The impacts of brand identity on consumers buying habits

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Abstract

This study highlights the impacts of brand identity on consumers buying habits. Through previous review of literature on this topic, it was determined that branding, brand loyalty, emotional influence, and word-of-mouth affected a consumer's buying habits. However, the previous literature did not speak to the aspects of brand identity (color, design, and logo) itself and how it affects a consumer in relation to the previous stated factors. This study hopes to bridge that gap. Participants were chosen at random using convenience sampling within nonprobability sampling. The data was collected by way of a quantitative method, an online survey questionnaire, analyzed and presented within visual format for clear representation of each participants demographic.

The impacts of brand identity on consumers buying habits

The connection to brand identity can come from several different places. Whether it be from experiences, narratives, cultural background, or brand loyalty; every consumer thinks differently when buying a brand. Station8Branding, "a web design, branding and advertising agency" (Station8Branding, 2019, par. 1) in Tulsa, Oklahoma wrote the following:

> According to research studies done by several universities, people interact with brands in a way similar to how they interact with people. We live in a social world filled with outside influences. Brands affect our buying behavior in many ways that we're now able to understand. (Station8Branding, 2019, par. 2)

Have you ever wondered what drew you to a brand? Was it the logo, brand colors, or possibly the graphic elements? Did you feel a connection to the brand, or did you hear about it through word-of-mouth?

To answer these questions, it's important to first understand the difference between brand identity and brand image. An article from Investopedia stated, "Brand identity is the visible elements of a brand, such as color, design, and logo, that identify and distinguish the brand in consumers' minds" (Tarver, 2020, par. 1). It went on to further state that brand image is "the intent behind the branding and the way a company does the following: chooses its name, designs its logo, uses colors, shapes, and other visual elements in its products and promotions, crafts the language in its advertisements, and trains employees to interact with customers—all to cultivate a certain image in consumers' minds" (Tarver, 2020, par. 2). Therefore, brand identity is the visual elements that you see while brand image is the intent behind the overall branding itself.

Literature Review

To further dive into the topic of brand identity and its impact on consumer buying habits, there was a need to look at previous research already conducted. It was important to understand what methods have been successfully recorded while trying to learn from the data of studies that needed more research. From available literature, it was concluded that branding, brand loyalty, emotional influence, and word-of-mouth affected a consumer's buying habits. However, none of the current available literature studied the aspects of brand identity, color, design, and logo, in relations to the consumers themselves.

The journal article, *Impact of brand on consumer behavior* written by Chovanová, Korshunov, and Babčanová stated, "In our opinion, brand is a factor that has got an impact on consumer purchase preferences and therefore we decided to investigate the impact of brand on consumer behavior in connection with the age category of consumers" (Chovanová, Korshunov, & Babčanová, 2015, p. 616). Chovanová, Korshunov, and Babčanová's study used quantitative research, a questionnaire, over a six-month timeframe and the results divided the participants into age brackets once completed.

Building off of the age demographic, Zmuda wrote, "The student audience will always be important to marketers, because they see it's not just what they purchase today, but what they can purchase tomorrow" (Zmuda, 2011, par. 4). The research article, *The picture of luxury: A comprehensive examination of college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands* stated, "To build these relationships, marketers need a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship young adults, particularly college student consumers as the future of the luxury market, have with luxury brands" (Eastman, Shin, & Ruhland, 2020, p. 59). The researchers used

online interviews to retain some of their data. This study is relevant to future research because it

hits on the fact that the brand identity type could impact buying habits too.

The study, *Analysis of communication factors influencing customer loyalty among university students* noted, "Loyalty does not only imply retaining customers, but also turning these audiences into letters of introduction for potential customers, through recommendation" (Duque Rengel, Velásquez Benavides, & Abendaño Ramírez, 2017, p. 753). This study used a mixed method approach which included quantitative data from surveys along with in-depth interviews and observation. It notes how brand loyalty is linked to a consumer's emotions and word-of-mouth.

