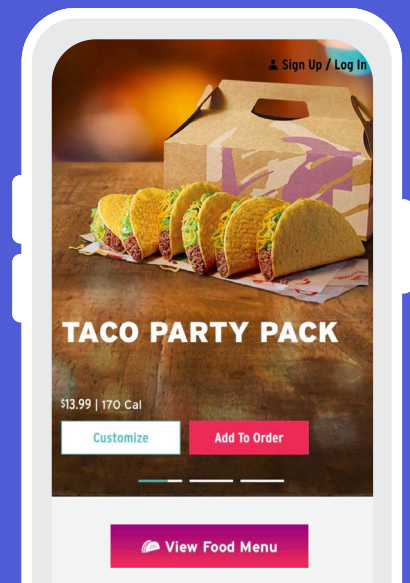


Example #1

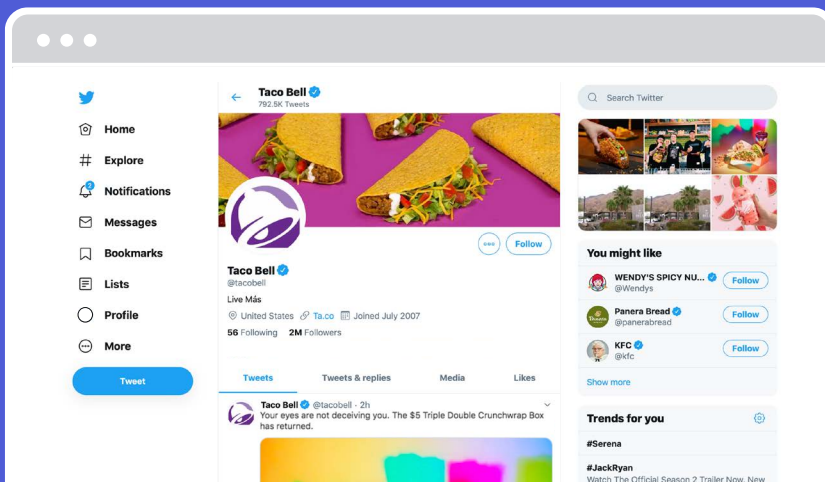
# Taco Bell



Website

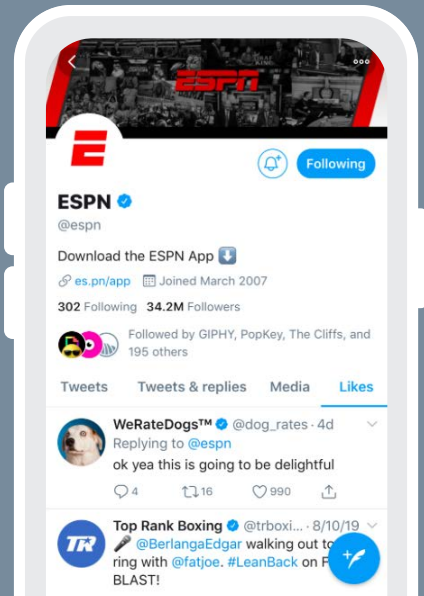


Mobile App



Social

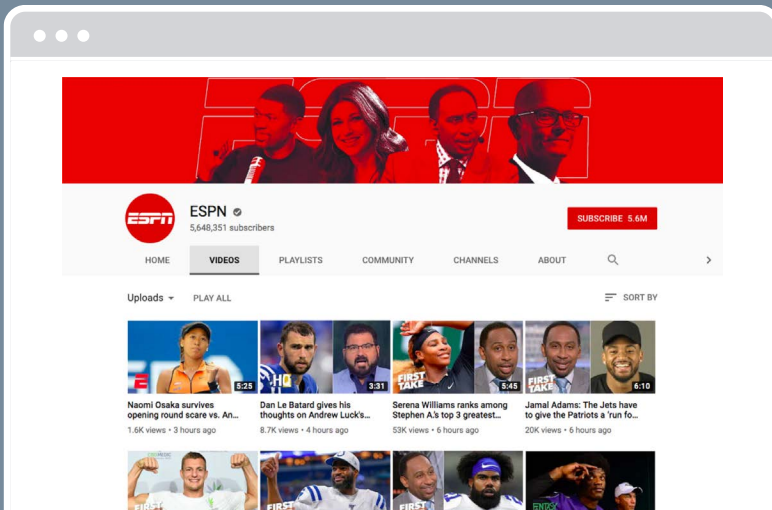




Newsletter

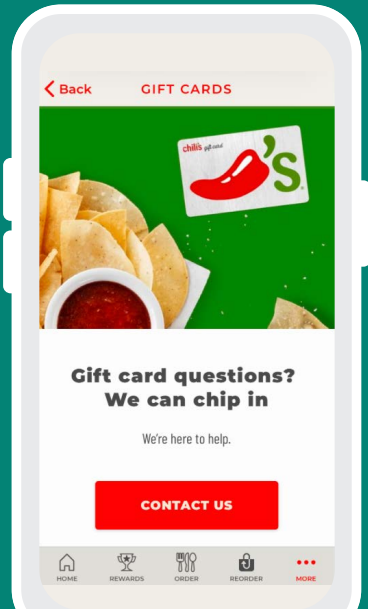


Social

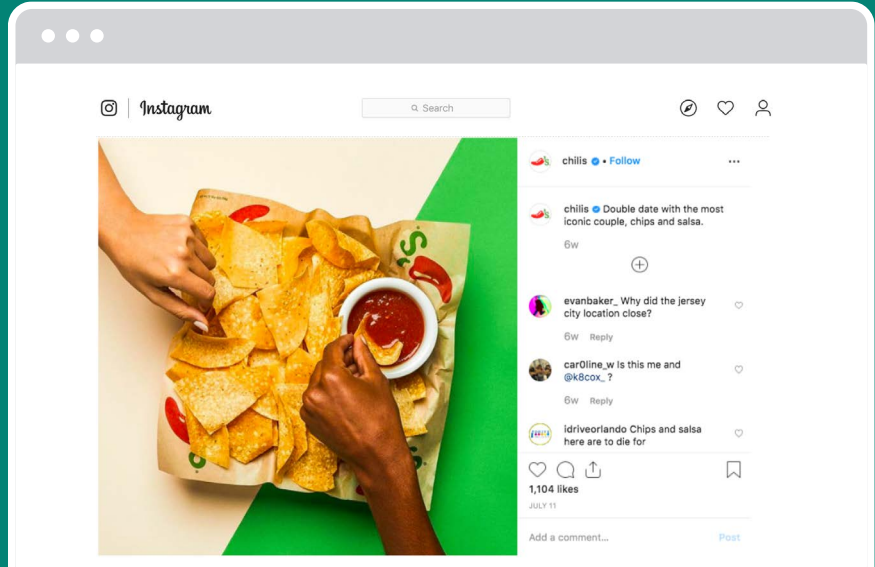


YouTube

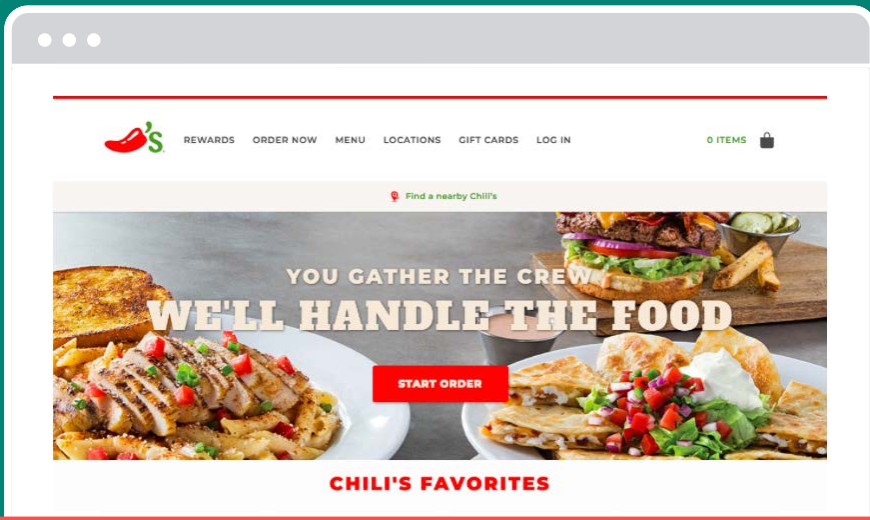
Example #2  
**ESPN**



Mobile App



Social



Website

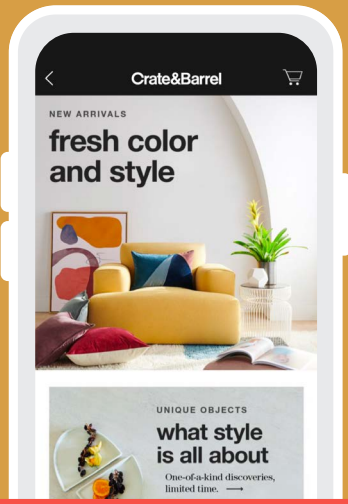
Example #3  
**Chilis**



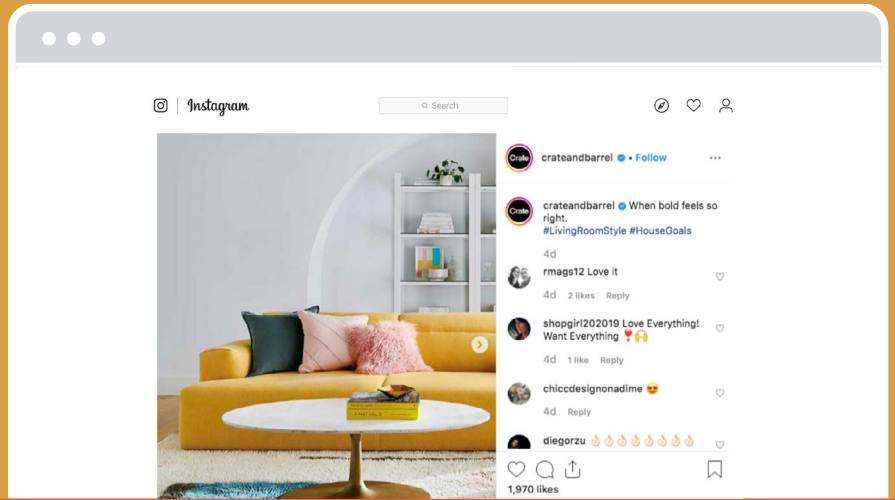


Example #4

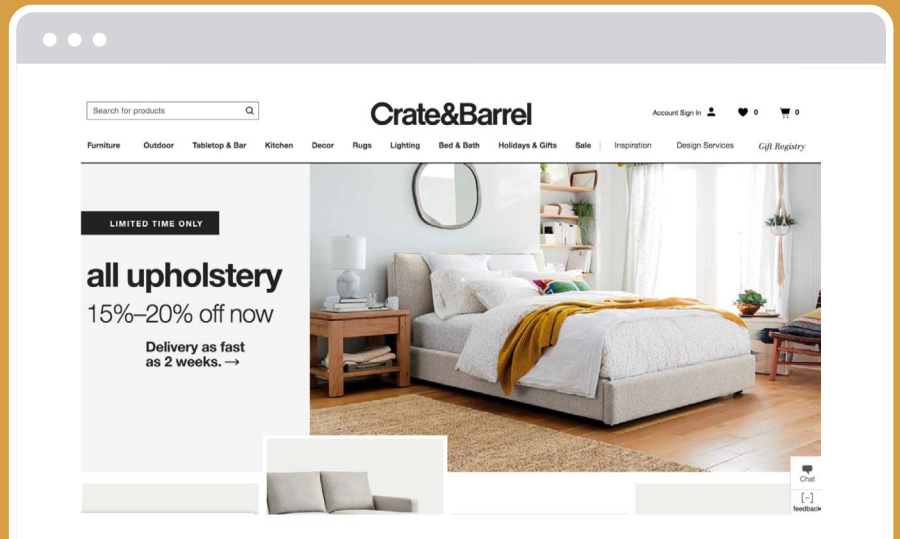
# Crate & Barrel



Mobile App



Social



Website



# Wrapping it up

If you take one thing away from this guide, let it be that consistent brands are successful brands.

Brand consistency plays a huge role in creating and nurturing your brand's relationships with consumers, which is critical to building trust and inspiring customer loyalty. As a result, working on establishing and maintaining a consistent, cross-channel customer experience can help improve your bottom line.

Establishing this consistency is an ongoing collaborative effort. But with the right guidelines and tools in place, you can empower your organization to help strengthen your audiences' relationship with your brand across every customer touchpoint.



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# About Bitly

Bitly is used by businesses around the world to build stronger connections with their customers across every digital channel. Our complete Link Management Platform empowers businesses of every size to embed short, branded call-to-action links in their communications using tools, analytics and insights to maximize the impact of every digital initiative. Learn more about us on [our website](#).



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