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Economic Information Design

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Econymic information design

Its role in brand management and brand communication

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Introduction

Econymy is a branch of onomastics and was created as a term for the scientific theory that forms the background for the practical activity of branding [Platen].

Branding is a key element of company policy: it is essential for holding on to or acquiring market shares. The businessman's tasks are not confined to organization and production. A company's goods and services, as well as its image, must be visible on the market. The brand is an indispensable instrument for communicating with the public. It enriches and enhances the consumer's relationship with the goods and services by associating distinctive values with them. The brand mark does not just identify the origin of goods: it establishes a relationship with the consumer based on trust by staking the company's reputation and offering a guarantee of consistent quality. A trademark is a capital good. It can be commercially exploited by licensing, franchising, merchandising and sponsorship. As a marketing tool it may even constitute the company's main asset.

Brand management involves designing brand identities, monitoring brand effectiveness, and making any alterations to the brand identity if deemed necessary. The strategic management of a particular brand aims at the maintenance or increase of brand equity [Vaid].

Brand communication conveys the information pertaining to a brand in various ways. Besides factual information, as usually contained in press releases, there is also a more condensed information transfer taking place in advertising and in direct consumer interaction. The attributes necessary for this procedure are achieved by econymic information coding.

Communication attributes are extrinsic characteristics that suggest descriptively, figuratively, or evocatively what the brand is like. These attributes are associational and provide definition of the brand as a personality in encoded form. Brand personality builds on the emotional appeal of brands and is the medium through which these are expressed in brand communication [Esch]. Information design is the defining of the requirements governing the selecting, rendering, and transmission of information for the purpose of knowledge transfer as well as the optimization of the information with respect to these requirements [Jacobson]. In the case of econymic information, the knowledge transfer is determined by and linked to the respective markets.

1 Brand name creation

Successful brand names typically follow four stages of creation: analysis of requirements, design, development, and testing. Understanding and using effective practices for each stage allows name designers to maximize a name's probability of success [Elvidge].

Requirements

In formal processes, requirements are gathered through market research, customer feedback, determination of target groups and cultural appropriateness. Informally, design requirements are often derived from direct knowledge or experience, formally from database consultation.

Design

This stage is where design requirements are translated into a form that yields a set of coding specifications. Excellent design is usually accomplished through careful research of existing or analogous solutions, active brainstorming, ample use and testing of prototypes and tuning concepts. A selection of possible specifications for coding techniques is given in chapter 2.

Development

The development stage is where design specifications are transformed into an actual name by reducing the variability in the options and by applying creative skills in an iterative mode. Design iteration occurs when creating and refining design concepts. Each cycle in the design process narrows the wide range of possibilities until the name conforms to the design requirements. The outcome of design iteration is a detailed and well researched specification that is reflected by the final name.

Testing

The testing stage is where the name is tested to ensure that it meets design requirements and specifications, and will be accepted by the target clientel. Whether tests are deemed a success or failure is irrelevant in design iteration, since both success and failure provide important information about what does and does not work. In the case of failure, however, the name goes back to its development stage.

2 Coding techniques and their specifications

Unless indicated otherwise, the examples are taken from the Dictionary of Trade Name Origins [Room].

Aesthetics

Aesthetic information codes are perceived as more tempting to use than less aesthetic codes. This effect has significant implications regarding the acceptance, use, and performance of the information concerned. For instance, it is common for people to remember and develop feelings toward brand names that fostered positive attitudes (e.g. delight of a sound) and unusual for people to do the same with names that have fostered negative attitudes. Such personal and positive relationships with a name design evoke feelings of affection, loyalty, and patience – all significant factors in the long-term usability and overall success of a brand. They are more readily accepted and used over time, and promote creative thinking and tolerance towards the product.

e.g.: Dolcis, Goya, Ladybird

Archetypes

As C.G. Jung pointed out, archetypes are a product of unconscious biases and dispositions that have been hardwired in the brain over the course of human evolution.. Since these innate biases and dispositions are unconscious, their existence is inferred when common patterns emerge in many cultures over long periods. Identifying and aligning appropriate archetypes with an information code will increase its probability of success. Archetypal themes can be applied to all aspects of information design – from form and function to name and brand.

e.g.: Ivory (innocent), Nike (hero)[Mark].

Chunking

The term chunk refers to a unit of information in short term memory: a string of letters, a word, or a series of numbers. The technique of chunking seeks to accommodate short-term memory limits by forming information into a small number of units. The maximum number of chunks that can be efficiently processed by short-term memory is four, plus or minus one.

e.g.: Day-Glo, Odo-Ro-No

Conditioning

Conditioning influences the appeal of a code or specific kinds of behaviour. Repeated pairings of a brand name with a trigger stimulus will condition an association over time. Examples of positive trigger stimuli include anything that causes pleasure or evokes a positive emotional response – a picture of food, a sound, a fragrance or the images of attractive people.

e.g.: Marlboro

Closure

Whenever possible, people tend to perceive a set of individual elements as a single, recognizable pattern, rather than multiple, individual elements. The tendency to perceive a single pattern is so strong that people will close gaps and fill in missing information to complete the pattern if necessary. Elements in text and graphics can be minimized or omitted to allow viewers to participate in the completion of the pattern. The result is a more interesting code. The principle of closure enables designers to reduce complexity of names by reducing the number of elements needed to organize and communicate the concept.

