

The Influence of Brand Logo Design Elements on Consumer Response: A Systematic Review

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Abstract. As a key sensory asset for enterprises, the design characteristics of the brand logo profoundly influence consumer response. Employing a systematic literature review methodology, this paper aims to clarify the conceptualization and typology of brand logos, alongside the mechanisms through which their design elements affect consumer response. First, the study proposes a broad concept of brand logo (encompassing multi-sensory systems like visual and auditory), moving beyond the limitations of traditional visual-centric approaches. Second, focusing on the two core types – visual logos and sonic logos – it systematically deconstructs the pathways through which design elements influence consumer response. Finally, the paper outlines potential future research directions, including AI-driven dynamic logo design, globalization and cultural adaptation strategies, and multi-sensory integrated experience construction. This provides a framework for theoretical advancement and practical innovation in brand logo design.

Keywords: Brand Logo, Design Elements, Consumer Response, Visual Logo, Sonic Logo.

1. Introduction

Global brand logo design is undergoing multi-dimensional innovations. Recent practices have shown that the application of audio logos (such as Intel and BMW enhancing brand personality through sound color) and dynamic logos (such as the controversy over the removal of Sprite borders) has surged [1 2], AI technologies (such as Google Logo update, sustainability optimization) are driving design innovation [3 4], the logo shows a trend of multi-sensory and adaptive transformation [5].

In increasingly competitive markets, the brand logo, serving as the crucial "first point of sensory contact" between brand and consumer, profoundly shapes consumer cognition, emotion, and behavioral responses. Previous research across design, advertising, and consumer behavior fields has extensively explored individual logo design elements (e.g., typography, graphics, color), identifying key factors and their effects. However, these studies remain fragmented, lacking an integrated, systematic theoretical framework to unify design elements across sensory dimensions (visual, auditory, etc.) and the complex pathways through which they trigger consumer responses. This compartmentalized perspective hampers a holistic understanding of logo design effects and impedes translating theoretical insights into design practice.

Addressing this gap, this systematic literature review aims to: (1) Identify and summarize key design factors; (2) Clarify the consumer response it triggers and the theoretical basis; (3) Analyze the influencing mechanism and path; (4) Propose future research directions.

Through this effort, the study integrates previously dispersed, element-specific findings from various disciplines within a unified, process-oriented analytical framework. This integrated and systematic perspective not only deepens the theoretical understanding of brand logo design beyond single-element limitations but also provides a scientific foundation for more effective logo design and management. It empowers brands to precisely convey value, forge emotional bonds, and secure consumer preference in complex market environments.

2. Brand logo

2.1. Definition

The definition of the brand logo has been progressively enriched through scholarly research. Traditionally, the brand logo was equated solely with the visual logo. From a visual perspective, it is defined as a design encompassing graphics, text, and colors [6], serving the core functions of brand differentiation and image communication [7]. For instance, Starbucks' twin-tailed mermaid logo conveys the heritage and innovation of coffee culture through a synthesis of traditional motifs and modern minimalism. Krishna's five-sensory experience model challenged this visual-centric perspective, providing theoretical grounding for auditory elements [8 9]. Sound, used either within advertisements or as brief musical segments termed Sonic Logos or Sogos, functions as the auditory counterpart to the visual brand logo [10]. Intel's classic 3-second audio logo exemplifies this, creating a distinct auditory memory point with a short melody. Furthermore, Singapore Airlines developed a patented scent for its flight attendants and cabins, crafting a unique olfactory brand impression. This demonstrates that brand logos extend beyond vision and hearing into the olfactory domain, thereby enriching their meaning and consumer interaction [11].

Integrating existing research, this paper defines the brand logo broadly as: a persistent symbolic system designed by brand owners, utilizing multi-sensory channels (including visual and auditory), to achieve brand recognition, value communication, and emotional connection.

2.2. Classification

The brand logo, broadly conceived, integrates visual, auditory, and other sensory identifiers. As existing research predominantly focuses on visual and auditory forms, this analysis focuses on these two primary types. Visual logos can be categorized into pure graphics, pure text, and combined graphics/text. Sonic logos can be classified based on timbre and sonic waveform characteristics.

