

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

DIFFERENTIATING YOUR BRAND IN THE COMMODITIZED FURNISHED APARTMENT INDUSTRY

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INTRODUCTION

This executive summary delivers strategic insights and practical recommendations for positioning your furnished apartment brand as a market leader by examining how this industry can learn from other companies in navigating the complexities of commoditization in order to thrive in a highly competitive, dynamic environment.

Commoditization occurs when products or services become indistinguishable from one another, compelling consumers to base their choices primarily on price. In the furnished apartment industry, this trend has become evident as numerous providers offer similar amenities and standardized services. Traditional features such as location and price are no longer sufficient to set offerings apart. Distinguishing your brand is essential to attract and retain clients, as the market becomes increasingly commoditized.

Furnished apartment providers don't need to spend millions of dollars on brand value, rather examining how other companies created enhanced experiences and differentiators.

By exploring strategies to differentiate your brand, focusing on developing a compelling brand purpose, enhancing customer experiences, leveraging social media and implementing innovative marketing tactics. By adopting these approaches, furnished apartment providers can create a unique market position, strengthen customer loyalty and drive sustainable business growth.

THE STARBUCKS EXAMPLE: HOW A GREAT BRAND CAN STRUGGLE

Cutting costs doesn't always result in greater revenue. Starbucks, once a dominant player in creating a "third place" experience, offers a cautionary tale for how commoditization can challenge even the strongest brands. Since 2016, its focus on transactional loyalty programs, cost-saving changes such as replacing comfortable seating with wooden chairs and reducing outlet


accessibility has diluted its unique appeal. To regain customer trust and loyalty, experts argued Starbucks needed to reinvest in experiential aspects that differentiate its brand from others in the coffee space, such as enhancing in-store ambiance and customer experiences.

Starbucks learned guest experience has much greater value; it is part of the selection process, and delivers revenue growth and sustainable results. This value can only be perceived, visualized and experienced by the guest or customer.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN BRAND DIFFERENTIATION

Digital transformation can significantly bolster brand differentiation by improving customer engagement, operational efficiency and personalization. Companies across diverse industries illustrate how leveraging digital tools create competitive advantages:

- **Domino's Pizza** transformed from a pizza delivery business into a leading e-commerce company by developing platforms like Domino's Tracker® and Any Ware, a software technology provider, to provide customers the ability to order pizza from any device and send to any location.
- **Capital One** re-imagined banking by prioritizing technology and customer-centric digital experiences, incorporating big data, machine learning and agile software practices to tailor customer interactions.
- **Kleenex** continually refreshes its brand by redesigning its packaging to align with seasonal themes, demonstrating how even in mature, commoditized markets, innovation can create differentiation and brand excitement.
- **FIJI Water** sets itself apart by emphasizing its artisan source, environmental sustainability



and social responsibility, building a compelling brand narrative that resonates deeply with customers seeking premium bottled water. Developing a compelling brand can foster a strong emotional connection with customers. FIJI Water aligns its brand identity with environmental sustainability and community enhancement, positioning itself as more than just a water company.

Articulating a strong purpose can enhance perceived value and establish your brand as a market leader.

HOW HOTELS DIFFERENTIATE

The luxury segment of the hospitality industry has grown significantly, with a compound annual growth rate of 11.5%. Independent hotels and hotel chains are challenging traditional luxury brands such as Ritz-Carlton, Aman, Four Seasons, and Mandarin Oriental. Luxury branding focuses on quality, exclusivity and storytelling to engage a specific consumer type. Luxury brands focus on authenticity, one-on-one relationships, service, personalization, artistic design, craftsmanship and quality in all things.

To differentiate themselves from mainstream hospitality brands, luxury brands must distill their identity to create a clear message for a particular demographic. They focus on exclusivity and rarity, such as limited guest numbers, high price points and exceptional services. Heritage and legacy are also crucial in the luxury hotel industry, as they help deliver unique and authentic guest experiences and showcase the history and culture of the area.