When it came to emotional influence, it can be seen as an abstract variable. Sung and Yang stated, "Analyzing the factors that influence publics' perceived image of an organization is challenging in that their abstraction level may be high, and, consequently, they are complex to conceptualize and difficult to measure" (Sung & Yang, 2008, p. 359). Station8Branding mentioned, "As much as colors and designs may catch the shoppers' eye, emotional appeals have an even greater potential of influencing buying behavior" (Station8Branding, 2019, par. 9). This connected to the journal article, *An empirical study on the relationship between consumption emotions and brand loyalty.* Geng and Li noted, "Similarly, emotions influence consumers' behavior during and after their purchases" (Geng, & Li, 2018, p. 267). This study used qualitative research, focus group discussions with a questionnaire, on college students to measure emotional factors of brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand awareness.

Word-of-mouth has become a powerful tool within brand identity and marketing. The journal article *Unintended effects of incentivizing consumers to recommend a favorite brand* touched on this topic. Anghelcev mentioned, "In late 2004, the business community recognized

the importance of WOM research by founding the word-of-mouth marketing association

(WOMMA)" (Anghelcev, 2015, p. 214). This study spoke to human behavior in the form of the

motivation crowding theory and how it impacts the use of word of mouth when recommending

their favorite brand to someone else.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

After looking at the previous literature available, the following research questions and

hypotheses are proposed:

Research question 1: Does visual representation within brand identity effect a

consumers buying habits?

Research question 2: What parts of a brand's identity attracts a consumer?

Research question 3: How important is word-of-mouth to consumers buying habits?

Hypothesis 1: Consumer buying habits depend on their emotional connection to a brand identity.

Hypothesis 2: Older consumers will be more loyal to a brand than younger consumers.

Hypothesis 3: Semiotics and visual rhetoric impact consumers buying habits.

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Proposed Method

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This study will build on the knowledge from the previous researchers and expand the

connection between brand identity and consumer buying habits. By breaking down how aspects

of brand identity (color, design, and logo) impact consumers within different demographics, the

data will show which aspects are the most important to consumers when making a purchase.

Therefore, strengthening future branding and consumer relationships.

Participants

The participants within this study will be chosen by at random using convenience sampling within nonprobability sampling. All participants will be over the age of sixteen and recruited on a volunteer basis. Participants will be colleagues, students, family members, social media friends and classmates who are reached through email, face-to-face questioning, and social media posts. An interactive Google Form link will be sent and posted through the internet for the participants to complete. An initial sample for this study would be 300 participants. The goal is to have a large enough sample with diverse demographics in hopes that the data produces higher quality results.

Design

The independent variables within this study will be name, age, gender identifier, profession, professional or employment status, and ethnicity. The dependent variables are the set aspects of brand identity (color, design, or logo), visual representation, loyalty, word-of-mouth, and emotional connection. Once all the data is collected, participants will be divided up based on the independent and dependent variables that were measured. This will be a once a day, three times a week between-participants design that will last over a four-week period.

Procedure

Each participant will receive a link to an interactive online survey questionnaire either by email, text message, or social media posts. The online survey questionnaire will measure the hypotheses by requesting answers to questions that apply to general demographics and the aspects of brand identity, visual representation, brand loyalty, word-of-mouth, and emotional connection. By seeing which aspects participants chose, it will help further research within brand

identity. See Appendix A for the full online survey questionnaire. Once the participate has answered each question, they will submit the online Google Form and receive a confirmation notice that their results have been submitted. If someone requests a paper copy then I will print the questionnaire out, have them answer the questions and then hand it back to me.

The data will be collected either in person or online through Google Forms. After collection, it will be stored within a folder in either my email or notebook depending on which form of communication the participant returns to me. All data will be analyzed and broken down based on the responses from the survey questionnaire. Once all data is sorted, graphics will be created to display the results.

