

CREATIVITY IN DISTINCTIVE BRAND ASSETS

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Abstract. The article discloses creativity in developing brand assets and explores the relationship between creativity, distinctive brand assets, and divergent thinking. The scientific novelty of an article that explores the combination of distinctive brand assets and divergent thinking might lie in its potential to shed new light on how branding strategies can be used to foster creativity. By examining how certain visual and auditory cues associated with a brand can activate divergent thinking, the study could provide insights into how marketers can design more effective branding campaigns that not only increase brand recognition but also inspire consumers to think outside the box. Distinctive brand assets are unique visual and auditory cues that help consumers identify and differentiate a brand from its competitors. Divergent thinking is generating multiple ideas and solutions to a problem. The article argues that successful distinctive brand assets could result from divergent thinking and creativity, as they enable brands to create assets that are not only distinctive but also emotionally resonant and memorable. Ultimately, the article demonstrates how divergent thinking and creativity are critical components in the development and success of distinctive brand assets, which are an essential part of a brand's overall marketing strategy.

Keywords: advertising, brands, creativity, distinctive brand assets, divergent thinking.

Introduction

In advertising and creativity research, much attention is paid to linking creativity to advertising effectiveness, such as an increase in recall and recognition (Lehnert et al., 2013). An increasingly noisy and crowded global marketplace requires brands to be creative in order to stand a chance of being noticed (Anholt, 2006; Gajdzik & Wolniak, 2022). Creativity is an essential component of brand building, as it helps differentiate a brand from its competitors and create a unique identity in the minds of consumers. According to Lane Keller (1996), brand creativity involves developing a unique and compelling brand personality that resonates with consumers. This personality can be expressed through a variety of distinctive brand assets (Romaniuk, 2018). Additionally, creative branding can help to build emotional connections with consumers, creating a sense of loyalty and preference for the brand

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(Kapferer, 2012; Shahid et al., 2022). There is a strong link between distinctive brand assets and creativity. When brands and brand identities have unique symbolic meanings, consumers are able to identify and associate companies in crowded markets (Jin et al., 2019).

A brand's assets must be consistently used across all marketing and advertising channels to reinforce its identity and increase its recognition. Creativity is necessary to keep the assets fresh and relevant and to adapt them as the brand evolves or expands into new markets. Creativity and distinctive brand assets are essential elements in brand building, and each has advantages. However, creativity is often considered more critical than distinctive brand assets for the following reasons. First, creativity can lead to more engaging and effective marketing campaigns. Using creative marketing strategies can increase the receiver's motivation, opportunities, or ability to process advertising information (MacInnis et al., 1991). When brands use creativity to develop their marketing campaigns, they can create emotional connections with their audience. This emotional connection can more effectively influence customer behavior than a distinctive brand asset. Second, creativity can help brands adapt to changing trends. Novelty, flexibility, and potential futures are all aspects of creativity, challenging and transcending established norms. Creativity allows brands to be more flexible and adaptable to changing market trends. Flexibility is shown when an ad presents a fresh perspective on an old idea (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2015). With a creative approach, a brand can pivot and adjust its message or campaign to stay relevant and resonate with its audience. For this reason, creativity can help brands foster innovation: creativity is a key driver. Brands willing to take risks and think outside the box are more likely to develop innovative products, services, and experiences that can further strengthen their brand.

On the other hand, creativity is the key driver in developing brand assets. The main purpose of this article is to disclose the creativity in developing brand assets and to explore the relationship between creativity, distinctive brand assets, and divergent thinking.

1. Distinctive brand assets

Distinctive brand assets refer to visual and auditory elements unique to a brand and help consumers easily recognize and remember it. They include colors, logos, sounds, narrative, language, and characters (Romaniuk, 2018). By using a brand asset, a seller can distinguish its goods or services from its competitors and gain otherwise unattainable wealth. In order to protect the seller from competitors who may attempt to provide similar goods and/or services, legal recognition protects a brand asset's unique identity. Second, it makes it possible for it to exist as its own entity and thus be transferable independent of the goods and/or services to which it was originally linked (Tollington, 1998; Romaniuk, 2018).

