

“Are Irish SMEs satisfied with their logos?”

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## **Abstract**

Alan Alexander Milne once said, “*Things that make me different are the things that make me.*” (A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh – Piglet*). Every person is different; this is what makes us uniquely identifiable. Likewise, visual stimuli like logos are all very different and they can create differentiation amongst the extensive visual noise poured upon us every day. Aligning logos with an organisation’s values not only contributes to the differentiation of its visual perception but it makes them unique and identifiable to their stakeholders. This is informed by research which has found that when organisations align their logos to their core values, then the organisation’s perception among its customers or others improves (Siegert and Hangartner, 2017).

The aim of this study is to understand whether small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ireland are satisfied with their logos. While different research has highlighted the benefits that organisations derive from logos, many SMEs fail to capture the attention and perception of their customers with their logos (e.g., Mahmood et al. 2018). In fact, as SMEs develop their logos, it is found that there can be misunderstanding between designers and SMEs in the development process, particularly in logos embodying or incorporating the organisation’s core values and in delivering a brand appearance that best reflects the organisation.

In the Irish economy, SMEs employ about 68% of the entire workforce and account for approximately 50.3% of economic turnover (CSO, 2012). Logos can play a vital role in enhancing the brand reputation of Irish SMEs in global markets, the development of meaningful logos that resonate with consumers can be greatly significant for organisations (Abimbola, 2001). This

research focuses on Irish SMEs as a test case, in order to evaluate the overall satisfaction SMEs have with their logos and looks at their strategic significance in international markets.

This work is an exploratory study that involved both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in understanding what lies behind the reported difficulties that SMEs experience in achieving a logo that achieves strategic benefits. The quantitative approach involved the utilisation of an anonymous online survey that was sent to over 1000 marketing managers or SME owners that had recently had a logo redesigned in the last 24 months with a 22% response rate of completed surveys. The qualitative approach incorporated the use of semi-structured questions with qualified experts. A small set of SMEs who had recently undergone logo development in the last 24 months and used expert designers were the source for this data. For purposes of reliability, the interviewees were identified through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling strategies, with the sample size determined using the principle of data saturation. Therefore, the study had a solid representation of all the participants whose responses increased the validity and reliability of the research findings (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Based on this, the following research question is proposed: Are SMEs satisfied that their logos are enabling strategic success? A related, secondary questions is also addressed, which is: Is there a structured logo development process used by SMEs in Ireland in the creation of a logo and does it make a difference if it is used or not? As will be presented below, these questions are based on the assessment that logos in the wider research literature can greatly benefit an organisation by helping them achieve strategic success. The importance of logos can differentiate a successful and less successful organisation; having a logo that fits within a larger strategy and that fulfils strategic

objectives is critical for SMEs. Addressing these questions helps to better understand differences between less successful and potentially more successful logos as SMEs determine how logos fit within their strategic objectives.

From the research findings 100% the interviewees were in agreement that it is essential to undertake market research activities and use a design process in the development of their logos. This helps in understanding and knowing what designers can deliver for purposes of a giving the organisation a competitive advantage. A general result achieved is that the research found that SMEs had a poor understanding of design processes used in logo development, as it was often left to the design professionals as to what would be delivered and how. Finally, owing to the diversity of opinions regarding what constitutes a satisfactory logo in regards to satisfying strategic benefits, this research proposed the use of a case-based approach and proposes a Delphi study to be used in future research to enhance the development of theoretical concepts around what organisations can pursue in developing more strategically beneficial logos that increase competitiveness (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). A key conclusion achieved in this work is that there is evidence that SME owners in Ireland are not fully aware of the benefits of logos that could potentially shape and address strategic interests. Furthermore, this affects criteria used in measuring a satisfactory logo, that is one that address strategic interests, as revealed by SMEs, which increases vulnerability to creating ineffective logos.

