

The Influence of Logo Shapes on Non Governmental Organization Branding: A Comprehensive Literature Review

Zhang Ting¹, Raja Ahmad Azmeer Raja Ahmad Effendi¹, Mohd Shahrizal Dolah¹, Mohd Kher Hussein¹, Azhari Md Hashim², Wang Tongxu¹

¹Faculty of Design & Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia,

²Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi Mara

Corresponding Author Email: azmeer@upm.edu.my

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Abstract

The number of global non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is growing yearly, increasing their competition for donations. A strong brand can attract donors and help organizations survive better. When competing for public funding and recruiting volunteers, branding has become critical. In branding, the logo's shape is one of the most important elements influencing stakeholder perception. This literature review focuses on the impact of logo shape on NGO branding, synthesizes current research and identifies the gaps in current research. The main objective is to explore how logo shapes (circles, squares, triangles) influence people's perceptions. And how logo shapes to enhance emotional engagement and trust among stakeholders. This study aims to construct a theoretical framework to advance the current understanding of NGO branding and to provide valuable insights into logo design.

Keywords: Logo, NGO, Non-Governmental Organizations, Brand Perception, Branding, Logo Shape, Psychology

Introduction

As the competitive environment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) becomes more crowded, the dependence on brands becomes stronger. Brand image affects public perception, trust, emotional attachment, and organizational legitimacy (Saura et al., 2020). Good brands can help NGOs create unique identities that stand out in crowded environments while building lasting connections with important stakeholders. An effective brand image can make interactions easier between volunteers, sponsors, and the communities they serve (Whetten & Mackey, 2002; Yu et al., 2024).

For enterprises, the logo is the most effective and intuitive visual clue of the brand to attract the attention of consumers (Kim & Lim, 2019). For NGOs, a good logo allows their stakeholders to express themselves (Stride & Lee, 2006). Of all the branding elements, a logo is the basic visual communication of an organization's beliefs and goals and is the most important component of a brand (Henderson & Cote, 1998). At the same time, a logo is a communication tool that conveys the essence of an NGO to its target audience.

In recent years, logo shape, as an important factor affecting brand perception, has gradually received attention from the academic circles. The distinguishing factor in how an organization is perceived and remembered is the shape of its logo, as suggested in the study by Perea et al. (2021). Instead, the present findings strongly suggest that when we encounter a logo, we process its orthographic information (i.e., letter identity/ position) and its graphical information (i.e., typeface, color, design). A well-shaped logo can positively associate with the brand image, thus increasing consumer or stakeholder trust and loyalty.

Despite the significance of focusing on the logo's shape, little research has been conducted in the academic literature, particularly among NGOs. Instead, the focus has been primarily on other features of logos, such as colors, fonts, and images (Trehan & Kalro, 2024). However, marketing and consumer behavior research has shown that different graphic shapes can evoke specific emotional responses and influence cognitive processing (Biederman & Gerhardstein, 1993). This data suggests that different logo shapes impact perceptions and, by extension, an NGO's ability to form strong connections with its audiences.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by exploring through a comprehensive literature review how different logo shapes affect the perceived brand image of NGOs. The study is motivated by the fact that as the number of NGOs grows globally, branding has become crucial for NGOs to differentiate themselves from the competition. However, theoretical frameworks and empirical studies on the impact of logo shape on NGO brand image are still limited. This paper addresses the following core question: how do different logo shapes affect the brand image of NGOs? By combining relevant studies on logo design and branding strategy, this paper not only provides a new theoretical framework for academics but also lays the foundation for branding strategies for NGOs.

In addition, the contribution of this study is to provide feasible and evidence-based design recommendations for NGO practitioners and designers. Specifically, the findings will help NGOs optimize their logo design to enhance their brand image and create a deeper emotional connection with the organization's stakeholders. This will contribute to NGOs' long-term development and further strengthen their social impact and public perception.

Literature Review

This section introduces these eight sections, including Branding from Business to NGO, the impact of logos on NGOs, the symbolism of shapes, theories about shapes, shapes and stakeholder perceptions, cultural differences in shapes, how shapes affect brand perceptions and attitudes, and the interaction of shapes with other design elements, to illustrate the theoretical basis for the impact of logo shapes on the cognitive and affective impressions of NGO brands. Organizations' brand perceptions. It combines relevant psychological theories,

symbolic interpretations of shape, and the unique attributes of NGOs to illuminate the significance of logo shape in influencing brand perception.

