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Exploring Factors Influencing Logo Effectiveness: an Experimental Inquiry

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT - Corporate logos are important assets to companies. Identifying and understanding various factors that influence consumer perceptions of logos is one key aspect in creating trademarks and in building corporate identity. The current exploratory research investigates several factors that may influence the effectiveness of logo design.

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Exploring Factors Influencing Logo Effectiveness: An Experimental Inquiry

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Corporate logos are important assets to companies. Identifying and understanding various factors that influence consumer perceptions of logos is one key aspect in creating trademarks and in building corporate identity. The current exploratory research investigates several factors that may influence the effectiveness of logo design.

Traditional research in logo design, particularly the study by Henderson and Cote (1998), has identified numerous factors (e.g., repetition, naturalness, and elaborateness) that influence consumers' responses to logos in terms of positive affect, familiar meaning, correct and false recognition. However, their research is not without limitations (e.g., methodological issues).

In this study, drawing upon the past research, we begin the process of exploring several factors that influence consumer responses to logos through more controlled experimental designs. Particularly, we manipulated two logo design characteristics: logo representative/abstract and angular/rounded. In addition, one individual difference factor, visual arts orientation, was included in the study. Based on literature, we hypothesized that respondents will prefer more representative and curved logos. In addition, the individual difference factor would moderate their effect on evaluations. Finally, to increase the generalizability of the results, we selected two logo stimuli, building and vase, and treated them as a within-subjects factor. Our dependent variables included attitude toward the logo, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the firm, and the perception of firms' modernness.

The results revealed some interesting findings. First, we found that product category moderated the effects of roundness on evaluations. Specifically, respondents preferred an angular logo for the building but a round logo for the vase. This effect was not only found in attitude toward the logo but also in attitude toward the firm. We proposed a match-up explanation to account for this finding. That is, when a logo matches the typical form of an object that is stored in consumers' mind (schema), their evaluation tends to be more positive. This match-up explanation merits further investigation.

Second, the individual difference factor, visual arts orientation, also moderated the effects of logo representativeness and roundness on evaluations. Specifically, high visual-orientation individuals liked an ad with an angular building logo more than an ad with a round logo only in the realistic condition. In contrast, in the abstract condition, low visual-orientation individuals liked an ad with an angular building logo slightly more than an ad with a round logo. For the building, high visual-orientation individuals perceived the firm as more modern than low visual-orientation ones. However, for the vase, there was an interaction of representativeness and visual orientation. Specifically, individuals with low visual orientation viewed the company as more modern when the logo was abstract than when it was realistic. In contrast, realism had no effect on the company's modern perception for high visual-oriented individuals.

Our research has the potential to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the investigation of logos. From a theoretical perspective, we identified several important factors including logo characteristics (representativeness and roundness), individual difference factor (visual arts orientation), and product category. A second contribution is that we manipulated realism and roundness in a more controlled environment, which excluded other possible confounding factors revealed in survey research studies (Henderson and Cote 1998).

From a practical perspective, our research provides useful guidelines for logo designers and marketers. First, marketers should employ design cues (e.g., angular/rounded) that match up with the typical shape in consumers' minds. Second, marketers may use different logo designs (e.g., abstract/real) to target to different consumer groups (e.g., high- or low-visual-orientation).

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