

THERE IS MORE TO CORPORATE IMAGE THAN MEETS THE EYE

NEELS VAN HEERDEN

One of the most popular myths in the management
IT IS CRUCIAL THAT DESIGNERS UNDERSTAND
of corporate identity is that the identity of an
WHAT A CORPORATE IMAGE COMPRISES AND HOW
organisation consists solely of visual and graphic
THIS IMAGE IS FORMED.

elements such as corporate logos and corporate
A TWO-PART STUDY IDENTIFIED FACTORS CRITICAL
colours.

TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CORPORATE IMAGE
The contents of many corporate identity manuals
OF SOUTH AFRICAN BANKING INSTITUTIONS AND
seem to confirm that this myth is widely accepted to

TESTED THE LEVEL OF RECOGNITION OF ELEVEN
be more fact than fiction in South Africa.

BANK LOGOS AND SLOGANS AS WELL AS THE
In addition, a number of international authors
PERCEPTIONS CREATED BY THEM AMONG A
(Katz: 1988; Lener: 1989; Olins: 1989; Miller:

SAMPLE GROUP OF MARKETING STUDENTS.
1990; Cullen: 1991) specifically emphasise the
visual side of corporate identity, which probably

strengthens the impression that a corporate identity programme could consist solely of visual paraphernalia. Other authors (Bernstein: 1986; Band: 1987; Bellhouse: 1989; Croft: 1989) argue that corporate identity consists of both visual elements and the way in which the corporation behaves.

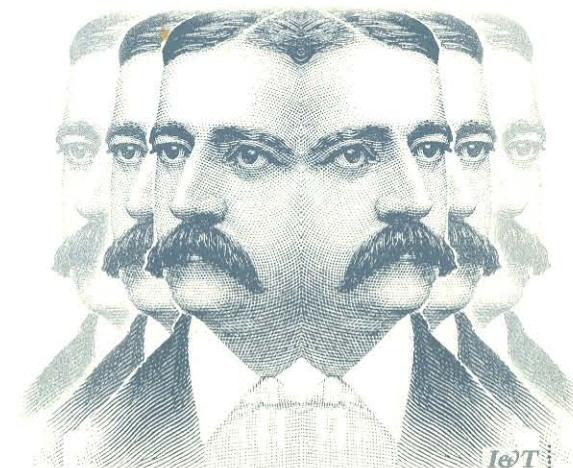
This literature highlights the existence of a variety of definitions and viewpoints regarding concepts such as corporate personality, corporate image, corporate identity and corporate logo. A further problem is that terms like corporate identity and corporate image are often used interchangeably (Puth: 1991). It is therefore necessary to constantly re-examine them to make sure we are all talking about the same thing.

Corporate personality determines corporate identity. Every corporation has a personality, which can be defined as a set of characteristics - behavioral and intellectual - which serve to distinguish it from other institutions. This personality is projected by visual identification cues, such as a corporate logo, and behavioral cues, such as the level of customer satisfaction provided.

How a corporate image is formed must be understood by corporate managers and visual designers. The corporate personality determines the corporate identity which constitutes the

corporate image. Abratt (1989:67) maintains that the corporate personality is projected by 'conscious cues', which consist of a diverse set of elements, such as employee behaviour, customer service, need-satisfying products or services, and the corporate name, logo, and slogan. These corporate identity cues create a set of beliefs, experiences, feelings, knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions about the institution in the minds of different stakeholders. This interaction creates overall impressions which constitute a corporate image.

A further assumption, based on this view, is that a visual identity cue, such as a corporate logo, could serve as a cognitive 'switch' to recall an image in the mind of the beholder. This means that an image of the corporation, which is initially constituted by the perceived behaviour of the corporation, can be recalled by a visual design element.





THE CORPORATE IMAGE OF SOUTH AFRICAN BANKS

A two-part investigation into the corporate image of South African banks was undertaken in 1993. It set out to confirm assumptions about the constituent components of corporate image and the role of visual elements. The first part, as reported in a Master's dissertation (Van Heerden: 1993), identified factors critical to the constitution of the corporate image of South African banking institutions. The second part, which will be reported in this article, tested the identification of bank logos and slogans and the perceptions created by them.

