



BRANDING

What is it? Why is it Important? How to create it?

WHAT IS A BRAND?

- Brand is everything people perceive you as. It's your personality, every word you write, the fonts and colors you use, the way you make people feel when they read your books or visit your website.
- Many people wrongly equate brand to a logo or website colours and although these are brand elements, **a brand is much more than just these graphic aspects.**
- Let's look at this company:



- What company is this?
- What is this company's tagline?
- What do you equate with this brand?

Brand = Promise

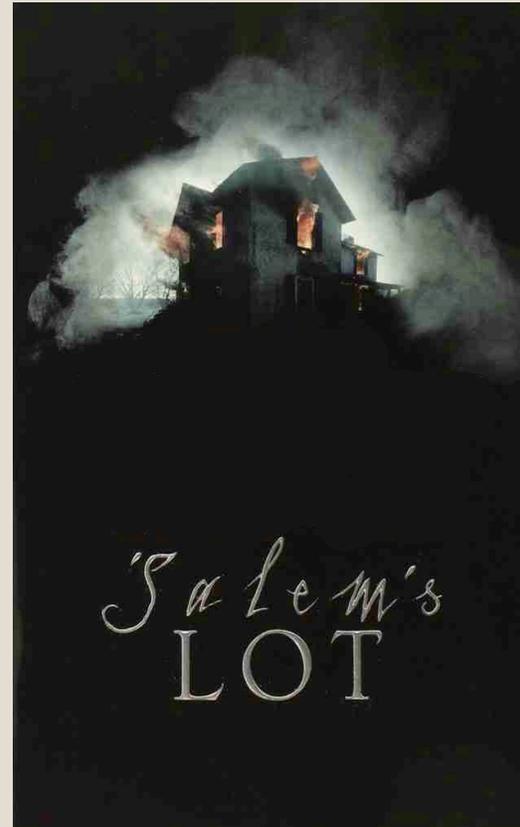
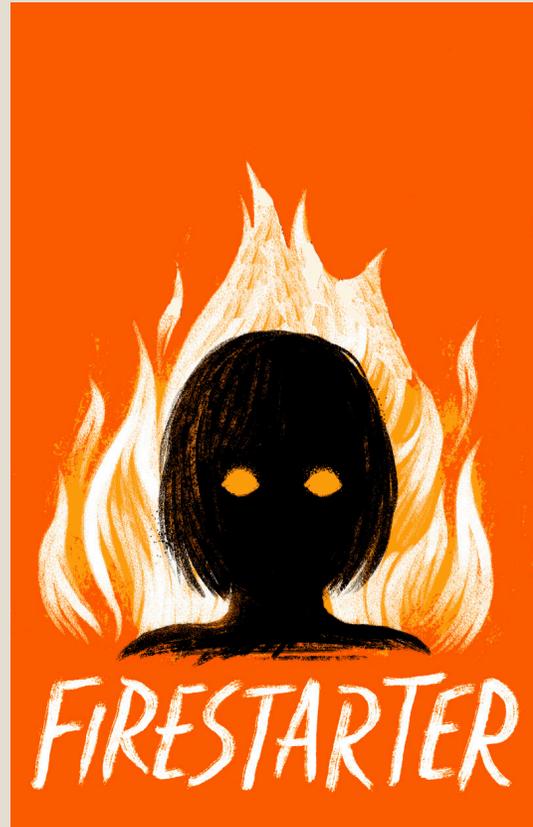
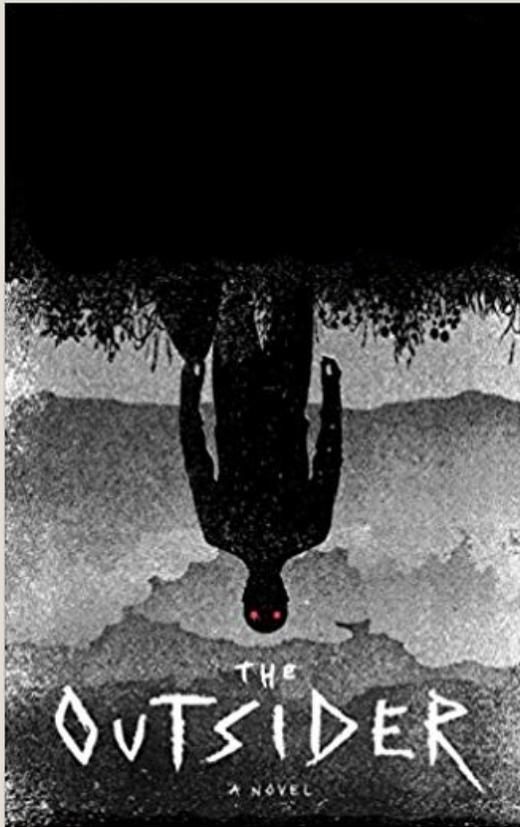
- A brand is a **consistent promise to a customer** about what they are going to get, in terms of product quality, customer service and more, and how what they get will be different from the competition.
- Once you start building your author platform and put yourself out into the world, people are going to get a sense of who you are and what you do and form an opinion based on that no matter what.
- Even if you've never consciously considered which colours to use on your website, the ones you're currently using are saying something about you.
- So it's wise to **take control of your brand** and help people to believe the things you want them to believe about you as an author before they draw their own conclusions.

