

A FRAMEWORK OF ICONIC BRANDED PRODUCT IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The identity of an object is the character or qualities, attitudes or beliefs that distinguish it from other similar objects in space. An iconic identity is one which is unique, stable and culturally relevant. Scholars in marketing, psychology, neuroscience and communications domains discuss the characteristics of brands, icons and product design. The purpose of this paper is to integrate the streams of research in this area and propose an approach to evaluating branded products to determine if they be considered iconic or not. Specifically, consumer response to branded products in the three dimensions of functional, emotional and visceral areas are evaluated by considering several categories.

This paper explores several dimensions in the design of tangible products including, but not limited to, consumer behavior, markets, media and branding, art and culture, technology, usability, and user experience with the express purpose of identifying reasons for some products becoming iconic in their class while others remain nondescript. Integrating Design and Marketing has been prevalent in both scholarship and pedagogy, especially the topics of iconic branding. Several research propositions are forwarded and research methodical approaches recommended.

Keywords: New product design; aesthetics; Iconic branding; Neuromarketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creating a lasting and recognizable brand is the endeavor of every firm, regardless of the product or service being offered. Creating a brand that connects deeply with the consumer and elicits some level of emotional response is what makes a lasting brand. The consumer recognizes the brand, knows what the brand stands for, understands the level of quality that they are getting in the brand, and pursues the brand above all others. Iconic brands need to extend past the quality focus to making the consumer respond at several levels – visceral, emotional and cognitive. The consumer feels a connection to brands like Nike and Apple: They instantly have a feeling about those brands and what they stand for. For a brand to be iconic, it has to connect with the consumer on a level deeper than just familiarity with the product. Because of this, achieving iconicity requires more than just brand awareness, brand loyalty, or brand identity among consumers. There needs to be a deep emotional connection to the brand; it needs to be embedded in the culture and elicit a strong response from the consumer (Holt, 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature in marketing, psychology and neuroscience to develop a research framework and propositions for determining the iconicity of the brand. The remaining sections of this paper are structured first with a review of the existing marketing literature, specifically focused on branded product identity.

The next section will be focused on defined antecedents of determining a product's identity that will prove helpful in determining the iconicity of a brand. That will be followed by a review of neurocognitive responses to product design that will establish the products identity. A proposed framework and set of research propositions are forwarded followed by conclusions and recommendations for further research. Methodologies appropriate to aspects of the framework are presented including neuromarketing, specifically eye tracking, to measure the product design elements and the response to the iconic characteristics of the brand.