In the first part of the investigation, respondents were exposed to the corporate logos of Standard Bank, Volkskas, Nedbank and First National Bank (these banks were identified by the respondent group as being the best banking institutions). While viewing each logo separately, respondents had to complete a semantic differential, which was specifically developed for this study. A factor analysis of these responses identified four major factors used to constitute the corporate image of South African banking institutions.

These factors are: dynamism, credibility/stability, customer service and visual identity. The findings confirm the view that corporate identity consists of behavioral and visual identity elements.

The second part of the investigation focused on two of the most important visual cues, the corporate logo and the corporate slogan of 11 banks. Both elements are extensively used on corporate artefacts such as publications, buildings, clothing items, and stationery.

RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND RESPONDENTS

There are a number of reasons why South African banking institutions (as research subjects) and university students (as a respondent group) were chosen for this investigation:

- increased competition between banks has led to changes in strategy - clients are recruited through offers of bursaries, loans, and credit facilities. They are approached by means of telephone canvassing as well as below-the-line direct mailings
- banking institutions are very visible in advertising and sponsorships, and in terms of locality with regard to branches and ATMs
- banking services, for example cheque accounts, offer more or less similar advantages at the different institutions
- all banks have distinguishable logos and corporate livery
- many building societies have repositioned themselves as banking institutions by offering the same type of accounts and services as the traditional banks
- the respondents are all clients of at least one bank.

The 11 banks used in the study were Allied Bank, Boland Bank, First National Bank, NBS, Nedbank, Perm, Saambou Bank, Standard Bank, Trustbank, United Bank and Volkskas Bank.

Although students are a fairly heterogeneous and transient group, they must be regarded as a very important target group for banks. They are future managers and decision-makers. It therefore makes sense that banking institutions should target them early to forge long-term ties.

The respondent group consisted of 141 second year students in the Marketing 210 class at the University of Pretoria. More than half (56 per cent) of the respondents had accounts at at least one banking institution, while 38 per cent had accounts or used services at two banks. Six per cent of the respondents had accounts at three banks and one respondent even had four different accounts at four different institutions.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

A questionnaire was developed to test identification and perception of corporate logos, as well as slogan recognition and was then administered in three sections. The material used for testing was current at the time of the investigation in 1993 and does not reflect recent changes to logos and/or slogans.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE CORPORATE LOGOS

Firstly, the graphic emblem of the corporate logo of each bank was shown to respondents independently to measure recognisability and to test identification. Figure 1 reflects the percentage of respondents who failed to identify each specific logo and Figure 2 reflects the level of confusion between certain of the logos.

FIGURE 1
COULD NOT IDENTIFY LOGO

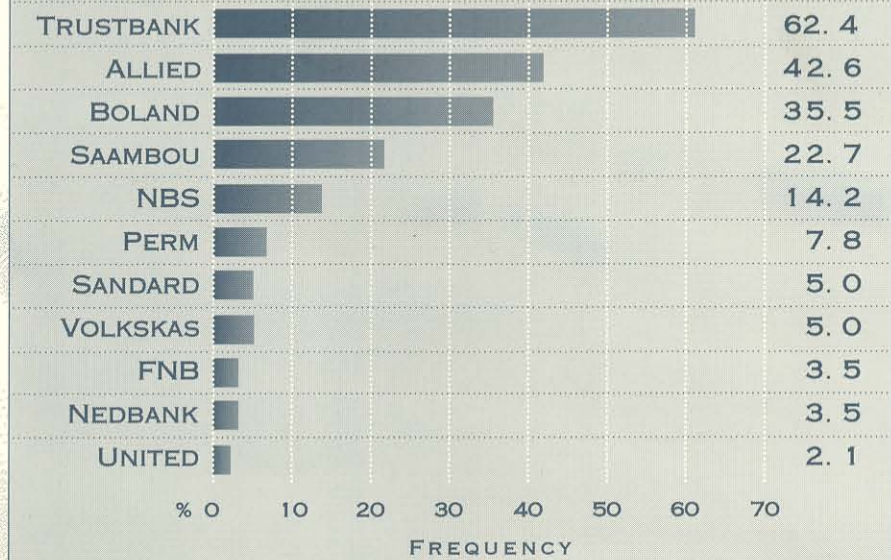
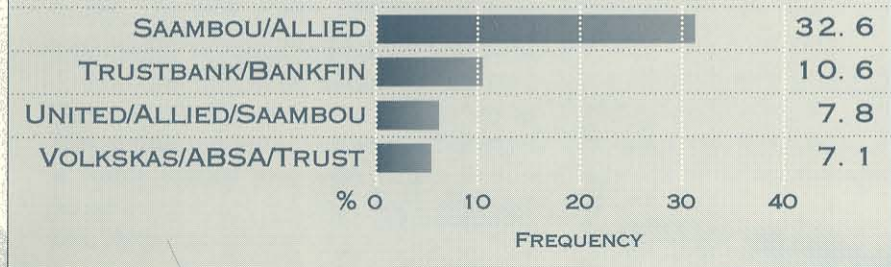