1.1. Colors

Color is one of the most powerful and recognizable elements of a brand's visual identity, making it a crucial distinctive brand asset. Color is a coded system. Color is an integral part of brand and marketing communications that influences consumer perceptions and behavior. It helps brands position themselves or differentiate themselves from the competition (Foroudi,

2019). Color is key in shaping brand personality and can influence consumers' perceptions of a brand's attributes and values (Mehta & Zhu, 2009). Depending on the product category, different colors can impact consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. When a brand's color stimulates consumers, they recognize it more quickly than they recognize other factors, such as a brand name or slogan. Therefore, color can be effectively used to convey a brand's story and image. Color is an expressive contribution to the design and a company's identity can be created using color (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006). For various promotions, color identity refers to the color or colors that a company chooses to be its official color or colors. Jeon and Baeck (2016) mentioned that brand association produces a mental representation of a brand and is defined as a unique connection to a brand that differentiates the brand from other brands in the same category.

1.2. Forms (logo, packing)

A logo visualizes a brand that helps consumers identify and differentiate it from other brands (Wallace, 2001). A logo is a distinctive feature that conveys an image of the brand in the context of its surroundings, evokes a personal experience in the mind of the viewer, and reinforces that experience in preparation for the next encounter (Matúšová, 2021). It typically includes text, symbols, and/or colors that communicate the brand's values, personality, and positioning. Logos are a crucial distinctive brand asset because they are often consumers' first point of contact with a brand. A well-designed logo can create a strong and positive first impression, increasing brand awareness and recognition. Additionally, logos can help build brand loyalty and emotional connections with consumers over time. Some key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of logos as distinctive brand assets include:

- *Creativity* is crucial when creating a logo because it is a visual representation of a brand and needs to be memorable, distinctive, and visually appealing. A logo is perceived as interesting and creative, and this perception spills over onto the firm (Hagtvedt, 2011);
- *Simplicity*: an easy-to-recognize and straightforward logo is more memorable and effective than a complex one (Bossel et al., 2019);
- *Relevance*: brand personas are vital to driving brand message continuity, according to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010). Also, they state that brand persona is “what makes the difference in strong or weak brand associations” (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Considering this, it can be said that a logo should be relevant to the brand and its positioning, communicating its unique value proposition and personality. Levin et al. (2001) indicate that logos generate a higher recall value for the corresponding brands than traditional ads, especially for consumers with a higher involvement level;
- *Differentiation*: logos should also convey the brand's ethos, despite their primary purpose of creating an association between a brand name and a graphic representation (Girard et al., 2013). A logo should differentiate the brand from competitors, highlighting its unique qualities and strengths.

A significant factor in the success of promoting a product is the packaging. Packaging refers to the physical container or wrapping that holds a product, and it can be designed to appeal to a brand's target audience and differentiate it from competitors. About 70% of all brand and purchase decisions are made in-store when buying, even if a consumer enters a

store intending to purchase specific products based on a shopping list (Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). This trend only proves that brand developers need to get creative to make their product packaging more eye-catching than other products. Hannele Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) suggests that instead of viewing packaging as an external product cue, it could be seen as an integral part of the brand and as an in-store media conveying the brand identity and message at the point of purchase. Here are some ways in which packaging can be used as a distinctive brand asset:

- *Visual design*: the visual design of a product's packaging can be used to create a distinctive brand identity and stand out on shelves. Packaging design is part of a creative business that combines shape, structure, material, color, imagery, typography, and other design elements with product information to market products (Budiardjo, 2016). Brand recognition can be enhanced by the appearance of a package, which reinforces valuable brand association (Farhana, 2012). The visual elements relate to graphics and color and size or shape of the packaging, and informational elements consist of information about the product and the technologies used in the package;
- *Materials*: the materials used in a product's packaging can communicate a brand's commitment to sustainability or quality. When selecting packaging materials, the first consideration should be how well they can contain the product. An effective packaged form can contribute greatly to establishing a brand's narrative and intent (Ambrose & Harris, 2011). For example, brands that use eco-friendly or recyclable packaging can differentiate themselves from competitors and appeal to consumers who value sustainability. Similarly, luxury brands may use high-quality materials like embossed or foiled paper, metal, or glass to create a premium and exclusive packaging experience;
- *Functionality*: a product's packaging can also be a distinctive brand asset. In the past few decades, innovations in packaging have resulted in resealable, tamper-proof, and more user-friendly products (e.g. easy to hold, easy to open, and squeezable). Changes in preservation have made vegetables crunchier, and special packaging has extended the shelf life of refrigerated foods (Lane Keller, 2003).

