

Jana Galera Matúšová

Logo as the Greatest Symbol of Brand

Abstract

The visual identity of a brand is what comprises a substantial part of its value, as it is the logo and the symbols used by a brand that distinguish it from competition and confer its competitive advantage. Logo can even be perceived as a work of art, which, however, beside its artistic value, needs to respect several principles. It needs to fulfil all the requirements posed on visual form, such as aesthetic aspect, as well needing to be a visual representation of what the brand has to say and how it seeks to operate on the market. The aim of the article is to clarify the issue of branding, which is closely related to the creation of the logo, on the basis of available domestic and foreign literature and online and magazine sources. The methods of description, analysis and synthesis were applied in the paper, particularly a descriptive approximation of theoretical knowledge relating to brands and logo creation presented by both domestic and foreign authors and by internet and magazine sources, connecting separate parts into a coherent whole and the analysis of the use of logo by individual brands.

Key words

Brand. Branding. Design manual. Logo. Visual identity.

Introduction

Branding is a complex process in the life cycle of a brand, and this article focuses on the visual identity of the brand related to the creation of the logo as a basic visual element and provides an insight into what the design manual of the brand should contain and how to work with it. While several foreign and several Slovak authors (Matúš, Heriban, Sharp, Adamson, Haig, Healey etc.) deal with the issue of branding, few authors deal with the creation of the logo and the design manual as a basic element of the visual identity of the brand. In this case, it is necessary to draw information either from the practical life of the brands (based on author's experiences) or professional media or the statements of brand representatives from various media. All three sources are used in the article. As a result, the scientific language of the article is disrupted when using citations of company representatives from the media. Numerous different brands and categories have been introduced to

the market, ranging from exclusive to private. Each brand unfolds a different story of its entry to the market, its development and the values it offers. The overall care of the brand nowadays necessitates suitably selected tools of not only the communication mix but also the marketing mix. Spectacular communication would not enable a market breakthrough without a brand offering a competitive product or service. Therefore, the strategic view of work with brands needs to be more and more adopted. Brand building or maintenance and increasing its market share is the key focus of marketing specialists. Not only more products and services sold are of importance, but brand is the concept that remains and increases sales. What is fundamental in the process of brand creation is, in addition to logo, the definition of colours to be associated with the brand, or the creation of a name and slogan. The name should characterise what the brand seeks to offer to the market, and should be integrated with the logo. On the other hand, the brand should be able to use both features independently without losing its identity or recognisability in the

minds of customers. However, logo still remains the symbol or the visual expression of a brand.

1 The Brand

Brand is considered as the essential distinguishing feature of products. Brands include visual features such as logo, colours, dress code of employees, design of sales areas and audio effects – advertising jingles. All of these shape an integrated whole, enabling us to easily identify the brand¹. The most significant brand identifiers, distinguishing a brand from others, include name, colour and logo, i.e. corporate identity.

Customers assign a level of trust to the brands they encounter. Preferred brands signify a high level of trust and indicate that the brand promise is delivered. Marketing managers, therefore, need to ensure that they do not harm or reduce the perceived levels of trust in their brands. Indeed, actions should be taken to enhance trust. One way of achieving this is to use labels and logos to represent a brand's values, associations, and source. For example, all Apple products are signified, and identified by, the fruit with a bite removed; UK meat products carry a red tractor symbol. According to the National Farmers Union, the red tractor logo indicates that the meat was produced to exacting standards of food safety, kindness to animals,

and environmental protection. This is intended to reassure customers about the origin and quality of the meat. A more recent symbol is that of a footprint. This refers to the carbon dioxide level associated with the production and transportation of a brand. This emerged because some brands wanted a means of demonstrating the carbon savings they had made in their supply chains. Walkers Crisps and then Tesco were the first brands to use this symbol².