Results

When it came to examining the results, the data was automatically calculated within the Google Form and broke down based on the question type. To further analyze the data, IBM SPSS Statistics was used to create tables for comparison. The first variable measured was the aspects of brand identity (color, design, or logo). Of the 140 participants, 91 participants, 65%, responded that the aspect of design motivated them to spend money (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Aspects of brand identity

Which aspect of brand identity motivates you to spend money?
140 responses
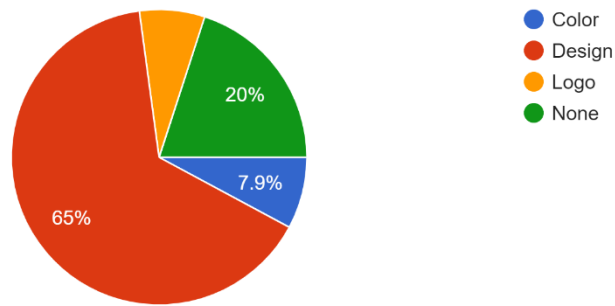
The topic of visual representation was the second variable measured within the survey questionnaire. Out of 140 participants, 81 participants, 57.9%, stated that visual representation within brand identity affects their buying habits (See Figure 2). This is important to note because if brands and organizations increase the visual representation of their target audience then their profits and revenue would increase.

Figure 2

Affects of visual representation

Does visual representation within a brand's identity affect your buying habits?
140 responses
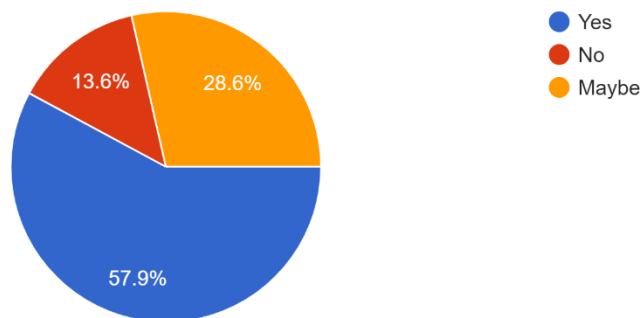
The third variable measured was brand loyalty. When it came to how age impacted brand loyalty, it seemed that the age range of 25-34 years old had the highest percentage of brand loyalty with a total of 64 participants who responded with the highest rank of three, neutral (see Table 1). However, the 25-34 years old also had the highest percentage for rank 5, very loyal, which is interesting since it was expected that the older age range, 55 and over would be the highest among that rank.

Table 1

Age vs Brand Loyalty Crosstabulation

| | | | Brand Loyalty | | | | | |
			1	2	3	4	5	Total
Age	18-24 years old	Count	1	2	10	9	2	24
		Expected Count	1.9	2.6	7.2	7.7	4.6	24.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	9.1%	13.3%	23.8%	20.0%	7.4%	17.1%
	25-34 years old	Count	5	5	20	18	16	64
		Expected Count	5.0	6.9	19.2	20.6	12.3	64.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	45.5%	33.3%	47.6%	40.0%	59.3%	45.7%
	35-44 years old	Count	3	3	5	8	3	22
		Expected Count	1.7	2.4	6.6	7.1	4.2	22.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	27.3%	20.0%	11.9%	17.8%	11.1%	15.7%
	45-54 years old	Count	0	2	3	3	4	12
		Expected Count	.9	1.3	3.6	3.9	2.3	12.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	0.0%	13.3%	7.1%	6.7%	14.8%	8.6%
	55 or older	Count	2	2	2	6	2	14
		Expected Count	1.1	1.5	4.2	4.5	2.7	14.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	18.2%	13.3%	4.8%	13.3%	7.4%	10.0%
	Under 18	Count	0	1	2	1	0	4
		Expected Count	.3	.4	1.2	1.3	.8	4.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	0.0%	6.7%	4.8%	2.2%	0.0%	2.9%
Total		Count	11	15	42	45	27	140
		Expected Count	11.0	15.0	42.0	45.0	27.0	140.0
		% within Age vs Brand Loyalty	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Word-of-mouth was the fourth variable measured. It was necessary to measure this variable because word-of-mouth has become a valuable tool for marketing within the last decade. Of the 140 participants, 79 participants, 56.4%, said that word-of-mouth affected their spending habits (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

