

The Logo and Brand Personality Connect: An Exploratory Study on Local Brands in Vadodara City of Gujarat

Jiji John

MCS Graduate (Batch 2012-2014),
Faculty of Journalism and
Communication,
Maharaja Sayajirao University of
Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat
Email: john.jiji0@gmail.com

Niti Chopra

Associate Professor,
Faculty of Journalism and
Communication,
Maharaja Sayajirao University of
Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat
Email: nitichopra1@gmail.com

Abstract

The importance of branding has increased in recent decades due to the ever-growing flow of information, advertising and social media. This research is an exploratory study which traces usages of brand personality of the product/service in the logo making process, and tries to understand the logo making process from an advertising agency's point of view and what exactly does the client brief state for making of a logo. Within the set of brand elements, the logo is perhaps, after the brand name, the most important and stable carrier of a brand's image. Human personality characteristics can be transferred to a brand, which then creates a brand personality. Local advertising personnel in Vadodara were interviewed in order to understand the usage of brand personality in the logo making process. Upon analysis and interpretation of the data collected, the researchers found out that brand personality is not a widely used terminology when it comes to local brands, but it surely finds a way into the logo making process.

Key Words

Logo, Brand Personality, Vadodara, Advertising Agency (Ad Agency).

Citation: John, J. & Chopra, N. (2015). The Logo and Brand Personality Connect: An Exploratory Study on Local Brands in Vadodara city of Gujarat. *Ganpat University Journal of Applied Research In Social Sciences & Humanities*, 3 (2) & 4 (1), 35-40.

Backdrop

This qualitative, empirical, exploratory study examines the process, at the advertising agency's side, of "incorporating" brand personality to the logo making process. Talks with various advertising agencies were conducted and the logo making process was understood by the researchers. The study is limited to Vadodara city of Gujarat, and tries to ascertain the interactions between the client (brand owners) and the advertising agencies vis-a-vis the purpose of the proposed investigation.

Introduction

In the early 1900s marketers began to realise the potential of "identity marketing". Brands were imbued with a personality, and advertisements became micro-narratives that consumers could identify with. The importance of personality was never challenged and brands continued to invest accordingly. The industry was shaken every time a new medium created another opportunity for communicating commercial content: print ruled, then radio became popular, and then television prevailed. Marketing monologues were simply retrofitted for a new medium. In the early years of the first decade of this century, the Internet and social media came along and shocked long standing status quos of marketing. The Internet made marketing a dialogue, not a monologue. Brands were now required to be always on an alert. There were so many different ways to engage consumers. And, in the digital age, personality became more important than ever.

Brand relevance is how well the brand speaks to individual audiences. Brand personification is the multifaceted personality and character of the brand that helps customers identify with it. Brand assets include core strengths and weaknesses, what a brand can promise and, taken a step further, what a brand can guarantee. Brand differentiation is what makes the brand unique, the tangible and intangible traits that set a particular brand apart. Brand relativity as both philosophical and process levels, includes the different components that create the sum of the identity.

Review of Literature

Brand personality is one of the integral dimensions of brand identity. Attaching personalities to brands may contribute to establishing emotional attachment between brands and their users and help to create a differentiating brand identity. This can make brands more desirable to the consumer (Aaker, 1996). At the same time it can serve a symbolic function to the meaning of the brand, which can help consumers express, satisfy, and enhance their own self-consistency and self-esteem (Aaker, 1997). Brand personalities are much the same, they reflect the collection of experiences that the public has with the brand. It differentiates while creating a lasting impression in consumers'

minds. Strong brands tie their narrative to consumers' emotions and achieve a lasting connection. Personality reflects the brand's courage to stand for something.

Brand personality can't be conceived as just a marketing tool invented through creative genius and embedded in advertising slogans. Rather, brand personality is a whole brand, whole experience, and whole organisation mindset. Some brands have well defined personalities like being outgoing, youthful, and friendly; or having freshness, warmth, and comfort. It is demonstrated through their service interactions, their packaging, their décor, their product offerings, and their corporate culture; and on the other hand, a total expression of youth, individuality, breaking of conventions, a loud shout for independence and freethinking.

Henderson & Cote's research on "Guidelines for Selecting or Modifying Logos", Journal of Marketing, (1998), states that 'each of the brand personality dimensions is influenced by multiple logo design characteristics. The use of round graphic designs in particular, significantly reduces consumers' perceptions of a brand's competence. Logos act as the primary visual representation of a brand's general image and meaning. As a result, logos can shape the brand's reputation along with consumers' attitudes, their purchase intentions and their brand loyalty. Brand logos also have an impact on the financial value of a company. The aesthetic appeal of brand logos is an essential component of a brand's ability to endear customers and emotionally connect to them, thereby enhancing their commitment.

Mariam Melkumyan in her thesis work "Development of Logo Assessment Matrix in Response to Changes in Graphic Identity for Country Tourism Branding Campaigns" mentions some concepts - *Brand relevance is how well the brand speaks to individual audiences*. Brand personification is the multifaceted personality and character of the brand that helps customers identify with it. Brand assets include core strengths and weaknesses, what a brand can promise and, taken a step further, what a brand can guarantee. Brand differentiation is what makes the brand unique, the tangible and intangible traits that set the brand apart. Brand relativity as both philosophy and process includes the different components that create the sum of the identity.

Research work by both Aaker, J. L. - "Dimensions of Brand Personality", published in Journal of Marketing, 1997; and Fournier, S. - "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research" published in the Journal of Consumer Research, 1998 states that *Brand personality is the association of human personality traits with brands— and is relevant because it influences consumers' responses to brands*.

