

Visual Identity Matters: Enhancing Brand Recall and Recognition through Symbols

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Abstract

Brand symbols show a pivotal role in assisting consumers recall a brand at the socket of purchase. In advertising, various practices are employed to arrest consumer consideration, primarily through brand recall and gratitude. This article discovers the notion of brand symbols and inspects their standing in differentiating a brand from its contenders. Additionally, it probes whether brand symbols add to positive brand connotations and acquaintance. In Pakistan, brand power has been noticeable for years, leading to intense rivalry among brands. To capture consumer attention and drive purchases, brands must create a distinctive impression. This paper provides cherished understandings for brand executives and pushers on the tactical use of brand symbols in both fresh and current brands. Data was collected using a survey that encompassed 18 interrogations about international brands, aiming on recall and recognition. The study was led with a arbitrarily chosen sample of 2500 consumers in Karachi, who regularly use various brands. Key demographic factors such as gender, age, and education were inspected to assess their impact on brand symbol memory and acknowledgement. The analysis, shown using MLR (OLS model), exposed that gender does not meaningfully affect brand symbol recall but does affect recognition. Age positively influences brand symbol recall, while education negatively relates with it. However, recognition of brand symbols showed no significant relationship with either age or education.

Keywords: Visual Identity, Brand recall, Brand recognition, Brand symbol

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Introduction

Brand symbols are vibrant fundamentals of brand individuality, attending as pictorial cues that help shoppers recognize and distinguish products. This study inspects how effectively purchasers can recall and spot various brand symbols, discovering the inferences for marketing tactics.

Brand symbols are vital fundamentals that distinguish one brand from another. They play a significant role in representing an organization's identity and conveying its meaning to consumers and the wider world. Since the foundation of brand administration and marketing pedagogy, brand symbols have effectively communicated and associated brands and services with consumers. These symbols can take various forms, including pictorial representations, pictorials with text, text in symbolic form, or a combination of these elements.

Extensive research has been conducted on brand symbols over different periods, but the current era has seen significant evolution in consumer behavior. This study aims to examine consumer behavior concerning brand symbols, focusing on precise proxies such as age, sexual category, schooling, profession, family dimensions, faith, ethnic group, race, division, and family income. Understanding these variables will help marketing executives appreciate the importance of brand symbols in enhancing brand recall and gratitude (brand awareness).

Review of the Literature

Brand recall and recognition are critical components of brand equity. Recall refers to the ability of consumers to retrieve brand information from memory, while recognition involves identifying a brand when presented with visual or verbal cues. Prior research indicates that strong brand symbols enhance both recall and recognition, contributing to consumer loyalty and purchase decisions.

Being there and being the center of charm are two distinct concepts, especially when discussing brands. The central drive of a brand is to be the center of magnetism rather than merely existing among contenders. In today's cluttered market environment, capturing and retaining customer attention is challenging (Radder & Wei, 2008). Brand consciousness must be robust to create recurrent and promising relations with the brand. Consistently prompting consumers to recall and spot the brand across various purchasing states is crucial (Subhani & Osman, 2011).

This study focuses on brand symbols that attract consumers and are consistently displayed through media, hoardings, and various forms of advertising. Consumers are more likely to remember and recognize a brand within a specific product grouping when the brand title relates to its symbol. Examples of renowned brand symbols paired with brand names include Pizza Hut, Walmart, Coca-Cola, and MasterCard. These brands have robust and promising associations because purchasers can easily narrate to them within their respective categories. For instance, Pizza Hut evokes images of a pizza restaurant, Coca-Cola is synonymous with cola drinks, Walmart represents a retail mart, and MasterCard is associated with credit or debit cards. Additionally, some brand symbols, like NBA and NASA, immediately convey their product categories. NASA, for example, is easily identified with space and astronomy, while NBA is associated with sports, specifically basketball.

Research by Abbas (2023) highlights four key aspects of creating brand awareness: memorizing the brand name, product category, and brand names that explain the product advantage. Their work shows that brand symbols are effective in interconnecting the brand's note to purchasers. Furthermore, if a brand logo includes the brand title, it becomes more memorable and easier for shoppers to recall and understand. Xu and Matsuoka, (2024) emphasizes that brand knowledge consists of two straightforward basics: brand mindfulness and brand appearance. Brand mindfulness/ symbols, as a subset of brand identity, play a critical role in enabling brands to communicate with their consumers effectively.

Over the decades, numerous studies have explored brand influence, worth, character, and brand equity. Specific research on brand symbols and brand knowledge includes works by Subhani and Osman (2011), Runkel, and Preuss (2021), and Rao, (2024). These studies have acknowledged the associations and significance of brand symbols in marketing.

This research is unique in its examination of how brand symbols create recall in connection to demographic, social, political, economic, and technological factors.

