Emanuela Maria AVRAM
University of Bucharest, Romania, Faculty of Business and Administration

BRAND LOGO PERCEPTION IN A GLOBALIZED SOCIETY

Case
Study

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Abstract

Strong brands are rapidly spreading into a globalized society and becoming known to many people. Elements such as name, graphic representation, symbols and colors used are the most important features of a brand. They differentiate the brands and attract consumers thus having a strong impact on their buying decision. That is why looking into consumer perception about brand logo is of crucial importance to organizations. This study offers examples of different brands illustrating how powerful a good logo is. The results reveal the importance of colors and brand logo design and the power of these elements to influence consumers' decisions and emotions.

INTRODUCTION

The personality of each company is unique and aims to distinguish itself on the market. (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 161) The most important factors of differentiation are the brand and its logo, which are defined as important features of a product design in attracting consumer's attention (Bossel et al., 2019, p. 131). Brands have different functions. First of all, those tools which create long term relationships with customers are taken into consideration (Roustasekehravani et al., 2014, p. 175). Brands served primarily as a way for customers to identify and recognize goods and their manufacturer (Jin& Weber,2013, p. 95). Each brand has its own logo, which is the most eye-catching element (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 77) because a logo is an essential component of brand identification (Grobert et al., 2016, p. 239). A logo can be a graphic element, an image or a word to be imprinted in the consumer's mind (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 76). A brand logo (names with or without symbols) is the key visual representation of a brand (Japutraet al., 2015, p. 240). The corporate logo can influence consumers' perception (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 162), which is an important aspect of the marketing mix with major implications in designing policies and strategies of communication and promotion (Gabor &Conţiu, 2012, p. 1344). It is also a significant marketing strategy, which can position a brand uniquely in consumers' minds (Foroudi et al., 2018, p. 463).

Consumers are attracted to what they see because they think visually. Nike, Apple, Puma, Adidas, or McDonald's are strong brands which have stuck in the consumer's mind through simplicity (Peters, 1999, p.41). The corporate logo directly influences purchase intentions (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 159) and contributes to the success of a brand (Mülleret al.,2013, p. 86).

Brand logos provide consumers with three types of benefits: functional, aesthetic and personal by offering opportunities to express themselves, influencing their perception about the brand. When brands provide consumers with these benefits, consumers further develop their relationships with the brands (Japutraet al., 2018, p. 192) and their perception about the logo is based on this relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand consumer perception of the brand logo in a globalized society, it is important, first of all, to define the term "logo". A logo is an important element of the image of a company or product on the market, being also a communication element (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 159). A logo is a graphic element to identify a company/service/product; it is like a "signature"(Adîr et al., 2014, p. 140) and refers to the graphical element that a company uses to identify itself or its products. Bossel et al. (2019, p.129) suggest that simple brand logos increase consumption and a brand logo design has the potential to influence food intake. Brand logos are visual and designed to be easily noticed (Lee et al., 2015, p. 1343).

A logo represents an image or a graphical representation that produces memory associations. Brand names or symbols visually represent brands. "A logo is the symbol of a corporate image and the main value attached to logos has traditionally focused on the identification and the differentiation of the brand from its competitors" (Zhu et al., 2017, p.722). The basic element of the corporate identity is the logo (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 158). Other specialists considered that a logo is "a symbolic representative of any industry, organization or institution, which symbolizes the functionality of their work. Once a logo is designed for any organization or company, it needs to be tested for its originality and uniqueness" (Kumar et al., 2016, p. 371). A logo means a graphic and visual representation in a desired original concept. Elements such as images, words, or colours, make a logo in a harmonious combination which may show attitudes and values of the company (Adîr et al., 2014, p. 140) and influence the consumer perception.

Logos can change without losing or changing the brand identity or brand values and many companies choose to continuously refine their brand logo (Grinsven&Das, 2015, p. 1711). Changing the logo does not mean changing the perception of consumers that remains the same even if some reactions can occur. The most significant advantage of changing the logo is given by the fact that consumers perceive the new logo to be more modern (Mülleret al.,2013, p. 86).

