

The Role of Visual-Spatial Properties in Chinese Brand Name Recognition and Perception

Fanny Fong Yee CHAN

Department of Marketing, School of Business, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Previous literature has identified that several visual elements such as color and patterns can have an impact on consumer perceptions of brands. However, comparatively very few studies have explored the role of visual properties in brand names despite that brand names in certain languages such as Chinese possess rich visual properties. The dramatic growth in Chinese branding and the rise of a Chinese-speaking consumer population make it important to systematically examine the role of visual-spatial properties in Chinese brand names recognition and perception. Two pretests and two experimental studies were conducted with participants from a more homogenous sample of university students and a wider national sample. The results show that visual spatial properties include symmetry (i.e., Chinese characters with bilateral symmetry, either along the vertical or the horizontal axis) and closure (i.e., closed-structure Chinese characters, generally surrounded by a square) contributed to higher processing fluency which in turn enhanced participants' brand recognition and perception. The study enriches our understanding of a unique practice in logographic writing and its subsequent effects in marketing communications. It also helps to improve global corporations' understanding of Chinese linguistic culture and provide practical implications for brand naming in China. It suggests that international corporations and advertisement creators have to embrace Chinese linguistics and visual properties when selecting suitable brand names.

Keywords: brand recognition; closure; experimental studies; symmetry; brand perception

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project Reference No.: UGC/FDS14/B08/19).