2 The Branding Process

The fundamental purpose of branding is to identify the source of the product or service. This is the reason that branding was first developed. Branding must have qualities that distinguish the brand from other competitors. One obvious characteristic is the brand name itself, which is, by law, unique. There are also other distinctive elements that, as part of a brand's identity, can supplement or substitute for the brand name. These qualities help the consumer to notice, recognise and recall the brand – when the brand is advertising and in buying situations. These elements can include:

- colours – such as the Garnier green and the TNT orange;
- logos – such as McDonald's golden arches;
- taglines – such as Nike's 'Just do it';
- symbols/characters – such as MickeyMouse's ears;

- celebrities – such as Tiger Woods for Nike advertising styles – such as MasterCard's "priceless" campaign.

A distinctive asset is anything that shows people what brand is being offered for sale. These can be used on packaging and in advertising, in-store displays and sponsorships – they can be used in any marketing activity where the marketer wants the consumer to be able to identify the brand. This might be to build, refresh or reinforce consumer memory structures or to facilitate purchasing by making the brand easier to locate. The stronger and fresher the links between these distinctive elements and the brand name, the easier it is for the consumer to identify the brand. While for packaged goods bought from retail supermarkets, pharmacies or hardware shelves this link to the brand name isn't even necessary. The distinctive asset alone can brand the product³. Successful businesses have been built by simply introducing branding to a category. For example, Subway recognised that sandwiches were popular throughout the world, and yet there were no branded sandwich shops. What an opportunity sitting under all of our noses! Today, people recognise Subway's brand when they look down a street or drive past. This recognition allows Subway to out-compete the less visible, unbranded sandwich shops (even though many are offering a superior product). There are three main reasons why distinctive brand

¹ MATÚŠ, J.: *Základy marketingu a marketingovej komunikácie*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2005, p. 12; See also: ALFÖLDIÓVÁ, A., TRNKA, A.: *In-World Marketing in Second Life*. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 58-71.

² FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson education limited, 2013, p. 385.

³ SHARP, B.: *How brands grow*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 125.

assets (descriptive memories) matter. First, branding allows consumers to be loyal to particular brands and to adopt heuristics like buying “their brand” or “the one they noticed”. Without branding, loyalty (which is natural behaviour) has to be directed to something else – like a price point, a position on the shelf or “whatever is on special”. Second, branding lets consumers know which brand the advertising belongs to so that their memory structures are refreshed for the right brand. Without this, advertising cannot refresh memory structures for a brand (in short, it can’t work). The effect is powerful, with consumers who are more familiar with a brand far more likely to notice the brand’s advertising. Branding is the creation of distinctive brand assets. Mental associations act like coat-hangers: they allow other memories and associations with a brand to hang or form. iPod’s white headphones (earbuds) are a distinctive asset; even by themselves in any ad they say “iPod”. The Jolly Green Giant, the M&M characters, PG Tips’ chimps, the Mercedes Benz 3-pointed star, Nike’s swoosh, Mastercard’s “priceless”, L’Oreal’s “because you’re worth it”, and Puma’s puma logo all do the same⁴.

3 Logo as a Visual Expression of Brands

Logo is the most significant visual brand identifier. Companies present their logos at every opportunity – internal materials, web sites,

brand designs, campaigns, etc. The logo itself, even without a name, is sufficient to identify the given brand. Logos are visual representations of brands.⁵ The use of logos to encapsulate the values and personality of an organisation and to promote recognition and recall among stakeholders, is both common and well-practised. One of the more common problems arises when the designer has a crystal clear understanding of what the logo represents but the meaning is obscure to stakeholders. The use of abstract logos in particular can frequently exacerbate this problem. The logo is an important brand identifier. In 2011, when energy prices started to soar and energy companies were being criticised for abuse of power, profiteering, and customer neglect, BGas saw the need to change the way their brand was perceived. This they attempted with a new identity, featuring a green leaf-shaped gas flame or ribbon, to reflect the brand’s values and range of energy-based products and services. The identity was introduced on a needs basis, no fanfare and no press release, all to keep criticism down⁶. When Peugeot and Citroen merged in 1976, the change was not marked by a new logo, or

⁵ See also: BEDNÁRIK, J., AUGUSTÍNOVÁ, N.: Texture and Pattern in Corporate Design. In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 114; ČÁBYOVÁ, I. et al.: Visual Identity of Universities: Logo as a visual symbol of university. In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 97.