The aesthetic appeal of the brand logo significantly influences consumer reactions (Machado et. al, 2014, p. 2). The brand and its logo are key elements in the decision-buying process (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 159) and for this reason the choice of the logo design reflects consumers' evaluations of the brand identity (Japutraet al., 2018, p. 192).

Machado et al. (2014, p. 3) have identified the terms "cultural logo design" when referring to logos that depict manufactured objects (i.e., buildings, furniture, everyday objects, writing symbols, etc.) and "natural logo design" when referring to logos that depict objects from the natural world (i.e., flowers, fruits, animals, landscapes, etc.). A strong logo is also an effective promotional element that has led to rethinking advertising (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 159).

The logo design has proposed three universal dimensions: elaborateness, naturalness and harmony (Henderson, et al., 2004, p. 7). The logo itself is considered as part of the brand identity because it helps to communicate with consumers and it is an essential part of the brand (Ismail et al., 2016, p. 256). An effective logo must be able to portray the company's values and present clear messages and images of the company (Munawaroh, 2015, p. 1); for this reason logo redesigns can affect customers differently. Changing the logo often generates negative feedback from consumers (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 76).

A good logo has to be: "simple, relevant, distinctive, memorable, adaptable, reproducible, legible and coherent" (Adîr et al., 2014, p. 142). Müller et al. (2013) investigated the phenomenon of brand revitalization and carried out an experiment on 385 respondents by exploring the effects of the logo similarity and the type of logo on brand modernity and brand loyalty. The results show that logo redesign affects the perception of brand modernity.

Zhu et al. (2017, p.725) divided logos into 3 categories: "abstract logos – which are artificially constructed (triangle, round, square), natural logos – which represent objects from the natural world (flowers, fruit, animals, faces), text logos, which use only text as graphs and punctuation marks".

Lee et al. (2015, p. 1341) investigated luxury versus non-luxury brand logos showing that people wearing clothes with luxury brand logos receive preferential treatment over those not wearing luxury brand logos. They also showed that "a person wearing a luxury brand logo while soliciting charitable donations receives larger contributions than a person not wearing a luxury brand logo".

Kumar et al. (2016, p. 372) made a logo classification in 3 categories: logos with text and symbols (Lions, Kroket), logos with only text (Sharp, Nec), logos with only symbols (Apple, Puma, Nike). The simplicity of the logo leads to increased familiarity, consumer confidence and credibility (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 170).

Adîr et al. (2014, p. 141) developed a typology of logos, dividing them into 3 categories:

· Iconic – a graphic representation of a sign, symbol, animal, bird, insect, flower, daily units etc.

· Logo type – letters, figures or words

· Complex logo – words/letters/figures

Complex brand logos are recognized faster and evaluated more positively (Grinsven& Das, 2015, p. 1711). For instance, Adidas includes both its logo and name in their communications and products (Japutrael al., 2015, p. 242).

Krishnan et al. (2012, p. 275) investigated sonic logos, or "sogos," which are a key element of sonic branding and auditory branding, like Samsung or Windows ring tones which are easy to be recognised.

Japutraet al., (2015) examined the relationships between brand logo identification and brand logo benefit by using a survey data and a structural equation modelling. The results reveal that logo benefit is a better predictor of satisfaction, trust and commitment (Japutraet al., 2015, p. 238).

Zhu et al. (2017) carried out research showing how logo design characteristics influence consumer response based on visual representation. A total of 115 logos related to youth education brands in the Chinese market were collected from different sources. The results show that four factors affect the consumer perception; the preference for a logo includes a sense of contemporaneity, a sense of aesthetics, a feeling of interest and a sense of style.

Brand logos also provide three other benefits: functional, aesthetic and personal by encouraging self-expression (Japutraet al., 2018, p. 192), which has a great impact on consumers' perception and buying decision. The first benefit refers to how to use a certain brand as its logo can provide such information; the second one offers a sense of beauty and the third one is connected to self image.