Branding from Business to NGO

The primary role of corporate brands is to reflect and influence the needs of consumers. In contrast, the brands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seek to project the concepts and values of the organizations themselves. To understand the extent to which NGOs use brands, the potential for developing charities' business technology, and the possible limitations of these practices, Tapp (1996) conducted interviews with fundraising managers of British charities. It was discovered that many charities already employ day-to-day brand strategies, even if they do not explicitly refer to them as "branding." These organizations have adopted professionally designed logos but often lack comprehensive brand development activities.

Branding has increasingly garnered attention from non-profit organizations as a means of communicating their mission and values. This trend is evident across various sectors, including higher education, government services, environmental health protection organizations, overseas aid agencies, hospitals, and museums (Idris & Whitfield, 2014; van den Bosch et al., 2004a). For NGOs, Branding has become essential when competing for private and public funding, as well as when recruiting volunteers. Effective branding can help these organizations achieve their goals and enhance their social impact (Dickinson & Barker, 2007; Stride & Lee, 2007). Research indicates that for-profit enterprises establish brand alliances with non-profit organizations to generate a positive shift in brand attitude (Dickinson & Barker, 2007). Commercial brands often choose to support NGOs related to their business interests and engage in long-term alliance sponsorships. Through such collaborations, businesses can develop favorable associations between their brands and NGO brands, leading to more favorable brand attitudes among their customers. This requires NGOs to implement brand strategies that increase customer identification and engagement. Hankinson (2001) states that a charity's brand is the logo, more than a succinct statement. Helen and Stephen (2007) argue that an NGO's brand encompasses both visual elements, such as logo and design, and the intangible values it holds. Good branding allows an organization to effectively connect with its audience and communicate messages that are relevant to its ethos.

Impact of Logos on NGO

Emotional resonance is particularly important for NGOs as they often focus on social causes that require an emotional bond with their audiences. Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Framework states that an organization's identity plays a crucial role in communicating its core values to its target market and significantly impacts public perception. NGOs rely on visual identities such as logos to gain their audience's trust and support. Logo design affects not only market performance but also relationships with stakeholders.

Logos are the central element of corporate visual identities (CVIs) (Bolhuis et al., 2018), given their universal appeal across international borders and languages (Buttle & Westoby, 2006). For example, Coca-Cola's iconic red and white color scheme, wave design, and distinctive typeface have established its global brand identity, making it instantly recognizable across the globe.

Amazon's logo, featuring an arrow from "a" to "z," draws a smile and symbolizes the breadth of products available on their platform, reinforcing the message that anything can be bought on Amazon. This clever use of visual symbolism enhances brand recall and consumer association with the company's extensive product range. Apple's logo is a testament to the power of consistent and simple design. Despite several design iterations, the fundamental apple symbol has remained unchanged. This consistency and the logo's simplicity ensure its sustainability and strong consumer presence. Kaymak and Cubukcu (2020) state that maintaining consistent typefaces, shapes, and colors in logo design prevents disruption in consumer perception. By keeping these elements constant, Apple has created a permanent, memorable brand image that resonates globally.



Figure2-1 Logos of Amazon, Apple, and Coca-Cola

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was founded in Paris in 1971. Composed initially of French doctors and journalists who believed that everyone had a right to medical care, its members have expanded worldwide. Its logo represents the image of a doctor going to the front to save people and is not hindered in their actions. It implies that MSF assists people in distress and victims of natural and artificial disasters and armed conflicts regardless of race, religion, belief, and political position. Global Voices is an international website open to bloggers and citizen journalists worldwide to track and report. It does not necessarily have the professionalism of experts but sees the world from the perspective of ordinary people. Its logo implies a community that connects two languages or cultures, namely the so-called bridge bloggers.



Figure2-2 Logo and Name of Global Voices

These examples emphasize the importance of logos in building a strong visual identity. A well-designed logo can easily communicate a brand's values, mission, and personality. It evokes emotion, builds trust, and fosters consumer loyalty. A strong logo in today's globalized marketplace can be a universal symbol of quality and reliability.