❖ **Review of literature on Variables**

In brands' recall and recognition studies, quite a lot of variables play critical roles. The key variables include:

Brand Symbol: Visual basics demonstrating the brand, such as logos or icons. Brand symbols are considered to create immediate acknowledgment and convey definite associations related to the brand's identity and values (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Visual symbols are influential because they can interconnect complex ideas and emotions quickly and effectually. For instance, the Nike "Swoosh" carries concepts of athleticism and movement with a meek design.

Brand Recall: The brand recall is the capacity of consumers to retrieve brand information from his/ her memory. A higher recall indicates strong buyer associations with the brand (Keller, 1993). This course contains an active retrieval from memory, which often entails a strong emotional or pragmatic connection with the brand. Effective advertising approaches often target to create such connections via repeated and constant exposure to the brand symbols.

Brand Recognition: It is the ability of buyers to identify a brand when it is presented with visual or vocal cues. Recognition typically involves less cognitive energy than recall and specifies familiarity with the brand (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). This process can be boosted by the uniqueness and constancy of the brand symbol. For example, Coca-Cola's red and white logo is easily recognized worldwide, partly due to its constant use over many years.

Demographic Variables: Factors such as age, gender, and education level that may influence brand recall and recognition. For example, older buyers might have more brand disclosure over their lifetime, affecting recall (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Gender differences might impact how visual data is processed, leading to deviations in brand symbol recognition and recall (Putrevu, 2004).

❖ Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical substance of this study is rooted in the theories of buyer behavior and recall. The dual-process theory endorses that recognition and recall are unlike cognitive processes. Recognition is often considered a more candid process than recall because it includes identifying accustomed stimuli rather than retrieving data from memory without cues (Jacoby, 1991).

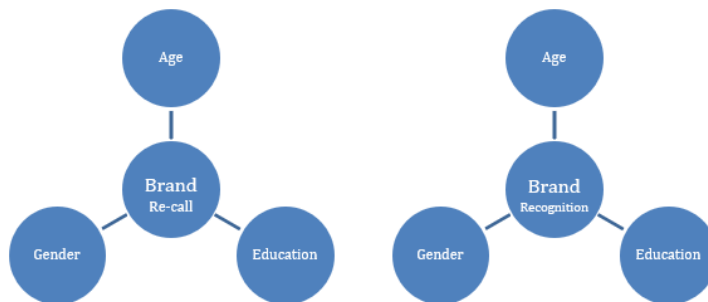
Dual-process theories, such as those offered by Kahneman (2012), differentiate between two types of cognitive progressions: System 1 (fast, automatic, and intuitive) and System 2 (slow, deliberate, and analytical). Recognition primarily

involves System 1 processes, making it faster and requiring less cognitive effort. On the other hand, recall needs System 2 processes, connecting more thoughtful and effortful retrieval from memory.

These theories are reinforced by neuroimaging studies showing that recognition and recall activate diverse areas of the brain. For instance, the hippocampus is deeply involved in recall tasks, while the perirhinal cortex is more vigorous during recognition tasks (Yonelinas, 2002). Understanding these differences helps marketers tailor their approaches to leverage the strengths of both processes.

❖ Conceptual Model Framework

Based on the theoretical underpinnings a conceptual model was established to investigate the connection between brand symbols and recall/recognition among consumers. The model considers demographic variables (age, gender, education) and their impact on brand symbol recall and recognition.



Source: Self-Established (2024).

❖ Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual model, outlined above, the following premises have been framed to address the research questions:

❖ Hypotheses for Brand Symbol-Recall

Hypothesis 1- Brand symbol-recall is influenced by the age.

Hypothesis 2- Brand symbol-recall is most influenced by the level of education.

Hypothesis 3- Brand symbol-recall is significantly influenced by gender differences.

❖ Hypotheses for Brand Symbol Recognition

Hypothesis 4- Brand symbol-recognition is influenced by the age.

Hypothesis 5- Brand symbol-recognition is most influenced by the level of education.

Hypothesis 6- Brand symbol-recognition is significantly influenced by gender differences.

Methodology

This research employs a quantifiable approach, deploying surveys to gather data from a sample of 2500 consumers. The survey contains a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice enquiries intended to measure partakers' ability to recall and identify a range of brand symbols from several businesses.

❖ Details on Method, Data and Variables

To examine the premises of this study, data was collected from 2500 respondents as mentioned, ranging in age from 15 to 65 years, with education levels from 0 to 20 years, and gender characterized as male (1) and female (2). The data pool was gathered using a self-administered personal survey method with non-restricted improbability sampling.

❖ The survey consisted of two main parts:

Brand Symbol Recall: Partakers were shown a chart with eight brand symbols (without brand names) that they might have seen in commercials or al fresco media. They were requested to identify the brand tags connected with these symbols.