Affects of word-of-mouth

Does word-of-mouth affect your buying habits?
140 responses
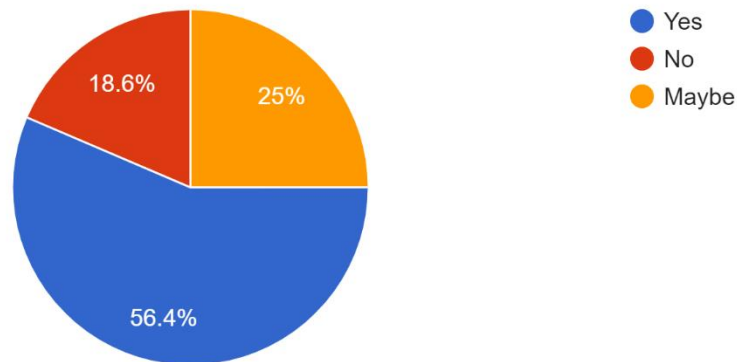
To further break down the data, the age ranges were compared to the impact that word-of-mouth has within their group. Once again, the age range of 25-34 years old had the highest count with 37 out of 64 who said yes (see Table 2). It was a tie between the age ranges of under 18 and 18-24 years old with a total count of 2 each who said no. Since the younger demographics represent the lower numbers for word-of-mouth, this data could be used to figure out how to better target their generations and create content that they would talk about.

Table 2

Age vs Word Of Mouth Crosstabulation

| | | | Word of Mouth | | | |
			Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Age	18-24 years old	Count	4	2	18	24
		Expected Count	6.0	4.5	13.5	24.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	11.4%	7.7%	22.8%	17.1%
	25-34 years old	Count	15	12	37	64
		Expected Count	16.0	11.9	36.1	64.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	42.9%	46.2%	46.8%	45.7%
	35-44 years old	Count	7	4	11	22
		Expected Count	5.5	4.1	12.4	22.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	20.0%	15.4%	13.9%	15.7%
	45-54 years old	Count	4	3	5	12
		Expected Count	3.0	2.2	6.8	12.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	11.4%	11.5%	6.3%	8.6%
	55 or older	Count	5	3	6	14
		Expected Count	3.5	2.6	7.9	14.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	14.3%	11.5%	7.6%	10.0%
	Under 18	Count	0	2	2	4
		Expected Count	1.0	.7	2.3	4.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	0.0%	7.7%	2.5%	2.9%
Total		Count	35	26	79	140
		Expected Count	35.0	26.0	79.0	140.0
		% within Age vs Word of Mouth	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Emotional connection was the last variable to be measured. Whether it be a brand connected to an experience, memory or the personal narratives within a consumer's life, emotional connection could have an impact on a consumer's buying habits. So, it was important to see how the participants responded to this question. This question was the most revealing since the data showed that 39.3%, 55 participants, were neutral when it came to emotional connection to a brand's identity followed by 28.6%, 40 participants, chose somewhat important
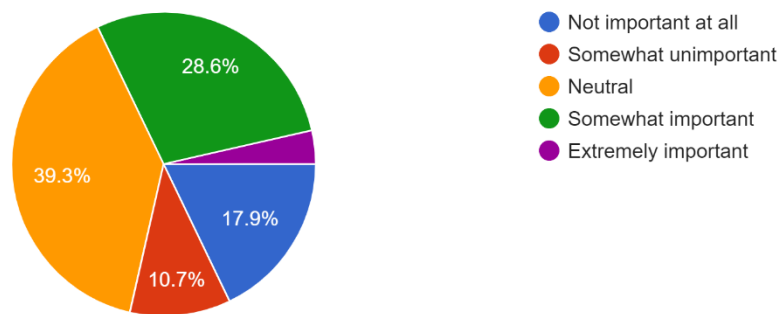
(See Figure 4). Some participants made the statement that their buying habits are based off functionality and need over emotional connection, but those variables were not measured.

Figure 4

Importance of emotional connection

When buying a brand, how important is it for you to have an emotional connection to that brand's identity?
140 responses

Overall, two out of the three proposed hypotheses were proved wrong based on the current data collected. Even though having a somewhat important emotional connection came in second highest, the data showed that it did not have a major effect like hypothesis one thought. Also, it seemed that the data proved the very opposite of hypothesis two since the younger generations were more loyal to brands than the older ones. However, it was proven that semiotics and visual rhetoric do impact consumers buying habits.

