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A Collaborative Logo Design Project for a Startup Therapeutic Medicine Company

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ABSTRACT

A logo design project was initiated in collaboration to serve the research, teaching, and service needs of the faculty, learning experience needs of the student, and the brand recognition need of a startup company. The company for which logo was developed and tested specializes in producing an herbal supplement for Type II diabetics that is naturally derived from plants and taken orally with a well-known Type II diabetes medication.

Most literature has focused on how to design effective logos but only a few studies have focused on the methods to develop and test the associations that logos represent. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to: 1) provide a description of the step-by-step process of the logo design method using the semiotics theory; 2) measure and test the designed logo's semiotic associations, industry representation, ease of recognizability, and its ability to create trust, and 3) examine the strength of the relationships among the antecedent factors that contribute to the logo's ability to build trust in the company.

In order to design a new logo, the theory of semiotics was utilized. To build strong associations with a therapeutic medicine brand, the authors started the logo design process with understanding the mission statement of the company and the description of its offering. The first draft of the logo was a hand-drawn sketch illustrating a human figure holding a leaf overhead enclosed in a circle. One of the main features of this logo was the use of certain colors to tie into the therapeutic industry utilizing the associations and meanings reported in the literature. For example, because maintaining normal blood sugar levels for diabetics is important, the dark red color is chosen for the human body to symbolize blood, and being active and healthy.

With the company owner's approval of the logo, the finalized logo's associations were tested anonymously (i.e., without the company name attached) using an online survey instrument. A total of 102 completed surveys were obtained within two weeks. The survey included 15 semiotic adjectives to measure the perceived associations for the logo on a 7-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree). The industry representation comprised of 23 industries on a 7-point likelihood scale that the logo represented (1=Least Likely to 7=Most Likely). Ease of Recognition construct was measured with 5 statements, the Logo's Image was measured with 5 statements, and Trust in Logo was measured with 5 statements on a 7-point Likert scale. In addition, to control for a person's tendency to trust others in the evaluation of the logo's trustworthiness, the authors included 3 statements to measure Disposition to Trust using a 7-point Likert scale. Disposition to trust (i.e., a person's natural tendency to trust others) was used as a moderating variable in order to test any possible bias from the respondents in assessing the logo's ability to build trust.

The testing of the associations and industry representation of the logo revealed that the logo created positive associations and represented the Therapeutics Medicine and Healthcare industries the most. In an SEM model using SmartPLS, the study also tested the relationships between the ease of recognition, Logo Associations/Image and Trust in the Company, moderated by a person's disposition to trust others in general. The relationships were significant and positive indicating that as long as a logo is designed to be easily recognized (and recalled) and conveys positive associations, it will lead to an initial trust in the company, assuming that the company lives up to its promises and regardless of consumers' disposition to trust others.

Besides the collaborative work described in this paper, this project provided the faculty member with multiple opportunities to work with different students to teach the concept of semiotics, logo design process, empirically measuring and testing the associations based on the literature and company mission, and analyzing and interpreting the data.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tulay Girard (Ph.D., Florida Atlantic University) is a Professor of Marketing at Penn State Altoona. Her research focuses on product classes, retailer attributes, perceived risk, Internet security/privacy, brand equity in banking, higher education, soccer league, and private-label branding, and brand orientation. Her publications can be found at www.tulaygirard.com. She has received several best paper awards and grants.

Luke Hallman was a senior student research assistant at Penn State Altoona.