Brand = Recognition

Brand is also about recognition.

Let's take a look at these
two authors:

Author 1



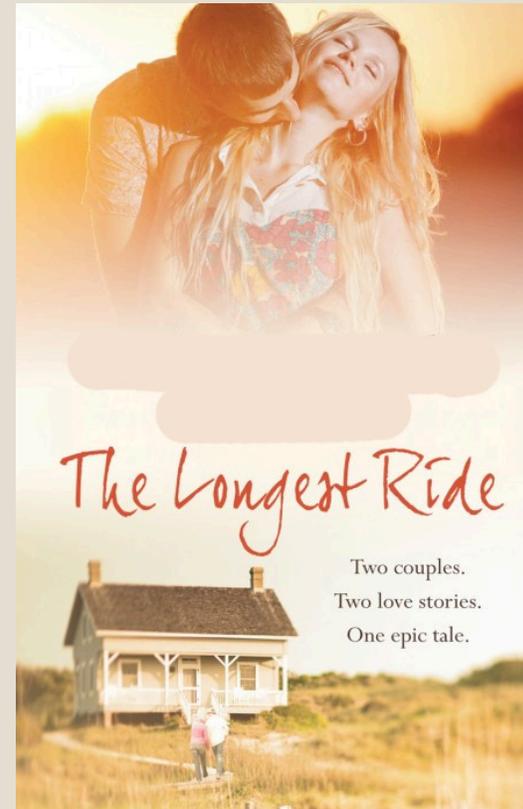
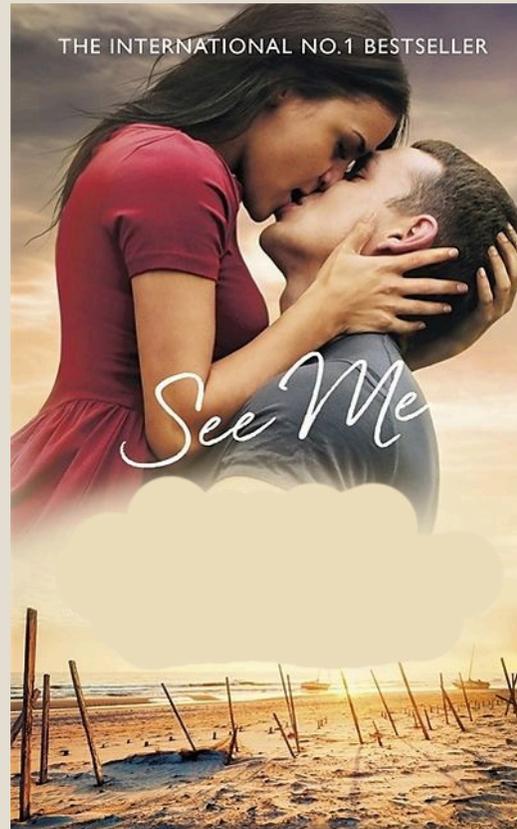
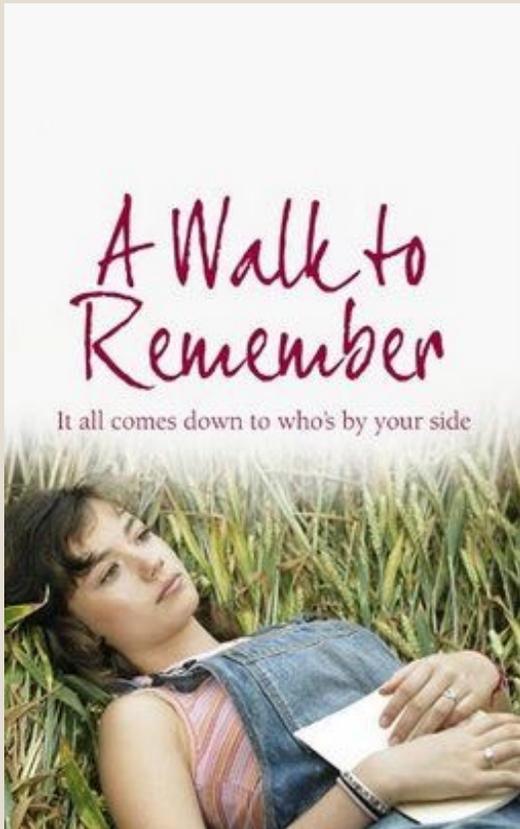
What kind of author is this?