2.2.1. Visual Logos

Visual logos constitute the primary element within the brand logo system.

Pure Graphic Logos consist solely of graphical elements. Examples like Nike's Swoosh are concise and dynamic, effectively communicating the brand's striving and enterprising spirit. Consumers readily associate the graphic with the brand without textual support.

Pure Text Logos rely primarily on typography. The Procter & Gamble logo exemplifies this, where unique font design distinguishes the brand name. Details like font style and stroke weight convey traits such as professionalism and precision. Consumers recognize the brand through its distinctive typography [6].

Combined Graphics/Text Logos incorporate both graphical and textual elements. For example, the JD.com logo features a vivid graphic alongside the brand name. This combination enhances visual impact while aiding consumer recall and recognition [12].

2.2.2. Sonic Logos

Sonic logos represent a significant non-visual component of brand logo.

Timbre plays a crucial role in sonic logos, with different brands exhibiting unique timbre characteristics. Instrument timbre is often linked to gender stereotypes: sounds perceived as "feminine," such as the flute or harp, typically convey elegance and sincerity, as heard in Tiffany & Co. Advertisements [10]. Conversely, "masculine" timbres, like the tuba or trombone, reinforce ruggedness, exemplified in Harley-Davidson advertisements. Sound texture further categorizes brand personality. Rough textures project ruggedness, demonstrated by the processed granularity of Harley-Davidson engine sounds, while smooth textures suggest sophistication, like the pure high frequency of the Apple Mac startup chime [13].

Sonic waveform characteristics significantly influence emotional response. Ascending patterns, known as "happy" waves (e.g., the ending of McDonald's jingle), enhance brand warmth. Descending

patterns, or "sad" waves (e.g., slow melodies in public service announcements), deepen emotional resonance [14].

3. Influence of Brand Logo Design Elements on Consumer Responses

Brand logo design elements can be broadly categorized into visual and auditory elements. Visual elements encompass the three fundamental components of graphics, text, and color in traditional views, as well as extended elements such as motion, space, and symbolism. Extended elements derive from the fundamental ones: motion elements are visual entities presented through movement, sequence, or interactive cues; space elements are design features governing positional relationships between graphic or text elements; symbolism elements are visual entities carrying cultural or emotional symbolic meanings.

3.1. Influence Mechanisms of Visual Elements

3.1.1. Fundamental Elements

(1) Graphics

Graphic design sources for brand logos are diverse and often highly stylized, making them a key research focus. Studies indicate that angular logos, compared to circular ones, enhance perceived brand premium by increasing consumers' psychological distance. This premium perception further translates into brand preference, especially when consumers seek status expression [15]. Conversely, circular logos evoke associations of warmth, environmental friendliness, and ecological sustainability, particularly suitable for green brands. This effect is primarily mediated by increased perceptions of femininity and warmth [16 17]. The shape of the logo border (circular vs. oval) and its congruence with the internal content shape (angular vs. rounded) are also critical. Circular borders symbolize stability and sincerity; matching them with angular content enhances perceived sincerity and brand trust. Oval borders symbolize dynamism and innovation; pairing them with rounded content boosts excitement and brand affect [18]. Specific graphic choices carry meaning: animal logos maximize consumer preference when aligned with cultural values. Competence animals (e.g., lions) resonate more in individualistic cultures, while warmth animals (e.g., rabbits) suit collectivist markets [19]. For regional logos, graphic elements effectively depicting local characteristics enhance familiarity, strengthening identity recognition [20].

(2) Text

As an element with both semantic and visual functions, text design details significantly influence brand image construction. Research shows letter case is crucial for brand tone. Uppercase letters enhance perceived authority (especially for luxury brands) by increasing perceived strength, while lowercase letters boost perceived friendliness (suited for accessible brands) by reducing psychological distance [21], [22]. Digit size also plays a role. Based on spatiotemporal consistency theory, large digits (e.g., "561" vs. "513") activate "new/future" metaphorical associations, improving consumer attitudes via enhanced perceived novelty and value, particularly among low cognitive-need consumers [23].

