

The effect of negative valence on memory and perception: Negative brand names experimental study

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ABSTRACT: While some studies suggest that a positive brand name may better predict consumers' memory of the product, other studies agree the opposite. The aims of this study are to explore how people recognise a negative brand name, and to investigate how it relates to people's preference and willingness to buy the product. A two-stage experiment was conducted on 84 undergraduate students. The results show that when structured stimuli are exposed with attractive colourful pictures, negative brand names are more likely to have lower recognition compared to positive brand names. However, negative brand names with no colourful picture are easier to remember. The results also show that compared to positive brand names, negative brand names are more likely to have lower correlation to consumers' preference and willingness to buy the products.

1 INTRODUCTION

'A product can be copied by competitor, a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated, a successful brand is timeless' (Stephen King, as cited in Trott and Sople (2016)).

Consumers' memory is influenced by their cognitive ability, learning experiences, mental health state, and environmental situation (Pierce & Gallo, 2011). Their cognitive ability and memory capacity in remembering a brand name are limited and differ from one to another depending on how strong their short-term memory is (Pierce & Gallo, 2011). Klink (2009), for example, found that males and females differed in responding to a brand name. Kellogg (2001) stated that it was easier for people to receive visual stimuli than auditory. Furthermore, Kellogg (2001) also emphasised that because the human brain interacts continuously with the social environment, the accuracy of people in remembering a brand name is not always reliable. The interaction makes the human brain process the information to create a new meaning. These processes then explain how consumers remember and forget new brand names in marketing.

Stephen King's statement reflects the importance of selecting a suitable brand name for a business. It is important for introducing either a new product or a new business. The success of a marketing campaign often depends on how easily the consumers like and recognise a particular brand. Klink and Athaide (2012) argue that brand name is strongly related to brand personality. It can be said then that a good brand name may improve the consumers' awareness of the brand. However, failure in determining the right brand name can prevent the product's or business's development (Ghodeswar, 2008; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Since the numbers of start-up businesses are growing rapidly, we think that research on brand names is important.

Most people agree that a brand name could influence how consumers remember and are aware of a certain product (Mccracken & Macklin, 1998; Oladepo & Abimbola, 2015). The importance of brand name challenges many entrepreneurs to determine the right brand for their business. However, which type of brand name that has the highest effect on the