Discussion

After collecting and reviewing all the data, it became clear that getting participants would be harder than initially thought. While the initial sample size was supposed to be 300, only 140 participants responded to the online survey questionnaire. At first, the thought of using social media seemed like a strength, however it later became a limitation because people were hesitant

to click on the link because they thought it was a scam or that they would be hacked. Participants would message for confirmation that the survey questionnaire was real and after they received that confirmation then they would take it even though the social media posts had a status and a disclaimer above the link (see Appendix B). Using the internet was a limitation also because people over the age of fifty-five are not that active on social media and they don't check their emails regularly like Millennials and Gen Z. Therefore, they did not respond in time for their results to be recorded.

The major strength was that this study focused on the actual aspects of brand identity rather than the overall brand image of an organization or product. It was easy to measure how consumers of different demographics response to their connection with a brand when buying it. The biggest limitation was the timeframe. It was hard collecting data within a short period to get the results needed. Google Forms had to be used because the cost of using a paid website to send the survey out was not an option. Moving forward, this would be a necessary option because the request for data would be more credible and accurate if sent through a professional survey website.

After further review of the data, it was determined that errors occurred in the methodology of this case study. Brand loyalty was listed as a dependent variable, but it truly is a continuous variable and must be measured with a series of items to verify internal reliability. Since only one question within the survey questionnaire addressed brand loyalty, the data cannot be deemed fully creditable. Also, T-testing should have been used instead of crosstabulation to produce the results.

As for ethical concerns, the option to take the survey questionnaire was given to colleagues, students, classmates, and family members to help increase the participation rate. While the results are confidentiality, the issue of false or inaccurate data is still possible because they could have just clicked any response to complete the form. As result, the data could be tainted or invalid. This study showed that people misunderstand the difference between brand identity (color, design, or logo) and brand image. Once participants separated the two then it was clear to see how consumers response differently when buying brands or products within different demographics.

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Appendix A

Online Google Form

The impacts of brand identity on consumer buying habits

Brand identity is the visual elements (color, design, or logo) that consumers see when shopping. The brand image is the intent behind the overall branding that the organization represents. This form's goal is to collect data for a graduate research paper on how brand identity impacts consumers buying habits. Any responses would be greatly appreciated.

Disclaimer: This online survey is for an academic research paper. All participation in this research study is on a voluntary basis. All responses will be confidential, and the results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. It will take approximately 5 minutes and may be closed at any time if the participant decides they do not wish to complete or submit this online survey.

* Required

1. Name *

2. What is your age? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Under 18
   ◯ 18-24 years old
   ◯ 25-34 years old
   ◯ 35-44 years old
   ◯ 45-54 years old
   ◯ 55 or older

3. Do you identify as: *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Male
   ◯ Female
   ◯ Transgender
   ◯ Non-Binary
   ◯ Prefer not to answer
   ◯ Other:

4. Do you work in an art related profession? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No

5. What is your professional or employment status? *

   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Employed Full-Time (40 or more hours/week)
   ☐ Employed Part-Time (less than 40 hours/week)
   ☐ Self-employed
   ☐ Unemployed and looking for work
   ☐ Unemployed but not currently looking for work
   ☐ A homemaker
   ☐ A student
   ☐ Military
   ☐ Retired
   Other: ☐

6. How would you identify your ethnicity? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Asian
    ◯ Black/African
    ◯ Caucasian
    ◯ Hispanic/Latino
    ◯ Native American
    ◯ Pacific Islander
    ◯ Multiracial or Biracial
    ◯ Prefer not to answer
    ◯ Other: _____

7. Which aspect of brand identity motivates you to spend money? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Color
    ◯ Design
    ◯ Logo
    ◯ None

8. Does visual representation within a brand's identity affect your buying habits? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Yes
    ◯ No
    ◯ Maybe

9. How loyal are you to the brands you buy? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not loyal	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very loyal

10. Does word-of-mouth affect your buying habits? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Yes
    ◯ No
    ◯ Maybe

11. When buying a brand, how important is it for you to have an emotional connection to that brand's identity? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Not Important at all
    ◯ Somewhat unimportant
    ◯ Neutral
    ◯ Somewhat Important
    ◯ Extremely Important

Appendix B

Recruitment post on Facebook