COLOR PSYCHOLOGY IN LOGO DESIGN

The logo colors are a powerful communication element with a strong impact on consumers, on their perceptions and preferences helping companies to reposition or stand out in competitions (Aslam,2005, p. 1). "Color highlights the business' strengths and helps attract the right customers; it makes the logo alive; it offers an instantaneous method for conveying meaning and message to the logo; it is the most influential non-verbal form of communication. Minds and eyes are designed to respond to color very quickly; we depend on the identification of color." (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 167) The color of the logo influences the consumer perception very much because it generates a great impact on the customer attention and has the power to attract consumers.

"Colors also represent local customs and taboos in some cultures and generate a potent socialization effect. There are color associations with festivals or holidays. Blue is associated with New Year, red and green with Christmas, black and orange with Halloween, red and pink with Valentine's Day" (Aslam,2005, p. 8). Many consumers have favourite colors which can stimulate their interest (Funk &Ndubisi, 2006, p. 41-42). Colors may create emotional connections resulting in the differentiation of the products, acquired competitive advantage, reinforced loyalty or increased sales; they have a powerful impact on all life aspects at the subconscious level (Sliburyte&Skeryte, 2014, p. 469). Color associates

the corporate position and facilitates brand recall (Aslam, 2005, p. 9). Colors used in the logo have strong impact on how the brand image is perceived by customers. The logo influences the brand image perception (Munawaroh, 2015, p. 1).

The choice of color is important, because certain colors trigger emotional responses and attract consumer attention: green has a calming effect, red an intense one. Red is associated with Coca Cola, Virgin, RedBull, Kelloggs, Mikey Mouse, H&M; blue with Pepsi, Twitter, Skype, Facebook; pink with Barbie Doll, Victoria's Secret, Telecom; green with SevenUp, TicTac, Lacoste, Starbucks; purple with Yahoo, Milka; yellow with Shell, DHL, Hertz, McDonald's. (Aslam, 2005, p. 9). Thus, color is an extremely important element in creating a strong, easy-to-recognize logo that draws consumers' attention by generating a strong emotional impact on purchasing decisions.

THE POWER OF A GOOD LOGO

Being an important element of the organizational image, a logo can capture consumers' attention and create strong emotions (Grobert et al.,2016, p. 239). Powerful corporate logos have generated a strong impact on the advertising process (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 159).

A logo represents:

· Corporate Identity, showing the specific characteristic a company has.

· Ownership, to differentiate one company from another.

· Quality assurance

· Avoiding piracy (Munawaroh, 2015, p. 2)

A lot of studies demonstrated that those customers that have strong relationships with a certain brand would spread no negative information about that specific brand and have positive attitude for the brand (Roustasekehravani et al., 2014, p. 175). Logos are a critical component of brand aesthetics. After many changes, many organisations have chosen rounded logos (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 76) because companies have the possibility to adapt or update their logos over time (Mülleret al.,2013, p. 83).

Grobert et al. (2016, p. 239) investigated the impact of brand attachment and familiarity on consumers' perception of logos and brands. The results show that consumers have accepted the change of the logo and its colors with a lot of surprise. When introducing a new or an updated logo, companies need to be aware that consumers still have the previous version of the logo in mind (Mülleret al.,2013, p. 83).

An effective logo must be able to portray the company's values and present clear messages and images of the company (Munawaroh, 2015, p. 1).

Numerous major brands including Apple, McDonald's, Nike, etc, have redesigned their logos opting for a more simplistic look. This simplification is a trend characterized by a focus on simple and minimalistic design (Bossel et al., 2019, p. 129). This section of the paper illustrates logo changes and evolution of different big companies with a reputation in their field: technological field - Apple, internet sector – Google, fast-food industry- McDonald's, textile field – United Colours of Benetton and sport – Nike. Regardless of the sector, any company can be successful on the market if it can attract consumers through its products, and has the ability to position itself in the consumer's mind through a simple and easy to recognize logo, creating, at the same time, a strong image on the market.