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Context of research**

Logos have typically helped to distinguish organisations. A logo is one of the most salient visual elements of an organisation's brand (Wallace, 2001); logos facilitate the identification of the organisation and its brand, differentiating it from other entities, particularly those that are similar or competitive to it (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001; MacInnis, Shapiro, & Mani, 1999). Throughout history, logos have enabled the efficient identification of individuals (e.g., in ancient China, emperors used the dragon as a symbol of imperial power). However, logos can be more than simple tools for identification and differentiation, hence suggesting that logos can, among others, convey key information about what the entity stands for. It suggests that logos act as the primary visual representation of an organisation's or brand identity (Henderson & Cote, 1998; MacInnis et al., 1999; Swartz, 1983). As a result, logos can shape an organisation's reputation or its brand perception (Baker & Balmer, 1997; Olins, 1989; Van den Bosch, de Jong, & Elving, 2005), along with consumers' attitudes, purchasing behaviour (Woo, Chang-Hoan, Hyuck Joon, 2008) and overall organisation loyalty (Müller, Koehler, & Crettaz, 2011). Logos have an impact on the financial value of an organisation (Schechter, 1993; Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001).

While there have been some short periods where design has grabbed wider public interests (e.g., Scandinavian Design Group & Franck, 1961), design and designers have increasingly emerged as part of wider business discourse in Ireland. The government's Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (2015) has publicised, through reports and events, that design plays a significant

role in the Irish economy. The Year of Design 2015 saw Irish design and designers being celebrated and promoted both at home and abroad in prestigious venues in international capitals of design and commerce in order to drive job creation, grow exports and increase competitiveness (Irish Design, 2015). Within the Irish design landscape, logo design plays a small but important role in helping Irish companies compete. Improving the knowledge available to SMEs and designers around this topic will contribute to more successful relationships and end results.

The relationship between designer and SME poses difficulties. In many cases, misunderstandings and goal misalignments arise, resulting in suboptimal logo designs that do not benefit clients and corporate brand value is mis conveyed. Understanding relationships between designers and Irish SMEs can better inform how they work more effectively in local and foreign markets and build a better case for investing in design and Irish designers (Kohli & Suri, 2002).

## **1.2 What Logos Promote**

Logos have been shown to play an important role in how large organisations succeed in their respective markets (Foroudi et al., 2017). Among key benefits, logos help to achieve brand identity that often associates products or services with organisations and perceptions of quality, affordability and overall reputation. Logos are symbols of these qualities to consumers which help elicit overall positive perceptions that can help create long-term value by being seen and remembered (Sääksjärvi et al., 2015). Logos that are attractive or equate a brand with consumers facilitate corporate connections that help consumers identify with an organisation for a given product or service (Foroudi et al., 2014). This is true for profit, NGO and non-profit organisations;

logos are attractive to many fields and industries (Chapleo, 2015). Additionally, logos can have other types of functions for organisations. For instance, organisations trying to create a niche, or even be acquired by other organisations, may try to design logos so that specialised niche markets might be developed, or the organisation is seen as more attractive relative to other organisations in such markets (Machado et al., 2012).

Although the literature has demonstrated the efficacy of logos in benefiting strategic interest and gaining customers affinity, further investigation is warranted in what makes a logo successful for organisations because there are still relatively few studies on logos' effect on different types of organisations. For logos to create long-term value and have meaning to stakeholders in different organisations, including customers, qualities such as shape, image, style, size and colour are among key characteristics that are often seen as the most important (Hynes, 2009). Van Riel and Van de Ban (2001) describe an improved logo as one that increases resonance and empathy with its audience. An improved logo will also take into consideration the needs, wants, and current concept of an organisation to meet standards while still creating an increase in activity with the brand. Studies have looked at these characteristics for organisations and different sized companies (e.g., see Lowry et al., 2014). Nevertheless, other factors, such as good communication between logo designers and companies, including reflecting the brand identity through a logo, play an important role in making logos relatively better (Black & Veloutsou, 2017).

### **1.3 Why this Research Question and how it arose**

The research question is “Are Irish SMEs satisfied with their Logos” The primary question seeks to discover if Irish SMEs are satisfied with their logos, followed by the subsequent question, that determine if SMEs believe that their logos fit their strategic interests when their logos have been developed.