On July 16, 2018, the non-governmental health organization PATH launched a new brand image designed by the San Francisco design company Manual. The latest image expresses PATH's diversified organizational structure and better reflects PATH's globalization. Unlike other health organizations in the world, PATH is committed to solving all the problems of global public health. In the design of the new logo, to reflect PATH's innovative methods to address global health challenges, the new logo contains a series of abstract geometric shapes. These geometries resemble some chemical or physical sequence, representing solutions to unknown and random problems. At the same time, these patterns will run through the entire visual system as a part of auxiliary graphics.



Figure2-3 Comparison Between the Original logo(left) and the Current CVI (right)

Shape: Symbolism

The strategic use of logo shapes in NGO branding improves brand recognition and enhances emotional engagement, making them an important part of the branding process. For example, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Red Cross (IRC), humanitarian NGOs, often use circular logos to represent the qualities of care, compassion, and solidarity. In contrast, an NGO such as Greenpeace may adopt a triangular or dynamic design to represent its activism and urge it to take action against environmental damage. These choices are not arbitrary but strongly based on the psychological impact of particular shapes on perceptions and the organization's strategic needs.



Figure2-4 The Logo of the International Red Cross



Figure2-5 The logo of Médecins Sans Frontières



Figure2-6 The Logo of Greenpeace

Shape should not only have aesthetic value, but should also contain symbolic meaning to evoke specific emotional and cognitive responses. These meanings can be used to shape the brand image and convey the values and mission statement of an organization.

The circle has been regarded as a symbol of unity, peace and inclusiveness (Jiang et al., 2016). When applied to some humanitarian organizations known for advocating equality and peace (Zheng et al., 2024), a circular logo can give people a sense of trust and warmth, which is a key element of organizations committed to social welfare or human rights.

Triangles symbolize energy, creativity, and forward-looking thinking (Salgado-Montejo et al., 2014). For some NGOs focused on environmental or technological innovation, the logo of triangular patterns is an appropriate symbol of advocating the concept of sustainability (VAMVAKIDOU et al., 2019). The triangle symbolizes power and stability, and is suitable for those NGOs that aim to achieve systemic change or solve global problems.

Rectangle-based graphics convey stability and reliability, which is essential for organizations wishing to promote justice or social change (Zheng et al., 2024). Their right-angled edges represent rationality and orderliness, making them suitable for organizations focused on legal activities or education or government regulation.

Shape: Theories

Semiotics and cognitive psychology provide a framework for explaining how logo shape affects brand perception. Geometric shape theory recognizes that geometric shapes elicit different emotional responses depending on visual characteristics (Biederman & Gerhardstein, 1993). According to this concept, basic patterns like circles are quickly processed by our brains to create pleasant memories. However, more complex triangles may elicit urgency due to their orientation or proportions.

Chandler, (2007). Semiotics: The Basics.

Chandler's (2007) semiotic analysis discusses the relationship between shape and emotion. A theoretical framework for conveying emotions through visual symbols is also proposed. He emphasized the effect of different shapes on people's intuition at the perceptual level; for example, circles are associated with softer emotions (e.g., warmth, safety), while sharp shapes are associated with threat and alertness. However, there are limitations to this prototypical perception-based attribution of emotions. Although geometric features of shapes may trigger universal perceptual responses, it ignores the role of individualized and group differences. For example, people with different educational backgrounds or occupations may have significantly divergent emotional associations with shapes. Furthermore, the emotional meaning of symbols is not transmitted in one direction but is

constantly reinterpreted in the psychosocial context of the audience. Therefore, the association between shapes and emotions may be expressed more as a complex interaction rather than a linear process.

Regarding the symbolic meaning of shapes, Chandler suggests that the cultural context deeply influences their emotional associations. For example, the circle symbolizes harmony and infinity in Western contexts but may convey negative or limiting meanings in other cultures. However, his analysis of this cultural relativity fails to delve into the issue of heterogeneity and homogeneity in interpreting symbols in the context of globalization. In brand globalization communication, symbol design often tries to achieve cross-cultural consistency of emotional meaning. However, the actual process of symbol interpretation may show more uncertainty due to conflicting cultural contexts. This suggests that the study of shape-emotion symbols needs to be more dynamically integrated into cultural flows in globalized contexts.