More specifically, it facilitates inclusion of brands as partners in didactic relationships, increases trust and loyalty, enhances brand preference, evokes emotions toward the brand, and increases brand identification and word-of-mouth communication. Brand personality also affects consumers' responses to failure and recovery efforts on the part of the brand.

Brand managers establish a brand's identity through traditional methods such as advertising, as well as through internal brand management. Brand managers become "brand ambassadors," who teach company employees at every level about brand personality and values. Brand management becomes "culture management," or an attempt to direct the entire organizational culture so that it aligns with the brand personality. Once a brand has engaged with consumers on an emotional level, consumers are much more likely to stay loyal to that brand in the face of competition. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), explain that a brand has more meaning to consumers when they can identify the personality of the brand. This is why the perception of personality through a brand's logo is so vital to the success of the brand.

Plan and procedure of the study

The study tries to look into the logo making process, from the point when an advertising agency receives a client brief, to the logo making process and finally the agency forming a logo. For this study the researchers conducted in-depth interviews of eight different advertising personnel in Vadodara and tried to understand the connection between brand personality and logo. A qualitative exploratory research design was adopted for this research, as no previous study was found conducted in this field for the aforesaid subject. Data collected was purely qualitative in nature. The different forms of data used were text, recorded interview conversations, and documents/case studies pertaining to local brands and their logos.

The questions that were asked helped the researchers to understand logo making process and importance of brand personality in a logo. Responses from the Ad agencies threw light on what the client brief states and what all factors are considered for logo making. The researchers received diverse answers from the respondents, but this helped to identify that Ad agencies work with their own set of principles. Not all of the theories and concepts of advertising are followed by the agencies. The biggest limitations for an Ad agency when it comes to work with local brands are the client not being aware of the logo making process and/or the clients not ready to accept and acknowledge creative ideas/thoughts.

Key Findings

The interaction with the respondents helped the researchers to understand that brand personality is shaped during the logo making process and is an integral part of branding. In order to establish a connection or a recall value of the product/service it is essential to showcase the brand personality of the product/service. As the study concentrates on local brands in Vadodara, it came to light that local brand owners never felt “brand personality” factor to be important. It is the Ad agency who ensured that personality is included in the logo making and branding process. The agencies further mentioned that it is essential for a logo to showcase the personality of the brand and not convey something imaginary. If not, then there would be a disconnection between the consumer and the product/service. Local clients demonstrated a preference for the use of different words with a positive connotation depending on the personality trait/s that they would like to project a product/service. Even if the local brand owners are not aware about “brand personality”, they do accept the Ad agencies point of view to incorporate brand personality in the logo.

David Ogilvy’s statement “Producers need a new method to identify themselves from each other” comes true when one talks about logo making process. Brand personality if not a part of client brief (for most of the agencies) is surely included at the later stage of logo making. It was found by the researcher that even if each of the brand personality dimensions is influenced by multiple logo design characteristics, still when it came to local brand owners most of them are unaware of brand personality. The Ad agency had to convince the local brand owners a lot to incorporate the brand personality to the logo.

It also came to light for the researchers that it need not be necessary that the brand personality a company projects through advertising is the same as what the product is. Local brand owners are not that aware regarding the science of logo making and the various media channels and communication theories used. It is the advertising/brand agencies that introduce the clients to these concepts and convince them use these channels. Yet another interesting finding for the researchers was the opinion that some Ad agencies possess i.e. the brand personality of the product/service need not be the personality of the brand, but it can be something which catches the eye of the consumers.

Conclusion:

Nowadays every business starts with an idea that one day they would be a national brand, and with the advent of social media there is rise in the efforts towards branding. Some of the local brand owners do not pay for creative inputs – for the simple fact that

they did not understand the creative aspect. The argument that the agency faced was, “we as the client do not understand what the logo stands for then how would a lay man come to know?” There is indeed a positive connect between logo-symbol and brand personality. The researchers could relate more to Jennifer Aaker’s proposed perception of brands as human personalities, after conducting this study. Once a brand has engaged with consumers on an emotional level, consumers are much more likely to stay loyal to that brand in the face of competition.

Thus, as final interpretation, it came to be known from the study that local brand owners confuse Brand personality with their own (proprietor) personality. As they are not aware of what brand personality is they tend to overlook this factor. It is the Ad agency who convinces the customer to include brand personality in the logo making and the complete branding process. Besides managing the marketplace products and services that carry a brand’s name, brand managers must also always manage a brand’s intangible identity, or personality. Both are essential to survival in a market driven by stiff competition.

Please Note: Names of Advertising Agencies, the personnel interviewed, and their respective clients have not been mentioned in order to protect their identity. However, the services/products stated by them for the purpose of the study ranged from local hotels and restaurants, to soaps and other cosmetics, as well as food items to electronic goods, etc.

References:

- Aaker, J. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 3 (34), 347-356.
- Azoulay, A., & Kapferer, J. (2003). Do Brand Personality Scales Really Measure Brand Personality? *Journal of Brand Management*, 2 (11), 143-155.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 343-373.
- Henderson, P., & Cote, A. (1998). Guidelines for Selecting or Modifying Logos. *Journal of Marketing*, 14-30.
- Melkumyan, M. (2011). Development of a Logo Assessment Matrix in Response to Challenges in Designing Graphic Identity for Country Tourism Branding Campaigns. *Graduate Thesis and Dissertations*. Iowa: Iowa State University.