The reason for this topic of interest and the research question stems from my thirty-year design curiosity and interest in how logos work as a visual stimulus. From an early age, I created drawings that I understood to be the essence of my subject. Today, I work with companies producing corporate brand identities and logos that are not all as famous as NIKE or Google, but they strive to create visual meaning and identity for those clients I work with. Organisations seek to differentiate themselves and have a way to connect with their clients and customers, which enables strategic benefits for them, and logos are a key step in achieving this. The importance of this research is to increase the knowledge of achieving better logos for a SMEs so that the brand identity or logo resonates and empathises with the SMEs clients so that the first impression their clients see when embarking on a new business relationship (Ghodeswar, 2008) is preferential. In short, logos represent the critical first impression one gets when dealing with an organisation. An open question to further investigate is how can organisations such as SMEs create a logo that can enable strategic success? While this cannot be answered at the moment, it is a question for potential future research.

## **1.4 What the research does**

To begin, the section below looks at what this study is not focusing on and outlines the primary data sources used. Then a literature review is presented that discusses the use of logos. A methods section is provided, including references to experts and expertise that help define what an improved logo is in addition to the description given above. The methods applied incorporate qualitative, explorative analysis based on interviews conducted with different specialists and insiders with knowledge on logos for particular SMEs. The study presents primary data findings from interviews with experts on their understanding of logo design and what constitutes an effective logo design for organisations. The data are then analysed to present what aspects and characteristics make a logo effective for organisational goals. The analysis is qualitative and quantitative; results are presented descriptively in the writing. Linkages of the results to the main question are made, including how it relates to the wider literature.

## **1.5 What I am not exploring**

The research did not explore non-profit organisations or large companies / organisations. Most larger organisations are seen as more established, meaning their brand identity is often clearly defined in the mind of consumers. This means that larger organisations might be more conservative in how they approach their logos, potentially limiting the data in which logo changes can be studied and understood from subjects (Ind, 1997). Larger organisations could be established in brands that define them; they could be content with the products they have, as well as their identified logos (Baumol, 2004). Furthermore, large organisations are harder for any single manager to sometimes

fully know, as organisations that are large have multiple brand identities and some parts of the organisations could focus on very different business areas.

## **1.6 SME Logos**

SME logos have not had as much prominent attention in the world of design in academic literature. Hence, one of the interests here is to explore the topic further. For this research study, SMEs can be defined as companies / organisations that generally have less than 250 employees, although different countries have differing definitions of what type of companies constitute SMEs (OECD, 2019). A small business should not exceed 10 million pounds and a medium business 43 million pounds for an annual balance sheet total (Enterprise Ireland, 2007). In both cases, if the enterprise is owned by one or more enterprises or more than 25% of one or more enterprises, a different title may be given. In these cases, where smaller firms are investigated, the focus has been on specific sectors. One quality that differentiates SMEs from other organisations is that they are often still attempting to develop a brand identity and product lines with which customers could readily identify (Spence & Essoussi, 2010). In many cases, companies may develop some initial success, but they are still trying to capture a significant part of the market in a given industry or better develop an emerging market. In other words, SMEs are often actively seeking to develop logos, potentially as part of their wider business strategy, making them an attractive focus area for organisations who are interested in logo design. Logos can play an important role for organisations that are trying to be competitive and establish their brand identity but have yet to secure what that identity is. These organisations are also often unclear on how to develop and invest in their logo development, as they often assume it can be done easily or they do not put great emphasis on the

most effective result. Finding a logo that better matches their products and services could be critical in helping to develop a clear brand identity that can be leveraged for market success (Phillips et al., 2014). Defining what an 'effective' logo could be for an organisation is not an easy task for SMEs, as they have to consider how to best use their more limited financial resources in investing in logo creation and apply their logos within an overall business strategy in a context of uncertainty. Such decisions are risky and could be difficult for SMEs that have to balance their needs for a logo and consider the risk of a logo that may not achieve the desired results (van Grinsve & Das, 2016).

For this research, data on logo use and design by Irish SMEs is possible, making it feasible to obtain data for answering the main question of this research. Therefore, the applied methods and research will incorporate SMEs as the main focus areas for obtaining relevant data to address the question posited.