Although Chandler's analysis provides a theoretical foundation for the shape-emotion relationship, its methodology focuses primarily on the structuralist tradition of semiotics. This perspective views symbolic meanings as relatively fixed structural outcomes without paying sufficient attention to the diversity of emotion as a social practice. In today's social environment, for example, the affective meaning of shapes may change profoundly over time, technology, and forms of media. From this perspective, future research should pay more attention to the communication process of shapes and emotional symbols in digital media and dynamic cultures, breaking through the limitations of static analyses in traditional semiotics.

Eco, (1976). A Theory of Semiotics.

From the perspective of symbols' role in perception and culture, Eco (1976) reveals how shapes play a key role in transmitting emotions and explains the subjectivity and complexity of symbolic meaning generation. He not only criticizes the excessively fixed and linear assumptions of traditional semiotic structuralist models, but also focuses specifically on the openness and polysemy of semiotic systems.

Eco (1976) asserts that the emotional impact of shapes as symbols derives not from their characteristics but their meaning within cultural contexts. He rejected Ferdinand de Saussure's reduction of symbols to equations between signifier and signified. Eco (1976) proposed that emotional associations evoked by shapes are dynamic. He developed the "field of semiosis" concept to demonstrate this fact and show how shapes acquire emotional meaning through the interplay between encoding and decoding systems in semiotic systems. For instance a circle may symbolize harmony and serenity while in other contexts it may represent emptiness or closure (Fiske 1990). Such variations in affective meaning explain why graphics appear differently depending on contexts while providing more flexibility theoretical tools for semiotic analysis.

Eco suggests that the geometric features, social power systems, and ideas of forms determine their emotional link. Emotional implications, however, vary depending on the social setting and could result in interpretations different from the intended design. For example, the triangle, which is often seen as a symbol of strength and sturdiness, may be seen by some other cultures as a symbol of hostility and danger (Mick & Buhl, 1992).

Some scholars have argued that although Eco's theory emphasizes the dynamic nature of symbolic systems, its analytical framework still tends to view emotion symbolization as an operation at the semantic level, ignoring the distinctive role of emotion as a bodily experience (Massumi, 2021). Emotions are not mere adjuncts to symbolic meanings but are experiences directly constructed through bodily perception and practice. Thus, the emotional impact of shapes needs to be analyzed within a semiotic framework and in conjunction with the interdisciplinary perspectives of cognitive science and perceptual psychology. For example, research suggests that the association between curvilinear shapes and emotion stems partly from neural mechanisms favoring visual fluency.

Aaker, (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality.

The term "brand personality" was first introduced by Aaker (1997) when she sought to discover the basis of the personality dimension of brands and products. Brand personality is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." (Aaker, 1997, p.347). This proposition linked to early research by early personality theorists into the unfolding of human traits or the basis of personality dimensions led to the creation of the Five-Factor Model of Personality (FFM), also known as the Big Five (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

Although researchers agree on the number of factors, there is some variation in the names that best represent each factor. In most cases, the Big Five personality dimensions are extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Regarding brand personality, Aaker (1997) identified five dimensions of personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (see Figure below). Brand personality can help consumers differentiate between brands based on a product's unique personality, thus simplifying their decision-making process. The brand personality scale is widely cited in marketing and branding literature and has become one of the critical characteristics for measuring brand performance.



Figure2-7 Brand Personality Framework

According to Azoulay and Kepferer (2003), although the concept of brand personality is beneficial, its definition and measurement must be recognizable and separate from other aspects of brand identity. Therefore, they propose a stricter definition; "brand personality is a set of human personality traits that apply to both the brand and the brand" (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, p. 151). Due to the nature of NGOs, the stakeholders' perception of NGOs is abstract. Charities often have many possible directions when considering their brand content. These goals are not only to spread the cause itself but also to meet the needs of the public. If the charity's brand personality is used to connect with donors, it will be more conducive to their business practice (Tapp, 1996). Stride (2004) compares brands to mirrors, lamps, and lenses. Brands act as a mirror reflecting consumers' irrational needs and desires

unrelated to the product or service, and consumers believe that the brand's personality is conveyed to them through association. As a "lamp," one of the brand's goals is to magnify consumers' values and behaviors. Therefore, there are still potential value conflicts. Charities that use brand promotion may appear too commercial or have impure motives (Stride, 2004). Gaustad et al. (2019) discussed brand personality more deeply. They found that consumers would integrate brands into their self-concept and use these brands to reflect who they are or what kind of people they want to be. Fennis and Pruyn (2007) pointed out the role of brand effect in impression formation. They further explored the hypothesis that brand personality characteristics will continue to affect the audience's perception of the organization's personality.