FIGURE 2
CONFUSION BETWEEN LOGOS



The greatest confusion, that between Saambou and Allied, could be due to visual similarity. Both emblems are red and contain two human-like figures. This confusion could seriously inhibit the communication and/or marketing value of these emblems.

More than 60 per cent of respondents did not recognise the emblem of Trustbank or confused it with Bankfin, the vehicle finance institution of the ABSA group. Both use basically the same graphic symbol although the researcher identified a few colour variations between them on different publications. The confusion also probably indicates that some of the respondents are under the misconception that Bankfin is a banking institution.

The confusion rate between United and Allied on the one hand and United and Saambou on the other could relate to the fact that all the emblems are red.

Many of the respondents thought that the Volkskas emblem or the Trustbank emblem were that of ABSA. ABSA should take heed of the confusion between Trustbank and Bankfin, and the confusion between Saambou and Allied.

Boland Bank has an intricate graphic emblem and few clients amongst the respondent group, which could explain the low recognition rate.

PERCEPTIONS OF CORPORATE LOGOS

Secondly, all the logos (emblems and corporate names) were shown simultaneously and respondents were required to answer nine questions. The following perceptions were recorded in response to the questions:

1 WHICH LOGO IS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE?

Volkscas and NBS managed to get nearly half of the vote, with 26.2 and 23.5 per cent respectively. Saambou, United and Perm were voted the least attractive at 1.3, 1.3 and 0.7 per cent respectively.

2 WHICH LOGO IS THE MOST VISUAL?

The banana design of NBS was regarded as the most visual by 28.8 per cent of respondents, while the Trustbank logo at 0 per cent did not feature at all.

3 WHICH LOGO IS THE MOST DYNAMIC?

Nedbank, Volkskas, and Standard Bank, whose logos differ sharply in colour and design, received 23.5, 22.1 and 16.8 per cent respectively. Boland, Allied and United were the least dynamic at 2.7 per cent each.

4 WHICH LOGO IS THE MOST MODERN?

Volkscas and Nedbank were the favourites at 36.9 and 24.8 per cent, while Saambou received the first of its many zero's.

5 WHICH LOGO IS THE MOST STYLISH?

Nedbank was the clear winner with 43.6 per cent, followed by Volkskas with 23.5 per cent. Three institutions - Perm, Saambou, and United - did not receive a single vote.

6 WHICH LOGO IS THE WARMEST?

The logos portraying human forms, Allied and Saambou, received 20 and 16.8 per cent respectively. United was third with 12.1 per cent. Red is the dominant colour in all three



logos. It is interesting to note that these three logos were not regarded as attractive. Nedbank, Trust and Perm were deemed the least warm at 4.7, 2.7 and 1.3 per cent respectively.

7 WHICH LOGO INDICATES QUALITY?

Nedbank, Standard Bank, and Volkskas were rated at 40.9, 26.2 and 15.4 per cent respectively. Trustbank received 5.4 per cent. The remaining banks were rated between 4 and 0 per cent.

8 WHICH LOGO INDICATES A PROGRESSIVE INSTITUTION?

No clear-cut favourite emerged. The five major banks had 79 per cent of the vote - Nedbank 18.1, Volkskas 17.4, Standard 15.4, FNB 14.1 and Trustbank 13.4 per cent. Two of ABSA's units - United and Allied - were at the bottom with 2 and 0.7 per cent respectively.