Typeface, a core element, has diverse and impactful design dimensions. Fundamental dimensions like naturalness, harmony, ornamentation [6], and completeness shape brand personality (e.g., excitement, sincerity, sophistication, innovation) and credibility. Note: incomplete typefaces may boost perceived innovation but harm trustworthiness and trigger negative attitudes in prevention-focused consumers [24]. Typeface style choice (e.g., handwritten vs. machine-written) is critical; congruence with brand or destination stereotypes (warmth vs. competence) enhances consumer attitudes and travel intentions [25]. Specifically, handwritten suits warm destinations, while machine-written fits competent ones. Text readability, influenced by brightness contrast, color combinations, font, and search time, is fundamental for effective brand communication [26].

(3) Color

Color, the most impactful visual element, possesses strong physiological properties for attracting attention. Unlike text or graphics, color in logos interacts with other elements. Research shows background-color interactions shape brand personality perceptions. Black backgrounds amplify the negative connotations of logo colors, such as making red appear more aggressive. Conversely, white backgrounds enhance positive associations, such as making red seem more energetic [27]. This effect is strongest when color combinations match brand personality (e.g., black background for violent game brands). Color saturation influences brand personality via arousal: high saturation (warm or cool) evokes excitement, while low saturation conveys calmness [28]. This mechanism applies crucially in food marketing, where high-saturation images boost purchase intent by enhancing perceived freshness and tastiness [29]. However, color effects are culturally contingent. Contrasting/high-saturation combinations can evoke cheapness in collectivist cultures [30], while high brightness/saturation in regional logos boosts development confidence [20]. Colors also carry ethical implications: green and blue logos increase consumer tolerance for retailers' ethical behaviors via eco-friendly perceptions [31].

3.1.2. Extended Elements

(1) Motion

Motion elements (e.g., animation, trajectory changes, interactivity) activate processing fluency and emotional engagement. For hedonic products, dynamic logos (e.g., with drag effects) outperform static ones in boosting brand attitude and purchase intent. The mechanism lies in motion implying brand effort, eliciting "brand energy" perceptions [32], and enhancing market performance via quality inferences [33]. Agentic animation (implying autonomous movement) particularly boosts attitudes congruent with dynamic brand positioning, whereas object animation (passive movement) is less effective [34]. Animated backgrounds (e.g., videos, scenes) can improve initial consumer response by enhancing processing fluency [35].

Logo tilt direction conveys meaning. Upright logos enhance perceived product reliability, while tilted logos boost perceived innovativeness, driven by varying perceptions of "motion" [36]. In food contexts, diagonal logos (vs. vertical) increase perceived tastiness and risk, also mediated by perceived motion. Final attitudes depend on regulatory focus: promotion-focused consumers prefer diagonal logos for tastiness, while prevention-focused consumers prefer vertical logos for lower risk [37].

(2) Space

Space elements (e.g., whitespace, boundaries, spacing, symmetry) trigger metaphorical associations and compensatory mechanisms. Whitespace presence enhances perceived brand vitality (mediated by uniqueness), while its absence reinforces stability [38]. Boundary presence (framing) affects information processing. Frameless designs promote relational processing, blur brand boundaries via "open space" metaphors, and increase acceptance of brand extensions [39] and perceived brand innovativeness [40]. Framed designs activate safety perceptions but only significantly improve brand attitude for high-safety-need products (e.g., food) [2], [41]. In low-risk contexts, frames may be perceived as restrictive, lowering purchase intent [42]. Chaotic environments or awe emotions reduce perceived control, increasing preference for bounded logos to restore psychological order [43], [46].

Symmetry significantly enhances perceived product quality by increasing perceived stability, but only under low cognitive load [45]. Symmetry influences preference via processing fluency, with conservative consumers favoring symmetrical logos [46]. Asymmetry boosts "exciting" brand personality via arousal [47], enhancing inferences of aesthetic and symbolic value [48].