⁶ CHAPMAN, M.: British Gas set to launch modern brand identity. In FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson education limited, 2013, p. 373.

⁴ SHARP, B.: *How brands grow*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 195.

one of the two being dropped. Both organisations retained their marques and their identities for several years. Melewar also cite the takeover of Midland Bank by HSBC. The Midland’s Griffin logo was retained for several years, enabling stakeholders to transfer their trust to the new company gradually. Many universities have dropped their official heraldic logos and have developed modern abstract identities in an attempt to be perceived as modern, commercially orientated organisations. This realignment might be said to reflect the changing financial structures as these institutions are required by government to seek a higher proportion of their income from private rather than public sources. Once again the personality of the organisation is reflected in the visual identity. Some universities adopt dual logos. The abstract, often contemporary logo is for everyday use on letterheads, Web pages and signage. However, the original, heraldic devices are still used for public events such as graduation ceremonies and the installation of chancellors and vice chancellors. On the one hand, this might be seen as a clever way of meeting the needs of their students without throwing away the credibility, heritage and intellectual associations attached to heraldic devices. On the other hand, however, this might be interpreted as uncertainty about how an organisation wants to be seen or, worse, neglect or poor strategic management on behalf of the owners – namely, the government. Visual identity is also an important element in an organisation’s international strategy and the way in which it wishes to be perceived in different countries and

regions. In particular, multinational organisations need to find new ways of identifying themselves as a result of mergers, acquisitions, technological developments, restructuring and other changes in their various marketplaces⁷.

Logo is a characteristic feature working in context with the environment to convey an image of the brand and to evoke a personal experience in the viewer’s mind, and to strengthen such experience in preparation for the next encounter⁸. The company Reebok made an interesting step in 2014, when it changed its logo, and subsequently launched a campaign in which it challenged customers to have the new logo tattooed on their body. The person with the largest tattoo could win a voucher to the amount of almost six thousand dollars. There are other examples of companies abroad who changed their logo to better represent their offer. Either redesign or overall rebranding of the companies was concerned. Fedex is an example of excellently managed rebranding. The iconic brand, known for express deliveries of parcels, became stronger than ever before following the change of name and logo. In 1994 the company changed not only its name (originally Federal Express), but also its logo, which is equally attractive even after 27 years. The final design represents

⁷ MELEWAR, T. C.: Measuring visual identity: a multi-construct study. In FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson education limited, 2013, p. 373; FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson education limited, 2013, p. 373.

⁸ HEALEY, M.: *Co je branding?* Praha : Nakladatelství Slovart, s. r. o., 2008, p. 90.

a typographic gem, in which an arrow symbol is hidden between the letters E and X, and it is considered as one of the best brand symbols by designers. This year pharmaceutical giant Pfizer introduced its greatest redesign in the last seven decades. The well-known shape of a pill was replaced by a double spiral in the new logo, symbolising passion and determination to engage in science, innovation and the well-being of patients. It took designers 18 months to create the logo which is to be a visual representation of the new strategy, intending to change Pfizer from a pharmaceutical company to a scientifically oriented brand focused on disease prevention and maximum commitment to patients. French car manufacturer Renault changed its logo and visuality, seeking to make the brand ready for a modern future in the digital world. The design manager Gilles Vidal grounded the logo design on two intertwined lines creating a notoriously known diamond. The line design also symbolises a new road that the car manufacturer seeks to take. As the author said the logo was perfectly ready for the digital era. Flat design enables a logo’s adaptation to different digital platforms, it facilitates work with animations, and it is equally well applicable to the grilles of new models. The logo also follows electrification, to which the brand seeks to devote intensely⁹. The logo of a company is also its symbol, which is used as a means of