NGO logos serve to communicate their mission and values to stakeholders. Semiotic theory examines how shapes, such as words or images, convey meaning through social and cultural contexts (Chandler, 2007). A circle may represent universal harmony while providing a sense of wholeness that resonates strongly with NGOs engaged in social justice or global well-being work; on the other hand, triangles' sharp angles often symbolize conflict or tension, appealing more strongly to environmental activism or conflict mediation NGOs (Eco, 1976).

Semiotic and psychological frameworks suggest that the shape of a logo can influence the emotional perception of a NGO by stimulating associations and increasing emotional engagement. This study combines Chandler, Eco, and Aaker's frameworks to focus on perceptions about three different logo shapes on the brand of an NGO. The figure below illustrates the theoretical framework of this study.

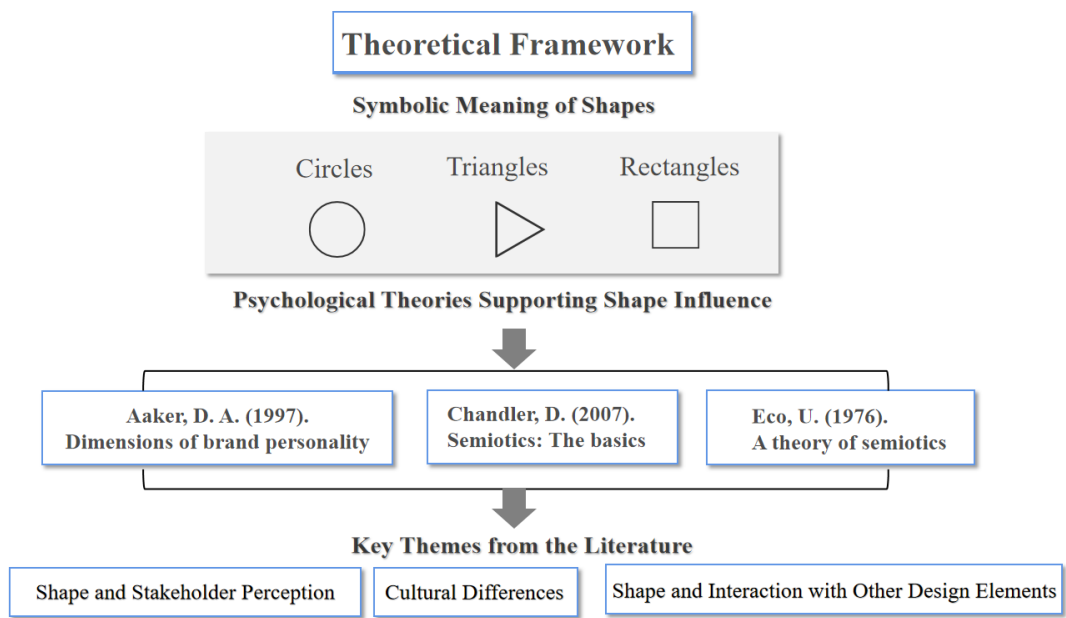


Figure 2-8 Theoretical Framework

Shape: Stakeholder perception and brand attitude

One of the most commonly discussed issues in the literature is how the shape of the logo affects stakeholder perceptions, particularly in terms of emotional engagement and brand affinity. Research suggests that certain shapes tend to elicit certain specific emotions, which may reinforce or weaken the emotional engagement between stakeholders and NGOs.

Research has shown that circular or oval shapes evoke positive feelings about warmth, trust, and inclusion. These types of logo shapes are appropriate for organizations dedicated to human welfare, social justice, or community building (Zheng et al., 2024). Meanwhile, triangles and squares tend to express stability and reliability and can give the impression of authority and professionalism. (Xu et al., 2020).

By contrast, pointed triangles or squares give more of an air of formality or distance that inhibits emotional connections and hinders human interactions. Feng et al. (2021) also point out that circular and angular designs often cause different emotional reactions in consumers: circular shapes evoke warmth, while angular forms convey strength or stability.