Logo spacing and complexity interact. Complex logos require more spacing for fluency [49]. However, it should be noted that loose gaps (vs. compact) are easily interpreted as the "inconsistency between words and deeds" of information organizers, reducing the perception of product security and the persuasiveness of resource conservation. This effect is more prominent in a compact culture or when threat perception is significant [50].

(3) Symbolism

Symbolism elements are strategic tools for shaping brand cognition, evoking emotional connections, and guiding behavior. They include cultural symbols (carrying cultural meaning), emotional symbols (eliciting affective responses), and contextual symbols (adapting to specific situations).

Cultural Symbols (e.g., Chinese dragon patterns, calligraphy, totems) are vital in cross-cultural marketing. Logos incorporating Chinese cultural symbols positively drive brand equity overseas by enhancing perceived innovation and brand confidence [51]. However, this effect depends heavily on consumer cognitive needs, perceptions of international relations, and cultural authenticity [52]. Their essence lies in activating deep cultural associations and value identification.

Emotional Symbols (e.g., cute symbols, anthropomorphism, luxury cues) impact emotions and value perceptions. Cute symbols enhance brand liking [53], especially under hope emotions (mediated by perceived growth potential), and trigger protective motivations during brand transgressions, reducing punishment intent – though this weakens with repeated violations [54]. Anthropomorphism exhibits dual value paths: organic symbols (natural objects) activate functional/economic value [55], [56], while anthropomorphized symbols evoke emotional/novelty value [55]. Effectiveness depends on attractiveness, which strengthens logo-self connection to influence functional benefit perception [57], and may be more pronounced for specific audiences (e.g., food science students) or contexts~~. Luxury cues (e.g., conspicuous logos) boost perceived status/wealth and elicit preferential treatment [58]. Conversely, the "Quiet Luxury" segment prefers inconspicuous logos, driven by social connection with elites [59]. Overall logo prominence affects luxury quality and emotional value perceptions [60].

Contextual Symbols (e.g., temporary designs with Winter Olympics or Spring Festival elements) emphasize situational fit. Contextual logo changes (e.g., adding festive elements) significantly boost perceived brand warmth via enhanced perceived vitality. A key boundary condition is high consumer expectancy for the context (e.g., major holidays vs. obscure events) [61]. Their core lies in leveraging temporality and relevance to create novelty and resonance.

3.2. Influence Mechanisms of Auditory Elements

Auditory elements in brand logos have become critical sensory channels for shaping consumer emotional responses, brand personality perceptions, and behavioral intentions. Research indicates that sonic logos, despite brief exposure, profoundly influence brand personality perception through timbre quality (roughness/smoothness). Rough timbres (e.g., synthesized bass, distorted guitar) convey ruggedness, suitable for outdoor gear and sports brands; smooth timbres (e.g., piano, harp) project sophistication, aligning with luxury and beauty categories. This influence stems from acoustic physical properties (e.g., harmonic structure), often operating below consumer awareness. However, inconsistency with visual elements (e.g., rugged sonic logo paired with sophisticated visual logo) significantly weakens this effect [12].

Timbre's mechanism extends through instrument types. Gender-stereotyped associations link feminine instruments (e.g., flute, harp) with brand sincerity via high-pitch perception, while masculine instruments (e.g., tuba, trombone) enhance masculine traits through low-pitch perception [10]. Thus, timbre affects brand personality (ruggedness/sophistication) via dual pathways: visceral reactions (non-associative, e.g., synthesized bass directly evoking ruggedness) and conceptual associations (associative, e.g., piano timbre activating sophistication cognition), with impact comparable to visual logo design [62].