EXEMPLE 1 – APPLE LOGO CHANGE

As we know, Apple relies on increased security and high quality. Quality is a consequence of Steve Jobs's philosophy of life "who believed that technology should allow people to create and discover the great things of life, to explore, invent and create" (https://www.logodesignteam.com/blog/apple-logo-history/). The Apple logo positioned itself in the consumer's mind with simplicity, being recognizable and unmistakable. For over 40 years, Apple's logo has remained the same regardless the style- a symbol of the Garden of Eden.

Steve Jobs wanted people to "think differently", because the logo "colors were organized in an order different from the rainbow." (https://1000logos.net/apple-logo/). The brand logo positively affects firm performance, (Japutraet al., 2015, p. 238) and this is valid also for Apple brand. To create a positive effect, logos need to be moderately elaborate (Mülleret al.,2013, p. 83) because a logo must be easy to remember and recognize which leads to increasing brand recognition. Apple created a visual expression of the company (Grobert et al.,2016, p. 239).

"The Apple idea goes back to the time of Adam and Eve, who bit from the apple of knowledge. Thus, the image suggests human thirst for knowledge, and Apple products would help people get knowledge" (https://1000logos.net/apple-logo/). In 2003, Apple Computer announced it was recoloring its logo (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 76) and after that customers and stakeholders perceived a negative reaction (Grobert et al., 2016, p. 239). However, Apple benefitted from the image conveyed by its logo (Mülleret al.,2013, p. 83).

According to the literature on the subject, the Apple logo is considered to be a natural one, because it represents an object from the natural world. There are some elements that made the

Apple logo successful: consistency, uniqueness, appeal, connection to founder, status and branding (https://www.logodesignteam.com/blog/apple-logo-history/).

EXEMPLE 2 – THE GOOGLE LOGO

In 1998 Google was founded by two Ph.D. students (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Google). Google built a strong logo emphasizing logo recognition (Grobert et al., 2016, p. 239). The logo of Google - an extremely strong and dynamic brand - is one of the world's most popular and instantly recognizable logos and is considered to be a text only logo. All the colors used in the Google logo "represent precision, uniqueness, growth, elegance and excellence". From 1998 to 2015, the Google logo went through various changes (http://www.nexgenmarketing.ca/blog/?p=131).

The Google logo is a key success factor to communicate positioning and brand values (Grobert et al., 2016, p. 241). The Google logo appears in numerous settings to identify the search engine company. Google has relied on several logos since its renaming with the first logo created by Sergey Brin. A revised logo debuted on September 1, 2015. The previous logo, with slight modifications between 1999 and 2013, was designed by Ruth Kedar (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_logo).

Changing logos can be really risky for companies. Many consumers have negative reactions to the radical change of the logo (Grobert et al., 2016, p. 239).

EXEMPLE 3 – MCDONALD'S LOGO CHANGE – A LOGO ORIGINATING IN ARCHITECTURE

Logos are means of transmitting feelings about the product or the company (Müller et al.,2013, p. 83). The world's largest chain of fast-food restaurant, McDonald's is more famous for its logo and the most famous fast food franchise in the world. The consumer's perception of the logo is based on the historical relationship between customers and the company (Grobert et al., 2016, p. 240).

Created by the McDonald's brothers, the company started to get its logo in the 60's. If we look at their logos above, "the iconic "M" has not changed much since 1962. The Arches were originally created as part of the restaurant design, with the intent to attract attention from a distance when mounted on top of a restaurant. Over the years, they have played with the design *around* the "M", trying fresh styles and adapting for campaigns like "I'm loving it" and "trying" to be environmentally conscious". (https://colleenkeith.com/what-makes-a-world-famous-logo/)

McDonald's logo is a complex one. By the '70s, the 'Golden Arches' became instantly recognizable and helped company establish as one of the most popular brands (https://www.designhill.com/design-blog/mcdonalds-iconic-logo-story-evolution/).

