

Walking billboards keep brands visible, budgets low

For most companies the most important part of business is getting new clientele and accounts. It is for this reason that many spend millions in advertising and marketing. However, newer ways of lowering costs and creating brand awareness have sprung up.

By [Titus Kaloki](#) 7 May 2009

For example SMS and digital marketing has cut across gender, race and location providing unlimited target market. Sadly though, not many in Kenya are tech-savvy and the youth are the only majority aware of these means. So, how does a brand create its own market share and send a message that resonates with its consumers without incurring expensive budgets?

The answer lies in what is referred to as 'walking billboards'. This is where a company brands clothing. This method is very effective especially if the target market is small and the need to use mass communication media like radio and television is unnecessary. Nancy Juma of Silver Bullet Public Relations says, "Whilst advertising creates awareness about a brand, branding clothing items is preferred because it creates a bond between products and customers."

If well executed, branding can be an effective and specialised way of marketing. There are however, a few things to consider when branding T-shirts, caps and bags with an organisation's identity symbols and colours.

The message must be personalised. This is because branded apparel is effective in communicating to staff members and creates brand attachment among employees. Also if the quality of the attire is poor, customers may not trust the brand because it determines their perception; nobody wants their branded clothing turned into nightwear.

If a company gives out branded polo shirts and then a customer comes across an unruly or rowdy person wearing it, it might change his/her perception towards the brand or even lower the brand equity. It is therefore important to control who and where your branded items are given. Branding might be expensive for large orders but the impact of 500 people wearing branded T-shirts or caps at a product launch would be more visible than a billboard stationed at one point.

The best branded giveaways due to the current technological trends are USB flash disks, CD racks, mouse pads and keyboards. Having your company logo or name ensures it is seen every time someone uses it.

Going green is also a current trend that may go down well with consumers if branded material is eco-friendly. However, just like any other advertising medium, branding garments is effective when complimented with other promotion strategies like advertising, direct sales and public relations.

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