The efficacy of sonic logos further depends on strategic placement within advertisements. Sonic logos can evoke intense emotions (happiness/sadness) akin to long-duration background music, influencing brand attitude and purchase intent. However, emotional transfer is position-sensitive: sad sonic logos (low-pitch minor keys/slow tempo) enhance consumer attitudes more effectively at ad openings, whereas happy sonic logos (bright major keys/fast tempo) perform better at closings. Crucially, the opening effect for sad sonic logos applies only to public service ads (e.g., environmental

causes); commercial use risks negative associations. Emotion mediates this process: immediate affect evoked by sonic logos (e.g., happiness → pleasure) positively transfers to ad attitude and brand belief, ultimately driving behavioral intentions [13].

4. Future Research Directions

4.1. Advancing AI in Logo Design

Rapid AI development is revolutionizing brand logo design. Future research should prioritize how AI enables dynamic and contextual innovations—e.g., auto-generating visual elements responsive to real-time scenarios (weather, festivals, geolocation) for enhanced environmental adaptability. Key questions emerge: (1) What are the boundaries of consumer acceptance for machine-generated designs? (2) How to balance algorithmic efficiency with human designers' emotional creativity? (3) What cultural misinterpretations and ethical risks arise when AI creates "fusion logos" by synthesizing cultural symbols? Long-term impacts warrant special attention: Could frequent AI-driven logo updates weaken consumer-brand emotional bonds? This research will establish scientific frameworks for digital-era brand visual management, balancing technological innovation with humanistic values.

4.2. Cultural Adaptation in Globalization

Accelerated brand globalization intensifies cultural adaptation challenges for logo design. Research must dissect cross-cultural perceptual differences—e.g., Asian markets' resonance with circular logos' "harmony" symbolism versus Western preferences for geometric designs' "innovation" connotations. Crucially, solutions for cultural conflicts require exploration: (1) How to maintain global brand consistency when localized adjustments address negative associations (e.g., animal graphics violating religious taboos)? (2) How to engage youth in emerging markets whose aesthetics hybridize Eastern and Western elements, challenging traditional cross-cultural design theories? Developing dynamic cultural adaptation models will be pivotal for multinational brands seeking globally efficient yet locally resonant logo strategies.

4.3. Multisensory Brand Experience Integration

Logo design is evolving from visual-centric to immersive multisensory experiences. Research should systematically investigate sensory synergies: (1) Can specific sound frequencies enhance futuristic perceptions for tech brands? (2) Does material texture communicate luxury craftsmanship? (3) How do tactile logos on food packaging evoke taste associations? Core focus: Revealing "multiplier effects" of sensory combinations—e.g., leather texture + woody scent creating experiential synergy versus jarring sounds + neon colors causing cognitive dissonance. Technical implementation challenges must be addressed: (1) Achieving equivalent tactile transmission in digital environments (2) Cost-effective mass production of multisensory logos. These efforts will transition brand experiences from "visual recognition" to "sensory memory," particularly in emotion-driven sectors (luxury, tourism, wellness).

5. Summary

This review synthesizes research on how brand logo design elements influence consumer responses. Moving beyond a purely visual focus, it proposes a generalized brand identity framework encompassing visual, auditory, and potentially other sensory systems. The core analysis dissects how specific elements within visual logos (e.g., shape, typography, color, motion, spacing, cultural/symbolic elements) and sonic logos (e.g., timbre, sonic wave patterns, placement) trigger distinct consumer responses—affecting cognition (e.g., brand personality perceptions), emotion (e.g., warmth, excitement), and behavior (e.g., purchase intent, brand loyalty). Key findings reveal nuanced mechanisms, such as angular shapes signaling premiumness, rough timbre conveying ruggedness, or

motion enhancing perceived brand energy. The paper concludes by outlining critical future research avenues: leveraging AI for dynamic/adaptive design, developing culturally adaptive strategies for global brands, and exploring multi-sensory integration for richer brand experiences. This integrated perspective aims to bridge theory and practice in brand identity design.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Nanjing University of Science and Technology for its academic resources and institutional support. My deepest appreciation goes to my supervisor for their invaluable guidance, critical feedback, and steadfast encouragement throughout this research. I am also indebted to my senior fellow students for their insightful suggestions and practical assistance during the development of this work.

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