Packaging is an important distinctive brand asset that can help brands differentiate themselves from competitors, communicate their values and personality, and create a memorable brand experience for consumers. By carefully designing packaging that aligns with their brand messaging and resonates with their target audience, brands can strengthen their brand identity and build long-term brand loyalty.

1.3. Audio (sounds, music, jingles)

Sound is a powerful and often overlooked distinctive brand asset. Sound, in its many forms, plays a central role in branding. Well-known worldwide are distinctive audio logos like the *Microsoft Windows* chimes or *Nokia* ringtones (Gustafsson, 2015). Sound can create a distinctive brand identity, like visual elements such as logos and colors. Sound can be created through music, jingles, sound effects, and voiceovers, communicating a brand's values, personality, and positioning.

Sound can also evoke emotions in consumers, just like visual elements can. Recent studies revealed that a certain type of music or sound effect could create a feeling of excitement, trust, or relaxation in consumers, depending on the brand's intended message and target audience

(Ballouli & Bennett, 2014). The use of sound as a distinctive brand asset has been shown to have a significant impact on brand recognition and recall. Sound can also help create a consistent and cohesive brand experience across different touchpoints, such as television commercials, radio ads, and social media content. By using consistent sound across all touchpoints, a brand can create a solid and memorable audio identity instantly recognizable to consumers.

Overall, sound is a powerful and often overlooked distinctive brand asset that can help create a solid and memorable brand identity, evoke emotions in consumers, and increase brand recognition and recall. By leveraging sound as part of their brand strategy, brands can differentiate themselves from competitors and build stronger emotional connections with consumers.

1.4. Language (naming, slogan, tone of voice)

Language is a distinctive brand asset that can help brands communicate their values, personality, and positioning.

Brand language refers to the specific words and phrases a brand uses to communicate with its audience. Language is a shared thread to build our socioeconomic interests and enhance our cultural value system. The way we use language is extremely important. Language connects people and brands. Developing a robust brand language can be a crucial factor in the success of a brand as it showcases the brand's creativity, participation in the sign system, and communication abilities (Ushchapovska, 2017). A brand's verbal identity refers to the words, phrases, and terms a company uses to describe itself or its products. Verbal identities – basic elements that aim to make a brand's language distinctive. They comprise the following: name, slogan, and tone of voice. Brand naming refers to how a brand chooses and uses names for its products, services, and other offerings. Brand managers recognize that although advertising can help build an image associated with a brand name over time, a thoughtfully crafted and selected name can bring intrinsic and instantaneous value to the brand (Kohli & LaBahn, 1997). A well-chosen brand name can be a powerful, distinctive asset that communicates a brand's values and personality and helps it stand out in a crowded market. There are some ways in which language can be used as a distinctive brand asset:

- *Slogan* can be a very effective and distinctive brand asset for a business or organization. A slogan is a short and catchy phrase or tagline that conveys the essence of a brand or its key message to its target audience. A well-crafted slogan can help a brand stand out in a crowded market, differentiate itself from competitors, and build brand awareness and loyalty. One of the key benefits of a slogan as a brand asset is its ability to quickly and easily communicate a brand's message or positioning to consumers. A memorable and meaningful slogan can help consumers associate a specific benefit, attribute, or value with the brand. For example, *Nike's, Inc. Just Do It* slogan conveys a sense of motivation, determination, and athletic performance that has become synonymous with the brand. Slogans play a crucial role in shaping a brand's identity by providing a distinctive and significant contribution. This identity, in turn, helps to increase brand awareness and improve brand image through recognition, recall, and favorable associations. As a result, slogans can act as effective “hooks” or “handles” in communicating the essence of a brand and conveying what sets it apart (Kohli et al., 2007);