Figure2-9 UNICEF logo, Circle

Xu et al.'s (2020) study utilized an experimental design with 122 participants to assess emotional responses to logo shapes (circle and angled) within charitable organizations, specifically how these affect green consumption. Results demonstrated that circle logo shapes (but not angled ones) were more successful at encouraging green consumption; participants perceived round symbols as more approachable and trustworthy, while angled ones were perceived more professionally but less emotionally appealing by participants. One limitation of this research study was the relative homogeneity of its sample, which may not adequately represent different target audiences of global NGOs.

Rafiq et al. (2020) noted that there is a correlation between brand attitudes and logo shape, which suggesting that logo shape can directly influence consumers' attitude towards the brand. Liang et al. (2024) emphasized that emotional attachment to a brand affects overall attitudes and purchasing decisions and preferences. Luffarelli et al. (2018) discovered visual asymmetry is related to consumers' emotional responses: upward-facing shapes tend to elicit positive feelings, while downward-facing shapes can cause negative reactions that reduce brand recognition, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty over time.

lancu and lanc (2017) have emphasized that the shape of the logo is an integral part of brand memory. Customers are better able to recall the simpler shaped signs because their minimalist elements reduce the cognitive load and thus increase brand awareness. This view is supported by the studies of Sharma and Varki (2018). This study revealed that using "active white space" in logo design could significantly boost brand recognition among consumers and facilitate communication between brand and consumers. Since its low complexity gives people more space to imagine and can help identify logos more readily (Waisnawa and Yupardhi, 2023).

This view has been widely recognized in the related research of brand management, which means that the simple design can improve the identifiability of the brand, and thus improve the reputation of the brand. Akbari (2024) shows that there is an inseparable link between the visual attractiveness of a logo and customer satisfaction and repeated purchases.

Further research conducted by Xu et al. (2020) examined how logo shape impacts consumer perception. Circular logos tend to evoke more positive emotions, while angular counterparts may prompt more negative responses. This indicates that circular logos may better convey trust, care and social responsibility, while square logos represent more serious brand images.

Shape: Cultural Differences

While certain shapes, such as circle-based signs, evoke positive feelings, the perception of graphics may vary greatly by the cultural context. Therefore, understanding the local cultural context is essential when designing logos for NGOs in different countries.

Triangles are usually associated with innovation and progress in Western cultures. However, in some Asian cultures, it conveys negative emotions (Jiang et al., 2019), such as conflict, instability, or violence. However, in some Asian countries, it has a different meaning. Research by Jamaludin & Salura (2018) suggests that triangular elements found in mosque architecture represent sacred sites in Indonesia, suggesting triangles should be seen as signs of connection rather than instability or conflict. Therefore, NGOs must pay attention to cultural nuances when crafting messages targeted towards specific audiences.

Triangles are often associated with innovation and progress in Western culture. However, in some Asian cultures, it conveys negative emotions (Jiang et al., 2019), such as conflict, instability, or violence. In some Asian countries, however, it has a different meaning. Jamaludin & Salura (2018) showed that the triangular elements found in mosque buildings represent the holy place in Indonesia, suggesting that the triangle should be regarded as a sacred symbol rather than instability or conflict. Therefore, NGOs must pay attention to the detail at the cultural level when developing information for a specific audience.

Shape: Interaction with Other Design Elements

Another question about the shape of the logo is how the logo shape interacts with other design elements to express a more cohesive brand that conveys the ideal image of an organization. Torbarina et al. (2021) conducted a study on the impact of logo shape and colour on people's perception, and a total of 190 students participated. In this study, the two independent variables were logo shape (abstract vs. concrete) and logo color (original color vs. greyscale). The results show that the grayscale and specific symbols can be identified more accurately. Red was negatively correlated with sign recognition and sign preference, while blue and green were positively correlated. This shows that the colour of the logo can also stimulate the emotional response of consumers and change consumers' perceptions and preferences of the brand.

However, the study of Torbarina et al. (2021) lacks the attention to the cultural differences. The sample of 190 participants was limited to Croatia, while colours may contain different symbolic meanings in different cultural contexts. Thus, it cannot reflect the diversity of global NGO stakeholders. Li et al. (2023) proposed that the auditory elements of a brand also play a

crucial role in consumer brand perception, affecting credibility and the retention of brand memory. In addition, Xiao et al. (2021) point out that colour saturation affects consumer sensitivity judgment and brand memory retention.