Brand Symbol Recognition: Partakers were shown a second chart with ten brand symbols that encompassed the brand names. They were questioned to distinguish the product category associated with each brand symbol.

The brand symbols selected for the survey were deliberately chosen to be less popular in Pakistan to challenge respondents' recall and recognition abilities.

The responses were measured relative to brand symbol recall and recognition. For age and education, higher positions were assigned to higher groups, reflecting increased age and education levels. Gender was categorized dichotomously, with male coded as 1 and female coded as 2.

❖ **Econometric Model**

To analyze the effects of age, education, and gender on brand symbol recall and recognition, ordinary least square MLR was employed. The models are specified as follows:

For Brand Symbol-Recall:

$$\text{Brand Symbol-Recall} = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 (\text{age}) + \beta_2 (\text{education}) + \beta_3 (\text{gender}) + \text{ET}_1$$

For Brand Symbol-Recognition:

$$\text{Brand Symbol-Recognition} = \alpha_2 + \beta_4 (\text{age}) + \beta_5 (\text{education}) + \beta_6 (\text{gender}) + \text{ET}_2$$

Results and Findings

Table 1: Regression Estimations

Dependent Variables	Predictors			
		Age	Education	Gender
Brand Symbol-Recall	Beta	0.013	-0.217	-0.041
	T-Stats	2.888	-3.978	-1.500
	Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.210
Adjusted R- Squared	0.087			
F-Statistics	4.997			
Dependent Variables	Predictors			
		Age	Education	Gender
Brand Symbol-Recognition	Beta	-0.009	-0.012	0.044
	T-Stats	-1.236	-0.508	1.873
	Sig.	0.340	0.893	0.002
Adjusted R- Squared	0.041			
F-Statistics	2.892			

The findings of this study indicate that among all the predictors, age and education significantly impact brand symbol recall. The beta coefficients for age and education are significant at $p < 0.05$, as shown in Table 1, thus supporting hypotheses H1 and

H2. Specifically, as customers age, particularly in the 50 to 60-year bracket, their ability to recall brand symbols increases. Conversely, higher levels of education correlate with a decrease in brand symbol recall.

In contrast, gender is the only predictor that significantly affects brand symbol recognition, with a significance level at $p < 0.1$. This supports hypothesis H6.

Precisely, the findings reveal that highly distinctive and frequently advertised brand symbols have higher recall and recognition rates. Symbols associated with global brands such as Nike and Apple showed significantly higher recognition compared to less well-known brands. The study also found that color and simplicity of design play crucial roles in enhancing brand symbol effectiveness. Overall, the study's propositions were not fully supported, but several components were validated, as summarized in the hypotheses assessment in Table 2.

Table 2: Hypotheses Assessment Summary

Hypotheses	Empirical Conclusion at $p < 0.05$
H1: Brand symbol-recall is influenced by the age.	Failed to be rejected
H2: Brand symbol-recall is most influenced by the level of education.	Failed to be rejected
H3: Brand symbol-recall is significantly influenced by gender differences.	Failed to be accepted
Hypotheses	Empirical Conclusion at $p < 0.10$
H4: Brand symbol-recognition is influenced by the age.	Failed to be accepted
H5: Brand symbol-recognition is most influenced by the level of education.	Failed to be accepted
H6: Brand symbol-recognition is significantly influenced by gender differences.	Failed to be rejected

Discussions and Conclusion

As previously noted, brand symbol recall is influenced by age and education, but not by gender. This can be understood through three key observations:

- **Positive Relationship between Age and Brand-Recall:** Older individuals tend to recall brand symbols more effectively than younger people. This could be because older adults may pay more attention to brands when shopping or watching television, while younger individuals might not be as attentive.
- **Negative Relationship between Education and Brand-Recall:** Individuals with higher education levels, such as PhDs and postgraduates, recall brand symbols less frequently than those with lower education levels. This suggests that graduates and intermediate-level individuals are more interested in and knowledgeable about brand symbols, while highly educated individuals may not prioritize memorizing brand symbols.
- **Insignificant Impact of Gender on Brand-Recall:** Gender does not significantly predict brand symbol recall, indicating that both males and females recall brands similarly. Brand recall does not differ significantly between male and female respondents.

Regarding brand symbol-recognition, there is a notable difference between males and females, with females showing a higher recognition ability. However, brand symbol-recognition is not influenced by age or education level. This suggests that customers, regardless of age or educational background, find it challenging to spot the product class of a brand based solely on its symbol.

In short, this study confirms that brand symbols are powerful tools in marketing, significantly impacting consumers' ability to recall and recognize brands. Companies should focus on creating distinctive, simple, and frequently advertised symbols to enhance their brand equity. Future research could explore the impact of cultural differences on brand symbol recognition and recall.

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