While, as stated above, the study of SME logos has been relatively limited, Irish SMEs have been studied even less in areas such as the efficacy of logo development and logo design. One area previously studied has been on how Irish SMEs could develop competitive foreign strategies as they seek to exploit markets (Nummela et al., 2016). In this case, logos are part of the wider strategy of competitiveness, but not a key focus in and of themselves as to how they can be used to leverage brand identity in markets, or even their efficacy for business goals. Studying Irish SMEs can be one way in which to see how relatively smaller organisations navigate and compete in markets where logos make up part of that strategy. Other countries can be studied, but Irish

SMEs are easier to study in this case due to the author's connections with local SMEs and knowledge of the local Irish markets in which SMEs operate.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature reviewed explores logos and their components, including what constitutes an effective logo for organisations and what expertise is needed for such logos. While there are limited publications particularly on Irish SMEs and developing their logos, the literature reviewed does explore many characteristics and concepts around effective logos.

### **2.1 Definition of a Logo**

A logo is defined as a visual element which an organisation uses to identify themselves. Much of the research covered in this study refers back to Henderson and Cote (1998) who defined a logo as a “graphic design that a company uses, with or without its name, to identify itself or its products” ( p.14). An earlier definition from Coleman et al. (1995) defined a logo as “corporate emblems or symbols of identity that are designed to convey an organisation’s identity to its members and to outsiders” (p. 405).

Miller et al. (2008) indicate that logo identity is an essential part of a company’s brand mark which makes up the brand identity. In their view, there are three brand marks that constitute a brand identity, which are: the brand name, logo and the slogan. While these three elements are often used together, a logo can also be used on its own. Similar to Henderson and Cote (1998), a log can be used with or without the name of an organisation in identifying itself or its products.

In some studies, the term logo is used almost interchangeably with the idea of an icon or visual symbol. The icon is an element of the logo defined as a “graphic image, illustration or symbol that represents a concept” (Kilic et al., 2010, p.585). When this is the case, it is the logo’s icon or visual symbol that becomes the signature for the brand’s identity (Cian et al., 2014).

Unless stated otherwise in this paper, the term logo will be used when referring to a specific visual, non-verbal element of a logo.

## **2.2 Definition of an ‘Effective’ Logo**

The characteristics of a effective logo, that is it satisfies an organisation’s expectations for a logo, is that it generally demonstrates familiarity, elicit a meaning of relevance for a product, create positive affect, look professional, has strong positive images in how it is viewed and appears elaborate and natural (Cohen, 1988; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Dowling, 2000; Walsh et al., 2010). Practitioner experts agree that well-designed logos should be recognisable, familiar, elicit consensually held meanings and evoke positive affect (Peter, 1989). An effective logo should reflect the identity, attitude and values of an organisation that it represents (Adir et al., 2014). Logos deemed positively should be associated with a given identity for the organisation, meaning logos should be easily understandable, memorable and original (Sakici & Ayan, 2012). However, getting to these qualities that make a logo ‘effective’ in achieving its goals requires expertise and detailed marketing research as well as insights into quantifiable information about increased awareness to demonstrate an effective result. Hem & Iversen (2012) argue that logos need to show connection between the logo owners, logo designers and logo recipients. Effective logos should

be distinctive, simple, natural and convey brand identity (Walsh et al., 2010). Experts, therefore, should be able to create such logos and/or demonstrate experience in such types of logos. Connections between the three types of stakeholders, that is owners, designers and recipients, where a logo can associate a given brand through has been shown to be effective. Logos that effectively reinforce desired ideas about what that identity and image are of a brand contribute to the popularity of that brand (Dowling, 2000; Chun, 2005).

One main quality about logos is they should be easily recognisable, where characteristics such as dynamism, colour, simplicity, natural appearance, including having so-called divine proportions (1: 1.618 ratio), help make a logo distinct and favourably viewed by consumers (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006; Pittard et al., 2007; Machado et al., 2012; Junghan & Lakshmanan, 2015). Results by Bayunitri & Putri (2016) confirm that simplicity, colour and shape are likely to influence consumers that link logos and brand. Among overall characteristics that have been tested, colour and overall appearance portray a message that consumers consciously or unconsciously begin to associate with a given brand (Lindstrom, 2006). Another important characteristic includes positioning logos higher, since this has been seen as more positive by consumers on perceptions of a given logo design (Dong & Gleim, 2018). In building brands, it is critical that companies engage consumers' senses to appeal to their expectations or make a connection for consumers that brings a positive perception through sensory experience. For logos, many SMEs may not necessarily recognise what characteristics work well with logos; however, SMEs may apply logo tests with consumer groups or conduct studies to test their logos for effect (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). While the above criteria are often used to define what a logo is, it remains unclear as to what makes one logo 'better' than another. At times, an 'improved' logo might be simpler in design, as this has