9 WHICH LOGO WOULD BE A GOOD MARKETING TOOL?

NBS received 29.9 per cent, followed by Nedbank with 17.4 and Volkskas with 16.8 per cent. The high vote for the NBS logo could probably be attributed to the concerted and integrated marketing effort of the NBS, and the tie-in to Natal as the banana province. The slogan 'Come on in and get your slice' is visually supported by this logo. The NBS has since dropped the banana from its logo. Judging by the favourable response the banana logo got in this investigation it may be a mistake on the part of NBS.

The 'N' of Nedbank is seen to be a better tool (17.4 per cent) than the 'U' of the United (1.3 per cent).

Based on the perceptions that were measured, the following comments can be made:

ALLIED BANK

This logo is not very visual, dynamic, or stylish, nor does it indicate quality or a progressive institution. It is, however, perceived to be the warmest logo.

BOLAND BANK

This logo is not very dynamic, stylish or modern.

FNB

This logo achieved an average score in all the questions.

NBS

This logo is attractive and very visual. It does not indicate a progressive institution, but is seen to be a good marketing tool.

NEDBANK

This logo is dynamic, modern, very stylish and indicates quality.

PERM

This logo is not attractive, modern, stylish or warm. It does not indicate quality, nor is it a good marketing tool.

SAAMBOU

This logo is not attractive, modern or stylish, it does not indicate quality, nor is it a good marketing tool. It is a warm logo.

STANDARD BANK

This logo indicates quality, is fairly visual and dynamic.

TRUSTBANK

This logo is not visual at all. Neither is it stylish, warm, attractive or a good marketing tool. It is, however, fairly modern.

UNITED BANK

This logo is not a good marketing tool, it does not indicate quality or progressiveness, nor is it dynamic, modern, attractive or stylish. It is perceived to be warm.

VOLKSKAS

This logo is attractive, dynamic, stylish and very modern.

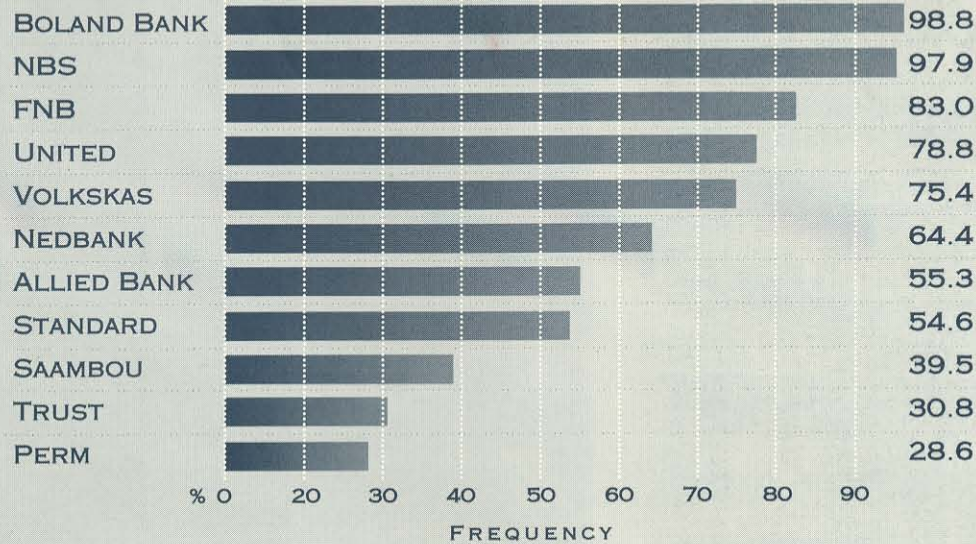
SLOGAN RECOGNITION

In this section respondents were asked to match a slogan to the correct institution. Both Afrikaans and English versions were provided to ensure a better response. Figure 3 reflects the percentage recognition of the corporate slogans of South African banking institutions.

BOLAND BANK: WHO DO YOU HAVE TO THANK

Although Boland Bank is a relatively small institution and enjoys limited patronage amongst the respondents, this slogan achieved the highest recognition rate. The slogan has been used often in Boland Bank's advertising campaigns and has a cognitive ring to it. All respondents answered - only three were wrong.

FIGURE 3
RECOGNISABILITY OF SLOGANS



**NBS: COME ON IN AND WE'LL TAILOR
MAKE YOUR SLICE**

Only 2.1 per cent of respondents were wrong. The NBS slogan, tied in with the logo, seems to be a great success.

