

Executive Summary

In the ETF business, the temptation is always to launch the next product. But in a market with thousands of ETFs competing for the same flows, the firms that win are not necessarily those with the best products or the best people. They are the firms with the strongest brands.

iShares is the global leader in ETFs—not because every fund is best-in-class on cost, liquidity, or performance, but because the brand commands trust across retail, advisory, and institutional channels. Investors know the name, they believe in it, and they default to it. That trust is the ultimate moat.

Most issuers underestimate this. They pour disproportionate resources into launches, roadshows, and product tweaks while treating brand-building as an afterthought. They rely on 50-page white papers no one reads, webinars that draw minimal engagement, and outdated marketing playbooks built for a pre-social media world.

This report makes the case that branding should be the number one focus for any ETF issuer that wants to grow and remain relevant.