been shown to be effective for certain products in attracting customers (Bossel et al., 2019). In such cases, customers may expect a logo or a brand to be a certain way and that can affect which design they prefer. In other cases, such as when an organisation is trying to be innovative or provide that perception, complex logos have been shown to be more effective in attracting customers to a given product (Mahmood et al., 2019). Innovation and demonstrating excitement to consumers can also mean some logos take on animated forms where upward movement has been shown to be attractive (Guido et al., 2019).

### **2.3 Who Qualifies an Effective Logo: Experts and Expertise**

For researchers, there is difficulty in identifying what is an effective logo, including how to measure efficacy. In most circumstances, researchers have used the term ‘improved’ to mean that when a logo has been redesigned, it could contain additional characteristics that achieve given goals such as improved performance, relative to an older version of a logo (Olavarrieta and Friedmann, 2007). To qualify if a given logo likely achieves its goals stated by an organisation, professionals in logo design could potentially provide knowledge as to the potential of a logo to achieve its goals. There is also a general assumption among owners of organisations and users of logos that the ‘improvement’ of the existing logo makes it better in terms of quality and essence (Park et al. 2013).

In cases where clear criteria are missing, as to how something is ‘effective’, one option is to utilise experts’ views, where expertise acts as a substitute for missing information on clear criteria (Martini, 2014). Expertise can be defined as someone who has recognised skills, knowledge or

abilities in activities or tasks that go above an expected standard. It can be in such areas as sports, design or other areas. It can refer to a decision-making process or it can refer to a final output that leads to a decision. While these criteria could define experts and expertise, this does not automatically make a person qualified to provide expert knowledge on logos. Foroudi et al. (2014) and Shanteau (1992) have stated that decision-making research provides results that suggest that one should challenge what insights gained from learning from experts, as expert views can be incorrect.

There is a large difference between a novice and expert. Cognitive science views experts within their domains as those who are skilled, competent and think in a qualitatively different way than do novices in the same areas (Farrington-Darby & Wilson, 2006). A review on experts and expertise shows that memory recall is one key characteristic. This includes work by Grønhaug & Haukedal (1995), who studied decision-making in bank managers, Gentner (1988), which investigated practical motor skills required in experts and novices and Vicente (1992), where these works found that a key characteristic for experts is their ability for memory recall of relevant information. In these works, experience in seeing as having knowledge about a given topic that allows often quick recall of useful information to make a value judgement. Qualifying expertise can be made through models such as Klein's (2000) recognition-primed decision model, What this work shows is that the faster and more accurate one can make decisions about a complex topic the more potential expertise the person has in a given area. More recent applications of the approach and model suggest it can be used to provide a qualitative assessment on who is qualified as an expert, and be able to judge if something is more qualified than something else, using several steps that demonstrate fast and complex reasoning about problems (Klein & Wright, 2016). It is experts,

as defined above, that are utilised by this study in order to provide their opinions about given topics addresses in this work. Below, subjects interviewed were evaluated using expertise criteria discussed.

## **2.4 SMEs Obtaining an effective Logo**

Changing logos for an organisation, for instance when an SME decides that a new logo is needed, to help with its brand identity can be challenging. For SMEs, knowing when they have achieved a useful logo and one that is satisfactory is critical. Similar to before, criteria, such as shape, colour, and design are crucial components (Machado et al., 2012; Junghan & Lakshmanan, 2015). Relevant stakeholders, such as the organisation and its customer base, need to be able to connect with the logo, while the logo chosen has to have easily recognisable relevance and meaning (Hem & Iversen 2012). For SMEs, brand identity must be reinforced and made relevant through the logo (Chun, 2005). The challenge is also for SMEs to realise the importance of logos. Some SMEs do not perceive logos as critical to their organisation, and they see them as expense to obtain professional development. Thus, they try to design and create logos themselves or use inferior resources and processes that are *ad hoc* or poorly designed (Holston, 2011). Other companies do place greater emphasis on having a well-developed logo design, where they hire experts to create logos that fit their criteria of an effective logo (Lowry et al., 2014; Gruber et al. 2015). In such cases, hiring the right logo designer becomes a critical part of the process of developing a logo. Such companies realise that effective and recognisable logos are not easily achieved and cannot as easily be developed without professional support.