⁹ MITÁS, A., ČUPKA, J.: *Zvažujete re-branding? 3 príbehy svetových značiek a čo sa z nich môžete naučiť!* [online]. [2021-09-05]. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.sk/zvazujete-rebranding-3-pribehy-svetovych-znaciek-a-co-sa-z-nich-mozete-naučit>>.

not only external but also internal communication. Symbolism refers to the visual aspect of identity and was once regarded as the sole aspect of corporate identity management. Salame and Salame were some of the first researchers to consider visual identity in this way. Indeed, there are many today who regard visual identity as the only real element of corporate identity, mentioned earlier as the visual school of corporate identity¹⁰. Schein in his hierarchy of corporate culture, determines “visible artefacts” as the first level. These are the more immediately observable aspects of the culture, such as the letterheads, logos, signage, emblems, colour schemes, architecture and the overall appearance of all the design aspects associated with the company¹¹. Dowling refers to visual identity and its composition consisting of four key elements: corporate names, logos and symbols, typefaces and colour¹². It is thought that, through the use of symbolism, a level of harmonisation can be achieved by bringing all of these identity cues together. To these elements should be added architecture and

¹⁰ SALAME, E., SALAME, J.: *Developing a Corporate Identity: How to Stand out in the Crowd*. In FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson Education Limited, 2013, p. 416.

¹¹ SCHEIN, E. H.: *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. In FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson Education Limited, 2013, p. 416.

¹² DOWLING, G. R.: *Corporate Reputation: Strategies for Developing the Corporate Brand*. In FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson Education Limited, 2013, p. 416.

physical location¹³. It is enough to indicate a “swoosh” and the Nike brand automatically appears in many people’s minds. A golden arch symbolises McDonald’s, three stripes symbolise Adidas, and the puma animal symbolises the Puma brand, while an apple represents the Apple brand. The examples of these brands picture the ideal



Figure 1: Fedex logo used in the 1970s (on the left) and the current logo, used since 1994 with minor modifications.

Source: MITÁS, A., ČUPKA, J.: *Zvažujete rebranding? 3 príbehy svetových značiek a čo sa z nich môžete naučiť*. [online]. [2021-09-05]. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.sk/zvažujete-rebranding-3-príbehy-svetovych-znaciek-a-co-sa-z-nich-mozete-naucit>>.



Figure 2: The pill in the Pfizer logo was replaced by a double spiral (on the right).

Source: MITÁS, A., ČUPKA, J.: *Zvažujete rebranding? 3 príbehy svetových značiek a čo sa z nich môžete naučiť*. [online]. [2021-09-05]. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.sk/zvažujete-rebranding-3-príbehy-svetovych-znaciek-a-co-sa-z-nich-mozete-naucit>>.

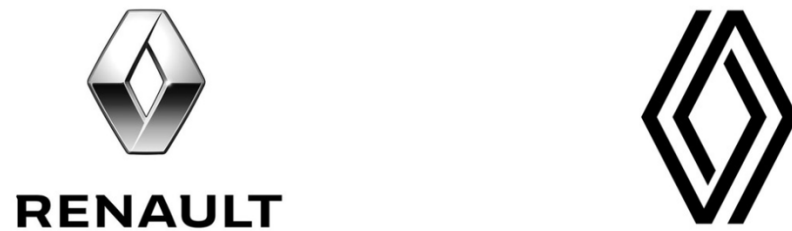


Figure 3: Car manufacturer Renault adapted the well-known diamond (on the right) to the digital world.

Source: MITÁS, A., ČUPKA, J.: *Zvažujete rebranding? 3 príbehy svetových značiek a čo sa z nich môžete naučiť*. [online]. [2021-09-05]. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.sk/zvažujete-rebranding-3-príbehy-svetovych-znaciek-a-co-sa-z-nich-mozete-naucit>>.