e.g.: Vimto, Ryvita, Disprin

Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is applied in the design of advertising and marketing attempts or any other context where influence and persuasion is the aim such as in branding. It is mainly used when attempting to change beliefs. It should engage people to invest their attention in detecting dissonant cognitions, and then provide simple and immediate mechanisms to alleviate the dissonance. When using compensation to reinforce change, the minimal compensation possible is to be applied.

e.g.: Grape Nuts, Ex-Lax

Consistency

Enterprises frequently use consistency to provide customers with the same experience across many products or services. This consistency improves brand recognition, reduces costs, and establishes a relationship with customers that extends beyond any single subbrand. Aesthetic and functional consistency is to be considered in all aspects of brand design. It establishes unique identities that can be easily recognized. Internal consistency of a brand with its subbrands cultivates trust with people; it is an indicator that a product has been designed, and not cobbled together. Thus it shares the same level of quality as the other elements in the product group.

e.g.: Land-Rover & Range Rover, Coca Cola & Coke

Convergence

Product analogies often reveal new possibilities for name design. One can make use of the fact that similar characteristics evolve independently in different environments. Stable environments with convergent name designs are receptive to minor innovations and refinements but resist radical departures from established uses. Unstable brand environments with no convergent naming systems are receptive to major innovations and experimentation, but offer little guidance as to which code may or may not be successful. Thus it is advisable to focus on variations of convergent name designs in stable brand environments, and explore

analogies with other environments and product classes for guidance when designing for new or unstable brand environments.

e.g.: Kiwi, Eden Vale, Elf

Depth of processing

There is a phenomenon of memory in which information that is analyzed deeply is better recalled than information that is analyzed superficially. This is also true of the information contained in a brand name.

The key determining factors as to how well a brand name is remembered are its distinctiveness, its relevance and the degree to which its message is elaborated.

Distinctiveness refers to the uniqueness of the name relative to surrounding names and previously encountered names also referred to as the von Restorff effect. Relevance refers to the degree to which the product or service is perceived to be important. The degree of elaboration refers to how much thought is required to interpret and understand the name.

Generally the degree of deep processing of the information contained in a name that is necessary or simply triggered by its confrontation determines its power of recall and retention. It is to be supplemented by other mnemonic devices.

e.g.: 4711, Cerebos

Distortion

The external form of the name is changed for various reasons, but the information contained in the concept remains the same.

e.g. Put-U-Up, Ovaltine (for phonetic reasons), Rawlplug, Caran d'Ache

Creative needs

In order for a name design to be successful, it must meet people's basic needs before it can attempt to satisfy higher level needs. The key levels of needs related to names are: reliability, usability, and creativity. The latter is the level in this hierarchy where people begin interacting with the name design in innovative ways. The name, having satisfied all the other needs, is then used to create and explore areas that extend both beyond its design and the person using it. Name designs at this level are perceived to be of the highest value, and often achieve cult-like loyalty among users.

e.g.: England's Glory, KitKat

Mimicry

Mimicry is perhaps the oldest and most efficient method for achieving familiarity in coding. It copies properties of familiar objects, organisms, or environments in order to realize specific benefits afforded by those properties. In name design the mimicry of familiar sounds is most popular in so-called onomatopoeic designs.

e.g.: Marmite, Muzak

Mnemonic device

Mnemonic devices are used to reorganize information so that the information is simpler and more meaningful and, therefore, more easily remembered. They involve the use of words or syllables in specific ways to link unfamiliar information to familiar information that resides in memory. The creative use of the following mnemonic devices can dramatically influence recall:

- the first letters of items to be recalled are used to form first letters in a meaningful phrase, or combined to form an acronym.
- a word that is similar to, or a subset of, a word or phrase that is linked to a familiar bridging image to aid in recall.
- one or more words in a phrase are linked to other words in the phrase through rhyming schemes to aid in recall.
- a word that is related to one or more features of something that is linked to a familiar bridging image to aid in recall.

When developing corporate and product identities, the ease of recall of the brand name is critical to success.

e.g.: Teasmade, Tizer, Vileda

Similarity

Elements that are similar are perceived to be more related than elements that are dissimilar. The grouping resulting from similarity reduces complexity and reinforces the relatedness of design elements. Conversely, a lack of similarity results in the perception of multiple, disparate chunks, and reinforces differences among the elements. Similarity of sound is one of the strongest grouping effects.

e.g.: Do-Do, Yo-Yo, Handy Andy

Simplicity

Simplicity is achieved when each user can easily understand and use the brand name, regardless of experience, literacy, or education level. Steps of improving simplicity are: avoid unnecessary length, allow clear and consistent pronunciation as well as spelling.

e.g.: Harp, Jell-O, K

Symmetry

Symmetry has long been associated with beauty, and is a property found in virtually all forms in nature. There are three basic types of symmetry: reflection, rotation, and translation. These compositions are perceived as simpler and more stable, but perhaps less interesting than asymmetrical compositions. Symmetrical compositions are to be favoured when efficiency of use is the priority, and asymmetrical ones when interestingness is the priority.

e.g.: Oxo, Uhu, Aga, Omo

Von Restorff effect

It explores the phenomenon of memory in which noticeably different coding sequences are more likely to be recalled than common sequences. The von Restorff effect is primarily the result of the increased attention given to the distinctive items in a set, where a set may be a sequence of syllables or signs. Unusual words with unusual spellings are popular as names for

unique brands utilizing the mnemonic effect to promote brand recognition and product sales. The von Restorff effect occurs when there is a stimulus different from surrounding stimuli or a stimulus different from experiences in memory, such as a numeral in a sequence of letters. e.g.: 7-Up, 3M, Trac II

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