## 2.5 Effective Logo Designers

Given that effective logo designers might be needed, what qualifies someone to be an effective logo designer is another question to be answered if we are to determine what an effective logo is. Effective logo designers, like other industries and specialities, have been considered to be those with relevant experience, achieved some industry accepted certifications and have an overall positive reputation that multiple individuals can confirm (Lucas, 2005; Biong, 2013; de Chernatony & Riley, 1998). Designs that allow connections between a firm's performance with its functional and emotional values are seen as examples of effective design (de Chernatony & Riley, 1998). Defining what an effective design has included what was achieved by taking a consensus view of reputable logo designers who can agree with what makes an effective logo design (Chernatony & Riley, 1997). An effective designer also understands the brand he or she is communicating and works effectively with the client. Based on this, it is important that the designer understands the values of the brand effectively, as otherwise the client can be less accepting of the new logo design, even if the logo could potentially be effective (Walsh et al., 2010). In creating the logo, close interaction with the client is essential at every phase so that designers know what companies want and develop clarity as to what type of logo would best display brand identity (Agogino et al. 1989; Morioka et al., 2006). This serves the purpose of creating an effective design, while satisfying the client. As Hem and Iversen (2004) have argued, producing effective logos requires a strong relationship and connection between the designer, customers and client requiring the new or freshly designed logo. This connection allows relevant communication that facilitates better or improved logo design and allows effective designers to express a given design that suits an organisation's desired product and brand.

## **2.6 Logos in branding context**

Brands are important assets and can significantly affect companies' performance. Consumers develop meaningful relationships with brands, resulting in increased purchases, reduced sensitivity to price change and decreases marketing costs (Park et al, 2013). Logos as part of an organisation's brand mark. Brand marks serve as visual cues on which brand identity components and brand associations can be created. (Kilic et al., 2010). Brand help consumers differentiate product type, draw inferences about brand attributes and benefits and serve as a central cue around which other brand associations can be made. Miller et al. (2007) identified three brand marks or elements that constituted an organisation's brand identity. Aside from the logo, these were the brand name and slogan. Two aspects of the brand mark design are its content and style. By content, this refers to the text and graphics, while style refers to how the brand elements are presented visually.

Logos are identified as being an important part of the entire organisation / visual identity. Visual identity is the way in which an organisation uses logos, typestyles, nomenclature and architecture to communicate its corporate philosophy and personality (Melwar et al., 2005). Buttle and Westoby (2006) found that using logos is a way that companies create a distinctive way to associate a brand name with a graphic representation as well as convey the ethos of the brand they represent.

Researchers have noted a logo's effectiveness as a visual representation of a corporation, its values and even its products or goals. Hynes (2009) noted that a logo acts as a badge of identification and as a mark of quality that increases an organisation's reputation. A logo is one of the main means of getting attention, building recognition, communicating the brand's image and values and

provoking emotional responses (Müller et al., 2013). As a key component of brand identity, a logo provides instant recognition for the brand and the product (Kohli et al., 2002).

## **2.7 Importance of a Logo**

Logos are often the first source of brand recognition and help to build brand awareness; this also allows for faster decision making by consumers in their perception of organisations (Park et al., 2013). However, the role of logos goes far beyond recognition. Logos “allow organisations to communicate positively about a product or the organisation itself, can create competitive advantage, and support a global marketing strategy” (Grohmann, 2008, p.143). According to J. Mallory Wober (1995), the function of a logo is as a “sight bite”, where logos are not just simple denotative labels, but can convey succinct impressions of corporate personality and function, similar to that of a politician’s sound bite (Coleman et al., 1995).