13 MELEWAR, T. C., BASSETT, K., SIMOES, C.: The role of communication and visual identity in modern organisations. In FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson Education Limited, 2013, p. 416; FILL, CH.: *Marketing communications. Brands, experiences and participation*. Edinburgh : Pearson Education Limited, 2013, p. 416.

state. Companies often seek to incorporate their brand name in the logo to make it sufficiently informative. However there are cases in which the logo itself is only created by the brand name. Symbols – such as the McDonald’s golden arches, the red Travelers umbrella, the Nike swoosh, or Google’s colourful logo – can provide strong company or brand recognition and image differentiation. The company might build a brand around a famous person, as Nike did with its Air Jordan basketball shoes and Tiger Woods golfing products. Some companies even become associated with colours, such as IBM (blue), UPS (brown), or Coca-Cola (red). The chosen symbols, characters, and other image elements must be communicated through advertising that conveys the company’s or brand’s personality¹⁴.

4 Design Manual as the Determining Tool of Brand Visual Identity Use

Brands can be misinterpreted and values diluted, therefore you need to make sure that this never happens because as brand becomes more inconsistent, it can start to lose its value. A brand book or brand guidelines is the ultimate user guide to make sure a brand is fully understood. They can help to guide all the brand’s content and creative development that represents the brand, both

14 KOTLER, P., ARMSTRONG, G.: *Principles of marketing*. New Jersey : Pearson Education, 2010, p. 394.

internally and externally¹⁵. We can generally say that corporate identity is a comprehensive approach comprising company’s communication, behaviour and design. Corporate design is also referred to as a uniform visual style, which is specified in the form of a design manual. Brand should not only include a logo defined, but the principles of its use should be incorporated in the design manual, which should cover the following:

Composition

Logo composition includes a graphic symbol and the name of the company, has it been defined for the brand, or the logo can directly include the company’s claim. Logo variations – design manual specifies the cases in which other than the basic logo variation can be used (e.g., black and white logo, inverse logo, etc.).

Colour – defines the exact colours used in a logo. Colouration cannot be expressed only verbally, it would not be a professional presentation. As especially graphic designers work with the logo, possible colours that may be used with the brand are expressed in Pantone, CMYK and RGB formats.

Protection zone

Protection zone represents a fixed value. No text, other logos or graphic elements may be placed beyond this boundary. It is the space around the logo that needs to remain clear, without other interfering elements.

15 KENNEDY, L.: *The A to Z of branding*. Dublin : Louise Kennedy, 2012, p. 3.

Minimum dimensions

Minimum logo dimensions are the dimensions preserving details and readability. It is not advisable to use smaller dimensions than those defined in the design manual of every brand.

Acceptable and unacceptable modifications

Design manual also defines acceptable and unacceptable logo modifications. If a coloured logo is concerned an acceptable modification is its use against a white or black background, while its use against a coloured background is unacceptable, as only black and white logo variants are acceptable against coloured backgrounds. Logo cannot be positioned sidelong or deformed in any way, or displayed in backgrounds of different shapes (such as oval), as the protection zone would not be respected. Logo cannot be positioned on a photograph, as it would also disrupt its visual representation.

5 Change of Strategy Accompanied by Change of Logo

Visual identity may not change during the entire life of a brand, or it may undergo gradual changes resulting from its development, e.g., it may be adapted to the communication strategy implemented at the given time. However, this does not mean that visual identity should be changed every time a new communication concept is introduced; in relation to possible logo changes communication strategy is exclusively concerned. Slovak brand Dedoles, which operates on 21 European markets, can provide an example. In their

first communication strategy, which was supported by an ATL campaign, they sought to promote respect and responsibility to oneself and to nature, highlighting the fact that the textile industry was one of the largest polluters of the environment, with which the company's logo was associated.



Figure 4: Previous logo of Dedoles.

Source: Dedoles, internal documents.

Last December Dedoles reviewed their strategy, starting to focus on "Dedoles as a clothing brand recognised for jolly colourful designs".

"The natural world remains part of it, but we are not going to promote it in advertising, rather only at the level of CSR projects," said Richard Mareček from Dedoles¹⁶.