EXEMPLE 4 – BENETTON LOGO

Launched in 1965 with a single collection of colorful sweaters, Benetton is today a global success story, producing over 150,000,000 garments a year for 6,000 Benetton stores in 120 countries (https://www.pentagram.com/work/benetton/story). United Colors of Benetton is a fashion brand with global recognition. Based in Ponzano Veneto, Italy, the company's name comes from the Benetton family (https://medium.com/ad-discovery-and-creativity-lab/la-pieta-united-colors-of-benettons-most-controversial-campaign-10615499a103).

The origin of "United Colors" is an interesting one. Bright colours have been an integral part of Benetton since the 1960s. The phrase "All the colors of the world" appeared in ads serving as a metaphor "for not only a collection of clothing, but also as a collective identity for youth of different races and cultures. This was eventually replaced with the slogan "United Colors of Benetton", which later became the brand signature, replacing Benetton's original signature" (https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/united_colors_now_with_more_benetton.php).

According to the literature in the field, Benetton logo is considered to be a text mark logo which uses only text for representing the brand name. "A well-designed logo for a brand should make instant connection with the audience" (Foroudi et al., 2017, p. 170).

In 1996, Toscani refined Benetton's identity with Massimo Vignelli, "creating a comprehensive visual brand identity and refining the brand signature. All the company's retail activities were centralized under the single name, "United Colors of Benetton," written in white on a green rectangle" (https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/united_colors_now_with_more_benetton.php).

EXEMPLE 5 – THE NIKE LOGO – A LOGO WITHOUT WORDS

Rebranding through a change of the logo can be a very dangerous strategy and may cause serious damage to brand loyalty (Grobert et al., 2016, p.

239), but it can also be an effective marketing strategy. Nike is considered to be one of the most recognized and successful brand logos in the world. The logo was updated over years and this adaptation generated a positive impact on consumers (Müller et al.,2013, p. 83).

The Nike Swoosh embodies elements of movement and simplicity. The iconic trademark makes Nike the most valuable brand in the athletic industry. "The Swoosh first appeared on a sneaker in 1972, but it was different. Today, the Nike brand is so strong that it is one of the most recognizable brand logos in the world" (http://www.trianglemarketingclub.com/branding-logos-changed-time/).

The Swoosh is one of the world's most instantly recognisable logos and it is seen adorning countless trainers and items of sportswear. Yet the emblem, which became the basis for the Nike brand, was designed by a little-known university student named Carolyn Davidson (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/logos-that-became-legends-icons-from-the-world-of-advertising-768077.html).

The original design of the logo was established in 1971 and includes the NIKE name alongside the Swoosh. Over the years, the black and white swoosh has gained significant popularity (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swoosh). According to literature, the Nike logo is considered to be a logo with a symbol, known and appreciated by many consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

Consumers' perception about the brand and its logo helps specialists understand how these elements influence the buying decision. The logo design and colors represent a significant marketing strategy and an important aspect of the marketing mix. Logos can change without losing or changing the brand identity or brand values. Changing the logo does not mean changing the consumer's perception that remains the same even if some reactions can occur.

This study reveal that people, all around the world, regularly tend to make buying decisions based on the brand and corporate logo and the design and colour are the most influential forms of communication. People respond to color very quickly. The color of the logo and its design influences the consumer perception very much because it generates a great impact on the customer attention, having the power to attract consumers.

Colours and logo designs can stimulate consumers' interest in certain products and have a great impact on increasing the buying power, but also help companies reposition or differentiate from the competition. Colors and logo designs also create emotional connection with the products, reinforce loyalty and increase sales, because many consumers have favourite colours, trust their favourite logos, and also appreciate different brand logo colors. The Apple logo, for example, is appreciated by many consumers and it is known as a prestige brand. People associate its logo design and color with high quality products developing an emotional connection with the brand. Many consumers prefer simple logos like Nike, because simplicity helps consumers remember the logo.

The key elements relating to the logo are: colors, design, simplicity and ease of recognition. These help consumers to create preferences, increase sales, reinforce loyalty and create strong emotional connection with consumers.

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