HOW TO MAKE YOUR BRAND STAND OUT

- **Memorable and personalized experiences:** By offering customized furnishing options, flexible lease terms and high-touch service, a visually pleasing environment can create lasting positive

impressions. Personalization makes guests feel valued and can drive organic growth, from reputation to social media, repeat business and referrals. This strategy parallels approaches seen in hospitality giants like Ritz-Carlton, which focuses on individualized guest care.

- **Leverage social media to build brand champions:** According to Sprout Social, these platforms provide an opportunity to connect with prospective and current clients in a meaningful way. Brands can use platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to showcase properties, share engaging content and host interactive polls to help gauge customer preferences.
- **Recognize the value of visual content:** Investing in high-quality photos and video can have a significant impact on prospective customers' perception of your brand. High-resolution images and immersive 3D virtual tours allow prospects to "walk through" spaces digitally before making decisions, saving time while increasing both inquiry rates and perceived value. Today, amazing real estate photos are only part of a successful equation for the buyer and seller. The future is in 3D virtual tours. Agencies are turning to Matterport's 3D tours for driving engagement and reserving properties.
- **Focus on customer-centric technology:** Implementing innovative marketing strategies, such as interactive content or targeted local SEO campaigns, can help brands stand out in crowded markets. Optimizing your Google Business Profile to appear prominently in search results also ensures better visibility and boosts credibility among potential tenants

Branding encompasses a company's identity, mission and how it engages the world, extending beyond logos or slogans. Effective branding consistently communicates core values and creates memorable experiences. For example,



Apple's minimalist design and "Think Different" ethos build customer loyalty, while trademarks protect its innovations. Nike's "Just Do It" slogan and swoosh logo convey inspiration and athleticism across ads, product design and social initiatives, creating strong consumer bonds. Smaller brands, like BrewDog, use bold campaigns and storytelling to stand out. Intellectual property protections reinforce brand equity, ensuring exclusivity, recognition and long-term customer trust.

CONCLUSION

Differentiating your brand in the increasingly commoditized furnished apartment industry is critical for long-term success. By developing a compelling brand purpose, enhancing customer experiences, leveraging social media, investing in high-quality visuals and embracing innovative marketing, providers can create a distinctive market brand position.

Ultimately, businesses who prioritize differentiation will attract more loyal tenants, command higher perceived value and drive sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive market landscape.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand.asp
- www.techtarget.com/searchcio/tip/4-examples-of-digital-transformation-success-in-business
- hbr.org/2024/06/how-starbucks-devalued-its-own-brand
- hbr.org/2023/03/8-best-practices-for-creating-a-compelling-customer-experience
- www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4123896.html

ABOUT CHPA

Corporate Housing Providers Association (CHPA) is the only trade association dedicated exclusively to the corporate housing industry. The association advances the highest standards in

business and professionalism; provides valuable insight, knowledge and resources to the industry; and increases visibility among related industries. Along with networking, education, certification, and information sharing, CHPA members grow their business and expand their reach through an international network of partners. Find out more about corporate or furnished apartments at www.chpaonline.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Higgins is the founder of Revalant Consulting and Recruiting. Serving as the Senior Partner, Revalant specializes in corporate housing, residential real estate, and the hospitality industry. As a former Vice President and sales leader at BridgeStreet, Oakwood and Convene, he has an expertise in having companies act more strategically, reach their maximum potential, achieve significant revenue growth, and deliver market expansion through sales development, branding, marketing, project management, and talent acquisition.

ABOUT REVALANT

Revalant works with organizations to successfully sell into the Fortune 1000, vertical markets, and uncover sales and operational advancement. Members of the Revalant team are experts in millennial workforce integration, business development, lead generation and project management. With exceptional leadership and a unique perspective for developing and driving others to fulfill their potential. Revalant delivers results on both the strategic and tactical level by providing executive leadership and direction, targeting sustainable revenue growth and market expansion. Revalant aims to assist businesses that are looking to improve various aspects within their company. Revalant tailors their approach to the company's specific needs and budget, while isolating key areas for development and creating a plan to implement and execute for success.