FNB: FIRST FOR YOU

This slogan did well. The word 'First' is probably a good give-away in any case. Some confusion - 9.5 per cent - existed with Nedbank.

**UNITED BANK: YOUR HELPING HAND
FOR LIFE**

A high recognition rate was attained.

VOLKSKAS: FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Although a high percentage of the respondents recognised the slogan, the rate

should be higher, considering 26 per cent of the respondents are clients of this bank.

**NEDBANK: IF YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT
MONEY**

Approximately two thirds of the sample recognised the slogan. Confusion with Trustbank (14.4 per cent) should worry Nedbank's marketing manager.

ALLIED: PEOPLE YOU CAN TALK TO

Although a 55.3 per cent recognition was achieved, confusion with Saambou (14.6 per cent) and the Perm (11.4 per cent) is significant.

STANDARD BANK: YOUR KIND OF BANK

For a major bank and considering that nearly 20 per cent of respondents are

clients of this bank, a recognition rate of 54.6 per cent is probably too low.

**SAAMBOU: YOU'LL NEVER STAND
ALONE**

22.7 per cent of respondents confused this slogan with that of Allied. There was also significant confusion with Perm - 11.8 per cent - and United at 10.1 per cent.

TRUSTBANK: THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Less than a third of respondents were able to match the slogan correctly. Significant confusion existed between Nedbank (16.2 per cent), Perm (14.5 per cent), Volkskas (11.1 per cent), Saambou (9.4 per cent), Standard Bank (6.8 per cent), Allied (6 per cent) and United (5.1 per cent).

PERM: SOMEBODY TO LEAN ON

The low recognition rate of the Perm's slogan reflects the inability of regional head office in Pretoria to supply the researcher with the correct slogan. If it is not internally used or promoted at the Perm, it would probably not be recognized in the market place.

The two slogans with the greatest recognition, those of Boland Bank and the NBS, are extensively used in advertising campaigns. NBS's slogan did tie in with Natal as the banana province and with the graphic emblem, which has recently been changed.

The low recognition rate of a number of slogans needs some thought on the part of marketing or communication managers. They are probably not used effectively and/or often enough.

Saambou Bank 

 **TRUSTBANK**

 **United Bank**

 **VOLKSKAS
BANK**



CONCLUSION

Certain literature sources and a review of corporate identity manuals might lead readers to the belief that a well-designed corporate livery package, consisting of a well-known corporate name, a distinctive corporate logo, a visually appealing building or premises, and attractive corporate colours, is the most important factor contributing to a desired corporate image. This investigation confirms the view that both corporate behaviour and corporate visual identity contribute to corporate image. It also confirms that the corporate logo, as one of the elements of the corporate identity mix, does create measurable images in the minds of respondents because it serves as a 'mental switch' or stimulus.

The fact that corporate behavioral traits are very important in the creation of a corporate image has managerial implications. It emphasises that management should spend more time on managing aspects such as customer service and overall public relations. It must be noted that behavioral cues can be unintentionally projected through inadequate internal and external communication, customer dissatisfaction and low employee morale and performance.

The corporate logo and the corporate slogan are very important elements of the corporate identity mix. The proper management of both entities can greatly enhance their marketing equity. The recognition rate and perceptions that they create should be evaluated regularly.

While not much research has been reported on the management of corporate slogans, it is the view of the researcher that the corporate slogan should be used consistently, it should not be changed every season, and it should be used in conjunction with the logo as often as possible.

Its effects on marketing and communication should be measured regularly.

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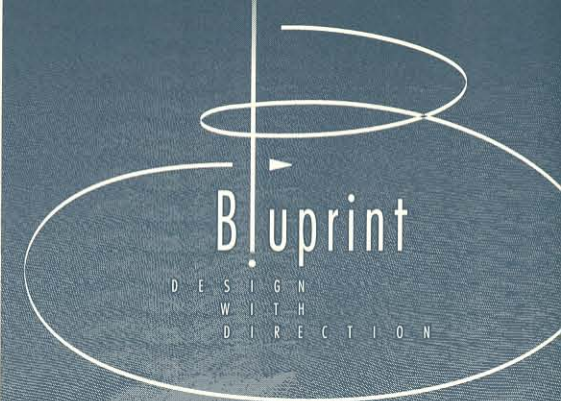
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