- Style and manner in which a brand communicates with its audience – the *tone*. The tone of voice can range from formal and authoritative to informal and conversational, depending on the brand's personality and target audience. By using a consistent tone of voice across all touchpoints, a brand can create a strong and recognizable voice that resonates with its audience. Numerous experts in the professional press suggest that brands should adopt a more human-like tone of voice when communicating on social media. Despite the growing trend of brands using an informal style in their social media communications, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that this approach is the most effective way to communicate with all consumers. Nonetheless, reports indicate that more and more brands are adopting this informal style (Beukeboom et al., 2015).

Language is an important distinctive brand asset that can communicate a brand's values, personality, and positioning, engage and connect with its audience, and differentiate itself from competitors. The verbal identity of brand language plays an important part in producing a persuasive effect. It helps consumers choose products relying on the information transmitted by the brand language. Consumers often make their purchasing decisions based on the specific semantic properties of the language used to describe the features of the goods or services, rather than relying on prior experience or knowledge (Ushchapovska, 2017). By using a consistent and strategic approach to brand language, brands can create a strong and memorable identity that resonates with their audience and builds long-term brand loyalty.

1.5. Narrative (style, moments)

A brand narrative is the brand's story, which includes its history, mission, values, and personality. A well-crafted brand narrative can help a brand create a strong emotional connection with its target audience, differentiate itself from competitors, and build a loyal customer base. While some advertisements do showcase a specific claim or product feature, their primary objective is typically to weave a creative narrative around the brand rather than to establish the feature on its own (Smith, 2011). One prevalent trend in both academic research and marketing communications is the growing importance of brand narratives – interconnected storylines – that aim to transform the emotional, symbolic, and social relationships between companies and their customers, as well as buyers and brands. If the brand is the full market offering that makes the product competitive, the brand narrative is the ongoing dialogue between the company and the customer. One of the key benefits of a brand narrative is its ability to create a compelling and memorable brand story that resonates with consumers. In particular, persona-focused storytelling is essential to branding. The persona, which is the articulated manifestation of a brand's character and personality, takes precedence when crafting a compelling brand narrative, with all other components stemming from it (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). A brand narrative can help consumers understand and relate to the brand's purpose and values and form a deeper emotional connection with the brand. This can be particularly effective in industries where consumers are passionate about the products or services being offered, such as fashion, food, or sports.

1.6. Characters

Characters is distinctive brand asset that helps brands connect with their audience and communicate their personality, values, and positioning. Here are some ways in which characters can be used as a distinctive brand asset. Creating brand character or mascot is an effective approach to establish a corporate identity and capture public attention. By incorporating a mascot, businesses can create numerous possibilities to stimulate consumer engagement and enhance brand awareness.

A mascot is a character that represents a brand and helps to create a friendly and approachable image. The success of the mascot heavily relies on the crucial aspects of its design and implementation. “To be visually effective, the vehicles or mascots must be properly designed and satisfying both the viewer’s preferences and perceptions” (Lin et al., 1999). Mascots can be animals, people, or objects, and they often have distinctive personalities and traits that reflect the brand’s values and messaging. A mascot may depict a real or fictional character in the form of an illustration. It represents the brand and adds life of it. It is between the brand’s logo and the celebrity endorser (Manjusha & Segar, 2013). Similar to brand logos, design, and taglines, the brand mascot is a fundamental element that provides visual cues to the brand’s customers. Characteristic figures can build an identity and help create and express a brand’s personality (Mohanty, 2014).