Challenges in the Use of Logo Shapes

Limited Design Resources Limited Design Resources

According to Ebrahimi et al (2021), Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face many design resources constraints when developing logos to communicate their unique goals and values. Many smaller NGOs operate with tight fiscal budgets which prevents them from creating high-quality logos. As a result, many NGOs choose too common logos instead. Furthermore, some of them rely solely on limited government funding without receiving additional funds for brand operations.

Waisnawa and Yupardhi (2023) indicated that the logo design should be as simple but impressive as possible. This does not mean at the expense of the meaning it conveys. However, due to a lack of specialized design tools and resources, many NGO designs are too generic. This may result in their logo not effectively communicating the organization's core values.

Cultural Adaptability

Although some designs are appropriate in one context, they may convey opposite connotations when applied to another culture. This may lead to the organization being alienated from the target audience. However, NGOs often need to operate across different cultural contexts. This requires their logo to ensure that they resonates in all target areas without unintended negative associations. According to the study of O'Connor (2010), colours convey different meanings according to different cultural backgrounds. The study of O'Connor (2010) shows that colour conveys different meanings according to the cultural context. In some cultures, red symbolizes good luck, while in some Western cultures, red is associated with warning or risk. This shows that culture can influence people's preference for logo design, and influence brand image and consumer cognition. The above evidence suggests that culture can influence people's preference for logo design, and affect the brand image and consumer perception.

Future Research Directions

With the rapid development of digital technology, more NGOs began to use social media. Waisnawa and Yupardhi (2023) pointed out that in digital environments such as social media, minimalist logos are more appropriate. In social media, where users are often overwhelmed by large amounts of data, designers must strategically consider how to present digital logos to maintain visual clarity and brand recognition (Rochimah, 2023). Therefore, the logo design needs to be as simple, straightforward and memorable as possible without compromising its identifiability.

Artificial intelligence (AI) assisted design is changing the traditional logo design. In recent years, AI technology has been increasingly applied in the design field, especially in graphic design. AI can support a designer's creative process by generating different design options (Almeida, 2024). Generated adversarial networks (GANs) automatically create logo designs to improve design efficiency and provide creative inspiration for designers (Mino & Spanakis,

2018). GANs also support rapid iteration and optimization processes that allow designers to conduct iterative designs to quickly meet market demand or more effectively meet consumer preferences.

Global environmental issues should also be emphasized. Sustainable design principles should also be taken into account when creating logos for NGOs. Ndungu (2024) indicated that sustainable design principles can increase social responsibility while enhancing consumer brand loyalty. The use of natural elements and organic shapes in Logo designs can help brands convey the concept of environmental protection while increasing the visual appeal (Machado et al., 2015).

Conclusion

This literature review reveals the impact of different shapes on people's perception, while also highlighting the role of shape application in NGOs branding. The findings provide a preliminary theoretical framework for exploring the impact of logo shape on brand image, filling a gap in the existing literature on brand design research in NGOs. This study further suggests that the shape of a logo is not only an embodiment of aesthetic elements but also an important symbol for conveying organizational values, which can directly influence stakeholders' perceptions and emotions through visual means.

Choosing the right logo shape is particularly important for NGOs to build a strong brand image in an increasingly complex competitive environment. Studies have shown that soft shapes, like circles, convey warmth and inclusion, while more angular shapes, such as triangles, represent the energy of forward-looking thinking. Choosing the appropriate logo shape is particularly important for organizations that need to evoke specific emotions to attract donors or volunteers. Such shapes as rectangles convey stable and reliable information, more suitable for educational or legal service organizations. In contrast, the circular shape is more appropriate for humanitarian or environmental organizations which wish to promote solidarity and compassion. NGOs should choose a logo shape that matches their mission and desired value proposition in order to build brand trust and evoke specific emotions in their target audience. This is particularly important for organizations that need to attract donors or volunteers.

Research on the logo shape is still in its infancy. Future Research needs to further explore how cross-cultural contexts affect people's cognitive and emotional responses to logo shapes, especially how more adaptive and culturally sensitive logos can be designed in different regions. In addition, the interaction of logo shape with other branding elements (e.g. colours and fonts) should also be investigated in order to build a more comprehensive theory of brand design. This study not only provides practical advice to NGOs on designing adaptable and culturally sensitive logos but also provides an important contribution to the literature of academic research in brand design. By revealing the importance of logo shape in NGO brand communication, this study provides a theoretical basis for organizations to build deep emotional connections and trust with their stakeholders.

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