What about these book covers lead you to that conclusion?

What is author's brand?

Are these covers consistent with this author's brand?

Author 2



What kind of author is this?

What about these book covers lead you to that conclusion?

What is author's brand?

Are these covers consistent with this author's brand?

Your Brand: Stop and Consider

- Take the next 10-15 minutes to consider brands you are familiar with and like.
- Identify at least two authors whose brands you know and like.
- What makes these brands recognizable?
- Identify specific aesthetic elements that resonate with you. Be prepared to explain/justify why.
- Are there aspects of this brand that you might consider emulate or personalize?

Prepare to discuss with the rest of the class...



Why is Branding Confusing?

- There is a lot of confusion about brand and how to go about branding someone or something and the reason for this confusion is because brand is largely something intangible.
- **A brand is like a person in that you can recognise it by a name**, but it is made up of all sorts of different attributes. Some of these are physical, such as the style of clothes or haircut someone chooses, but others are less tangible, such as personality or sense of humour, the way a person makes you feel when you're with them.
- For a company, or an author, a brand will have physical attributes, such as a logo, but also attributes, such as values, that are communicated in other ways.
- People make associations with companies and products based on their experiences, as well as what they hear from friends or what is reported in the news.
- Let's consider Amazon

Amazon



- Amazon has been a much loved brand for its great customer service, speedy delivery and convenience. But reports of poor working conditions and tax avoidance have at times negatively impacted its reputation and therefore its brand.
- When someone says Coca Cola, Apple or McDonald's you form an immediate association with those names. They each have well known logos, but you also have an opinion about each of those companies and their products based on your experiences and what you have heard from others.

Why Your Author Brand Matters

- What you think of companies like Apple and McDonald's will also depend largely on whether you're a target customer or not. You may think Apple makes hyped-up overpriced gadgets and that McDonald's offers cheap, tasteless, processed food. But then you're probably not the customer that Apple or McDonald's wants to attract.
- **Brand not only tells the world who you are and what you stand for**, it also encourages target customers to align with your brand.
- Marmite is a great example of a brand that knows its product splits opinion. By running the 'Love it or hate it' campaign Marmite not only acknowledges that not everyone likes the product, it also encourages a greater affinity among those that do love it.