A brand ambassador is a distinctive asset that helps brands connect with their audience and promote their products or services. A brand ambassador is a person or character who embodies a brand’s personality, values, and messaging and helps to promote the brand through various marketing channels. The majority of brand ambassador work takes place on social media platforms like *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *YouTube* (Iqani, 2019). There are several indicators of a brand ambassador:

- *Celebrity brand ambassadors*: these high-profile individuals endorse a brand and help raise its profile among their fan base. Celebrity brand ambassadors can be actors, musicians, athletes, or other public figures who have a strong following and are seen as trustworthy and credible by their audience. Celebrity endorsement is most effectively utilized by companies when the endorser’s personality matches that of the brand or product. As a result, many advertisers emphasize the notion that leveraging celebrity endorsements can not only generate a considerable amount of awareness but also have a positive impact on consumers, making them feel confident about their brand or product (Wang & Hariandja, 2016);
- *Brand employees*: in management literature, it is argued that the most important ambassadors for any brand are the people who work for the organization. Employees are the prototypical brand ambassadors (de Chernatony et al., 2013). These are individuals who work for a brand and are trained to represent it in a positive and professional manner. Employees are required to “embody the brand” and “personalize it for the customer beyond what can be achieved through media communications” (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Company employees can serve as brand ambassadors by engaging with customers, promoting the brand’s products or services, and providing a positive brand experience;
- An *influencer* can also be a distinctive brand asset for a business or organization. An influencer has a significant following on social media or other platforms and can influence their followers’ purchasing decisions and behaviors. Brands often collaborate

with influencers to promote their products or services and to reach new audiences. The commercial use of influencers is a growing global marketing phenomenon due to their capacity to shape purchase decisions (de Veirman et al., 2017). One of the key benefits of using an influencer as a brand asset is their ability to reach and engage with a large and targeted audience. Influencers often have loyal and engaged followers who trust their recommendations and opinions. By partnering with an influencer who aligns with the brand's values and target audience, a brand can reach a new and relevant audience who may not have otherwise been aware of the brand. The quick and easy dissemination of messages can trigger a viral effect or buzz. This way, their influence flows to their followers and spreads among followers as they share the viral messages in their social networks (Metz Thomas Jr., 2004). Another benefit of using an influencer as a brand asset is their ability to humanize the brand and create a more personal connection with consumers. During the digital media era, celebrities frequently leverage social media platforms to cultivate a feeling of closeness with their followers by sharing personal moments and offering glimpses into their private lives. Influencers often share their personal stories and experiences with their followers. By collaborating with an influencer, a brand can tap into this personal connection and create a more relatable image for the brand.

Characters are an important distinctive brand asset that can help brands connect with their audience and communicate their personality, values, and positioning. By creating memorable and relatable characters that resonate with their target audience, brands can differentiate themselves from competitors and build long-term brand loyalty.

Creativity is essential in developing distinctive brand assets. A creative approach is required to come up with unique, memorable, and effective brand assets. It is essential to apply creativity at every stage of the strategy process, starting from establishing a brand vision to designing and delivering its products and services. It is not enough to choose a color or font that looks nice; the assets must be carefully crafted to communicate the brand's message and values, and to resonate with its target audience. Creative brand assets are better remembered and seen more favorably (Smith & Yang, 2004), resulting in more known brand.

2. Divergent thinking for brands

While many creative agencies have traditionally institutionalized the separation of planners and creatives in the brand development process, a seamless and rigorous approach to creativity should involve both parties for success. Divergent thinking is a creative process involving generating multiple ideas and possibilities in response to a prompt or question (Runco, 1991). According to Fuller et al. (2023), pre-purchase service brands engage in intense competition to establish and reinforce a diverse range of memory associations rather than a singular corporate or brand image. In other words, the ability to awaken consumers' divergent thinking is crucial in developing a company's brand assets. Also, the divergent thinking of a brand assets developer is responsible for potential ideas and approaches for creating and promoting a brand's unique visual and conceptual elements. Taffe et al. (2022) introduced a focused brainstorming process, adapted from an approach called motivational modelling, to guide the process of designing brands. The authors investigated that brainstorming is useful for the branding process. One of the participants in the study found that "by creating a large

number of quickly drawn/sketched logos, you focus less on the perfection of the sketch, and rather focus on the different aspects of the design” (Taffe et al., 2022). Brainstorming could be used for creating logos and another brand asset – brand name creation. Despite the rise of naming and brainstorming software to aid in name creation, traditional methods such as individual creative thinking and brainstorming remain the most effective (Kohli & LaBahn, 1997). Exploring unusual or unexpected approaches to brand messaging or advertising, such as using humor, irony, or unconventional media channels. Certain researchers contend that the process of comprehending humor is a cognitive exercise in creativity, and the act of grasping each humorous instance can be likened to a form of creativity training (Chen et al., 2019). Considering ways to leverage a brand’s history or backstory to create a compelling narrative or emotional connection with customers. Experiencing diverse intellectual stimuli in a place can stimulate divergent thinking, leading to an emotional connection with the place’s brand. In addition, brand managers can use slogans and logos that stimulate the free thinking of potential visitors, meeting their own needs (Beckman et al., 2013).

