

## Building a Brand for Your Bar or Restaurant

By Rieva Lesonsky



As you plan the launch of your new bar or restaurant, one of the most crucial steps to success is developing a brand. Your brand encompasses your logo, trademark and marketing materials, among other things, but it's more than the sum of these parts. To state it simply, your brand is the *image* of your business.

Consider two businesses that both serve frozen treats, but have very different brands: Baskin-Robbins and Pinkberry. What do you think of when you think of these two brands? Here are some words that come to mind for me:

**Baskin-Robbins:** *Fun, family, tradition, kid-friendly, happy, familiar*

**Pinkberry:** *Hip, trendy, modern, sophisticated, upscale, new*

To develop your brand, begin by considering your what makes your bar or restaurant different from the competition. Factors to think about include:

- **Special benefits.** Does your bar or restaurant fill a need or solve a problem? Maybe it's the only affordable lunch spot in an area with lots of high-end restaurants. Perhaps it's a family-friendly eatery near an amusement park.
- **Unique features.** Does your bar or restaurant have something no competing establishment in your area has? That could be a banquet room, a sing-along piano bar or waiters dressed as clowns.
- **Production methods.** Is there something noteworthy about how your food is made? Perhaps you serve only locally sourced or organic ingredients. Maybe your tortillas are handmade while customers watch.
- **Suppliers.** Do you serve hard-to-find or desirable brands? Maybe your bar features a wide selection of premium tequilas, or your New York-style deli showcases brands normally sold only on the East Coast.
- **Target market.** Who is your target customer? Families with young children? Hip singles? Sports fans? Foodies?

- **Atmosphere.** Is your bar or restaurant hip or traditional? Romantic or family-friendly? Noisy and energetic, or quiet and peaceful?

Next, create your marketing message, which briefly summarizes what your brand stands for. Here are some sample marketing messages:

*“Mike’s Brewpub is a casual, friendly neighborhood restaurant serving lunch, dinner and an ever-changing selection of craft beers—including its own brews—to discerning beer lovers.”*

*“Mundo is an eclectic eatery spotlighting small plates of cuisines from around Latin America. We serve fun, exotic food in an upbeat, energetic atmosphere that caters to foodies.”*

*“Al Italia is a romantic, upscale Italian restaurant that caters to special occasions and celebrations. We serve classic Northern Italian dishes in a traditional setting.”*

Once you’ve developed a marketing message that “hits the spot,” be sure all of your marketing efforts convey and reinforce that message. That’s the secret to building a bar or restaurant brand.

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