Why Your Author Brand Matters

- If you're tech-savvy and love new technology, always after the latest and greatest new gadgets and willing to pay high prices for them, you will align perfectly with Apple's brand. If you are consistently impressed with Apple's devices and knowing you have the latest product gives you a buzz, then that emotional connection and consistency will also make the price tag irrelevant.
- My step-daughter just turned 15 and requested a new pair of Jordans. She quickly followed up her request with, "I don't want anything else. It's all I'm asking for, because I know they're expensive." When I told her I just couldn't justify spending \$200+ on gym shoes, her rebuttal was, "But they're Jordans!" For her and many other, that is justification enough for the price. **That is the power of brand.**

Why Your Author Brand Matters

- As an author who is fully in control of his/her brand, you can more easily attract your ideal readers and they will form a deeper connection with you. Something that concerns many authors is 'selling' your work.
- Create a strong, authentic brand that connects with the right readers and you will never have to 'sell' your writing.

Questions???

How to Create/Build Your Brand

- When authors start out, they generally don't have branding at the front of their minds. The trouble with this is it's easy to accidentally build a brand that doesn't say what you want it to.
- The website you will build in Project and Portfolio III will be instrumental and helping you begin to create and build your author brand.
- Let's look at your first steps to making this happen:

Identify Your Reader

- Identify who your ideal readers are.
- Who is it that will align best with the stories you write, and who is most likely to buy?
- In marketing we know these as customer personas, they are the semi-fictional characters that embody the qualities and characteristics of the people we're trying to reach.
- It can take some time and effort to define your ideal customer, but it will be worth it. When you know more about them, where they hang out online and what they like and don't like, you'll more easily be able to speak to them in a way that they will relate to.
- Think about it, this is how Apple knows what to say to motivate its target customers to queue up outside its stores before a new product release, while others gape and exclaim, "You paid how much for a phone?!"