Soriano de Alencar and de Souza Fleith (2003) assert that the generation of novel products, ideas, original inventions, or enhancements to existing ones is a key aspect encompassed in the majority of definitions of creativity Torrance’s (1972) classical creativity assessment elements – fluency (production of ideas), flexibility (production of different ideational categories), originality (production of unusual ideas), and elaboration (persistence in introducing details to products) can help a brand create a more distinctive and compelling brand identity that resonates with its target audience:

- *Fluency* refers to the ability to generate many potential brand assets. A brand that can generate a wide variety of distinctive assets can create a more memorable and recognizable brand identity. There is a belief that consumers’ favorable attitudes toward a brand stem from the positive experience of fluent processing, which can be the result of heightened perceptual or conceptual fluency (Reber et al., 1998; Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001);
- *Flexibility* in divergent thinking refers to the ability to generate various ideas that can be adapted to different situations. By cultivating flexibility, brands can explore various creative options and combinations that can result in novel and memorable brand assets. This can involve experimenting with different colors, shapes, fonts, images, slogans, sounds, and other sensory cues and testing their impact on different target audiences and channels. By embracing diversity and ambiguity, divergent thinkers can expand the horizons of brand innovation and differentiation (Runco, 2014). In the context of brand assets, flexibility can help a brand create a versatile identity that can be applied to various products, services, or markets;
- *Elaboration* refers to the ability to develop and expand upon initial ideas. In the context of brand assets, elaboration can help a brand to refine and improve its distinctive assets over time, creating a more sophisticated and effective brand identity. By fostering elaboration, brands can turn a creative idea into a distinctive brand asset that stands out in a crowded marketplace. This can involve brainstorming different ways to express the brand’s essence, experimenting with various design elements and communication strategies, and refining the asset through iterative feedback and testing (Sawyer, 2012). By engaging in this iterative process of elaboration, divergent thinkers can create brand assets that capture the attention and imagination of consumers;

- *Originality* refers to the ability to generate unique and creative ideas. In the context of brand assets, originality can help a brand to stand out from its competitors and create a distinctive brand identity that is memorable and engaging. By cultivating originality, brands can break free from conventional ways of thinking and develop brand assets that are truly innovative and attention-grabbing. This can involve exploring new design aesthetics, using unusual colors or shapes, playing with language or sound, or using unexpected metaphors or symbols. By daring to be different and pushing the boundaries of what is expected, divergent thinkers can create memorable brand assets and create a lasting impression on consumers (Randall, 2015).

Conclusions

Divergent thinking is a critical factor in the development of distinctive brand assets. The ability to generate a wide range of creative ideas and solutions is essential for companies seeking to differentiate themselves from their competitors and create a memorable brand identity. Businesses can unlock their full creative potential and generate unique brand assets that resonate with consumers. Additionally, divergent thinking can help companies stay agile and adapt to changing market conditions, allowing them to stay ahead of the curve and maintain a competitive edge. In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business environment, the ability to leverage divergent thinking to create distinctive brand assets can be a key factor in long-term success. Divergent thinking factors such as fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality can be crucial in creating distinctive brand assets. By applying these factors to developing brand assets, brands can generate a wide range of potential ideas and refine them into a memorable and effective brand identity. Fluency and flexibility allow for a broad range of ideas to be generated, while elaboration ensures that those ideas are refined and improved over time. Finally, originality is key to creating a brand identity that stands out from competitors and resonates with consumers. By incorporating these divergent thinking factors into their brand asset development process, brands can create a distinctive and powerful identity that helps them achieve their business goals.

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