The change of strategy was accompanied by a change of logo, which conveyed joyfulness and colourfulness, as the brand owner Jaroslav Chrapko stated: "Richard Mareček suggested that

we needed to be a more confident brand, and communicate joyfulness, colourfulness and optimism as a reflection of our products. The new logo is also more daring, joyful and cheeky. It depicts our characteristic feature of being both daring and reasonably cheeky"¹⁷.



Figure 5: Dedoles logo.

Source: Dedoles, internal documents.

Conclusion

A brand cannot be referred to as a logo, and a logo cannot be referred to as a brand. However, brand visual identity is essential, as its characteristics and symbols distinguish it from other brands and should be a brand's primary identifier in the eyes of the target group. Logo may be also called the work of art of every brand, and its design should be approached accordingly. Logo accompanies a brand during its entire existence, especially at every encounter with a consumer or customer with the given brand. Recognition of a brand by everybody just at the sight of its logo should be the goal of every brand. Simply said, logo should be associated with the given brand in the minds of consumers, and should not be confused with any other brand on the market. The ideal is

when consumers or customers seek to present their personal identity through the visual identity of the brand they prefer, as they identify with it. During the existence of a brand the processes of redesigning or rebranding may be initiated, as we already mentioned above. However, every company should give thorough consideration to such a step and subsequently spend sufficient time and investment to communicate it properly in order to "overwrite" the original logo with the new one in the minds of customers, who keep associating it with the given brand. Once a logo has been designed the definition of the principles of its use in a design manual is essential, as the design manual should be a bible of the brand with clearly specified rules of how the logo may be used and what variants are to be avoided. It is the only way to achieve a uniform visual representation regardless of who is designing it.

The article provided a comprehensive view of the issue of logo creation and manual design as the basic elements of the visual and symbolic form of the brand. At the same time, the article pointed out that the logo is not immutable throughout the life cycle of the brand, but on the contrary, it is necessary to work with its art design to reflect the positioning of the brand in the period/life cycle in which it is. For this reason, the article also provided examples of the Renault, Pfizer, FedEx and Dedoles brands, which changed their logo as their strategy changed. Dedoles started as a T-shirt business, for which the environmental topic was an important element of

communication. Since 2020, Dedoles has been a brand with jolly colourful clothes and the visual identity has been adapted to this.

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Author

Assoc. prof. PhDr. Jana Galera Matúšová, PhD.
jana.matusova@ucm.sk

Faculty of Mass Media Communication
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Námestie J. Herdu 2
91701 Trnava
SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Profile of the Author

Assoc. prof. Jana Galera Matúšová, PhD. has been working in the field of marketing communication for 19 years, especially in management positions for brands such as UniCredit Bank (Slovakia), SAZKA (Czech republic), Marks and Spencer (Slovakia, Czech republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland), LAMA mobile (Czech republic), Sberbank (Slovakia), Falck (Czech and Slovak republic) and Dedoles (21 countries within Europe). Since 2009 she has been working as an assistant professor at Slovak and Czech universities. Jana Galera Matúšová is member of foreign and domestic professional organizations, such as the PR club in Czech Republic. She is a member of the editorial board of the Polish magazine *Preferencje Polityczne* and the electronic magazine *ecoletra.com*. Jana Galera Matúšová won 2nd place in Effie Czech Republic with the launch campaign for LAMA mobile.

¹⁶ *Tri škrekčky vo farebných ponožkách ovládli televíziu aj online*. [online]. [2021-09-23]. Available at: <<https://strategie.hnonline.sk/marketing/2184165-tri-skrekky-vo-farebnych-ponozkach-ovladli-televiziu-aj-online>>.

¹⁷ HINŠT, J.: *Rok tancujúcich škrekčov*. [online]. [2021-09-23]. Available at: <https://www.dedoles.sk/buxus/docs/Public_Relations/SK/FORBES_Rok_tancujucich_skreckov.pdf>.