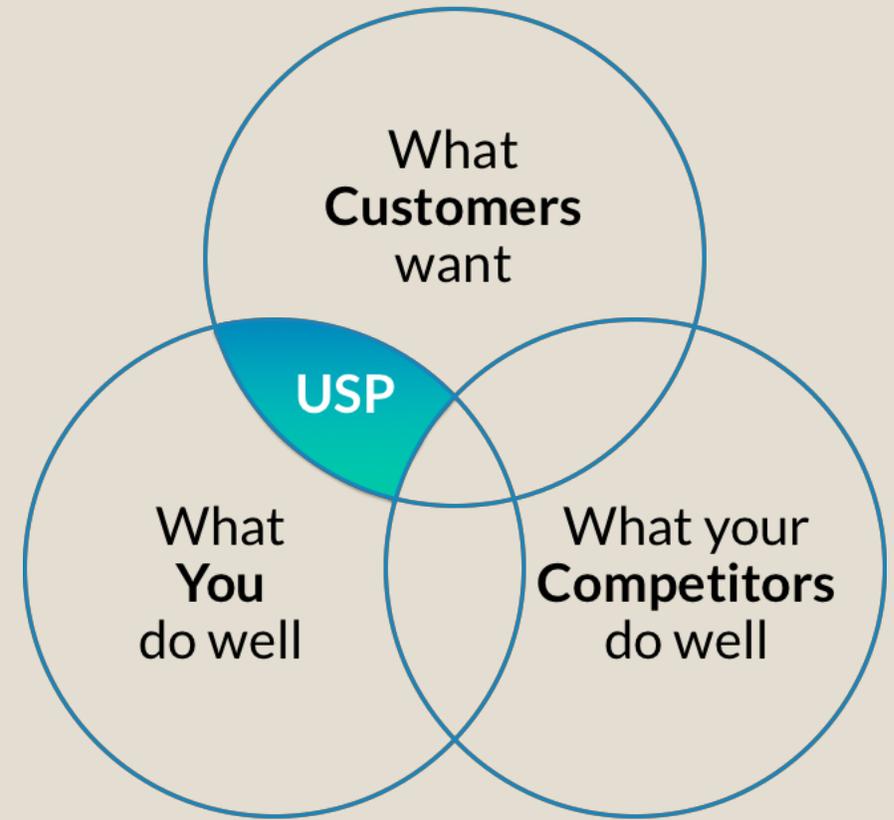
Develop Your Brand Voice



- Once you know who your brand is trying to speak to, it's time to look inwardly at yourself.
 - How do you want others to see you?
 - What do you want people to think when they hear your name?
 - You can dictate much of this by developing your unique brand voice. Just as finding your writer's voice can take time and practice and be difficult to even identify at first, it will take time to establish a consistent brand voice.
 - This is the tone you use in your blogs and across social media – are you the witty one, the wise one or the whimsical one? Or even something that doesn't begin with 'w'?
-
- You get the idea. If you generally post inspiring and motivational content, it would be 'off-brand' to suddenly post a rant filled with colorful language or to talk about a topic that has nothing to do with any of the things people follow you for.
 - To develop your voice, **think about your values**, what's important to you and what you want to represent.

Figure Out Your USP

- Knowing your USP, or **unique selling point**, is essential if you want to get across to readers why they should invest in you as a writer. How are you different? If you're a romance author, what makes you different from all the other romance authors? There are conventions to follow of course when it comes to genre writing and design aesthetic, but beyond that, what makes you stand out?
- Do you know why people enjoy your stories?
- Is it the quality of the writing, your strong characters or your brilliant pacing?
- What are your unique strengths?
- If you find it difficult to know what counts as a strength, try thinking about what you love about other authors. Do you share any of those qualities?



Set Some Expectations



- The aim of your brand is to tell your readers what they can expect from you. When you are consistent it helps people to get to know, like and trust, which is essential when growing an author platform.
- Expectations can include the genre you write in, or if you like to hop around, make that clear.
- It could be the length of your writing, how often you will blog or send emails.
- For example, you should always aim to be known for high quality – correct formatting, free from typos and with a great cover.

Know What You're Branding



- **The key is to brand you, not your book/script/TV series, etc.** It can be easy to make everything about one story, especially your first major project. But if you plan to have a long author career, there will be more projects and it will no longer make sense to have a website named after one earlier work.
- Decide instead whether you will use your own name for your website and social media, or something that represents you. Clive Staples Lewis, for example, wrote as C.S. Lewis and Joanne Rowling writes under J.K. Rowling as well as Robert Galbraith.
- Your brand doesn't have to be who you are in real life. It can be a persona. Just be sure you can stick with it, as consistency is key – an authentic brand is one where the brand values are reflected in everything you do and say.
- If you try to be something you're not, it will be much harder to stay consistent and your brand may suffer.

Choose A Look

- This is the part that most people think of when they think about brand. It's the color palette, graphics and visual cues, photos and typeface. Yes, it's also the logo!
- When choosing a look for your brand, there's no need to be fancy or to pay an expert. **Just remember to be consistent.**
- Remember, the devil is in the details. Font choice, for instance, has the power to set the tone of you entire site.



Be Intentional

- The look that you choose for your brand is important, but it will be easier to nail down your branding decisions if you first determine who you are, what you represent and the message you want to get across, as well as who your readers are.



- Your favorite color may be pale yellow, but if you're a thriller author, it may not be the right shade to represent your brand.

Questions???

Your Turn: Stop and Consider



- Take the next 10-15 minutes to consider your brand?
- Do you already have one? If so, what is it?
- If you don't already have a brand, what do you want your brand to be?
- How will you bridge the gap between where your brand is now and where you want it to be?
- How will you begin to establish your brand?
- Consider images, fonts, colors, etc.

Prepare to discuss with the rest of the class...