Some authors argue that the positive effect of logos does not come from allowing for recognition or identification, “but primarily from facilitating customer self-identity/expressiveness, representing a brand's functional benefits, and offering aesthetic appeal” (Park et al, 2013, p.180). Park et al (2013) cite the example of religious symbols such as the Christian cross or the Buddhist swastika. Aside from being tools or a means for identification and differentiation, they also convey information. Logos thus play a much more important role than just allowing for recognition; they are important carriers of key information about the brand and they serve as primary visual representations of the brand’s meaning and image (Henderson and Cote, 1998). As logos provide brands with a “face”, they can enhance a brand’s authenticity; to its customers, this enhances

customers' willingness to exert an effort to sustaining a relationship with the brand. (Park et al, 2013).

Evaluations made about a logo can affect the evaluations made about an organisation. For example, logos that help convey the brand's functional benefits and reinforcing them will encourage consumers to rely on the brand as a solution for specific problems. This will in turn improve consumers' brand commitment.

Park et al. (2013) also noted a brand's ability to represent the consumer. Brands have the ability to help express or define an individual's actual or desired selves and differentiate them from others. For example, a brand can come to stand for a customer's core beliefs or values (e.g., Rolex for uncompromising precision and attention to detail) or lifestyles they adhere to (e.g., Quicksilver for a young-minded, individual, casual style). We should also consider the potential aesthetic appeal of logos, which enhance the emotional bond between consumers and brands that are "near and dear to them" (Park et al., 2013, p.182) which leads to stronger brand commitment. Logos convey a brand's functional benefits to encourage customers to reciprocate and rely on the brand as a solution for certain problems, hence enhancing customers' brand commitment. Therefore, brand logos may have the potential to communicate and reinforce a brand's promise to assist customers in their daily lives, and in doing so, those logos will strengthen customer relationships with the brand (Park et. al., 2013).

Grohmann (2008) studied logo design characteristics and found that they can significantly influence perceptions of brand personality. Brand personality is defined as the association of

human personality traits to brands. Brand personality consists of five dimensions: sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. Depending on what personality a brand wants to convey, the type of logo they use can play a big part. To study the influence the design of a logo would have on consumers' perceptions of a brand, Grohmann (2008) conducted an online survey where 1376 consumers were asked to give their perceptions of 36 logo graphics. They found that logographic design characteristics did influence consumers' perception of brand personality.

Logos that were identified as being highly natural, round, elaborate and coherent, had a positive effect on perception of *sincerity*. Natural, elaborate harmonious and coherent logos positively affect perception of *competence*, while roundness has negative effect on *competence* perception. Natural, elaborate and coherent logos are also positively linked with the *excitement* and *sophistication* dimension; the latter is additionally evoked by round logos. To evoke the *ruggedness* aspect of brand personality, logos should be highly natural, elaborate and coherent, while round logos should be avoided (Grohmann, 2008). Grohmann further identified the following logo design elements: *colour(s)*, *typeface*, *icon or symbol and other imagery*, *shape*, *size and spacing*. Such design elements can each evoke different meanings to consumers (Müller et al., 2013) and should be chosen carefully. Authors frequently focus on these 'meaning based' design characteristics when explaining effects of various design elements (Bottomley, Doyle, 2006; Check-Teck, 2001; Cian, Krishna and Elder, 2014; Grohmann, 2008; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Hynes, 2009; Kohli, Suri and Thakor, 2002; Machado, de Carvalho and Torres, 2015; Müller, Kocher and Crettaz, 2013; Olavarrieta and Friedmann, 2007; Payne et al., 2013).

Aside from representing the personality of a brand, representing the brand image, a logo can also come to stand for the image of a consumer. Logos provide a means for a consumer to show their personal identification of a brand. When a consumer wears a t-shirt or baseball cap, or uses something with the brand logo on it, they are publicly showing a personal association with a brand (Pimental and Heckler, 2000). Brand personality literature suggests that brand elements, such as logos, shape consumers' brand personality perceptions (Grohmann, 2008). If the personality of a brand reflects the consumer's self-concept, the way they perceive themselves and how they want others to perceive them, they are more likely to purchase and use that brand.

Various marketing activities affect one another and offer synergies when they are well coordinated. To achieve desired synergies, all the various brand elements must be integrated (Hem and Iversen, 2004). The brand name, logo, symbols, packaging and slogans should thus, all complement each other. As such, when designing logos, one should first look at the brand from a wider perspective and only then focus on various design elements of the brand's logo as part of its visual identity. As Hem and Iversen (2004) point out, the vision of the brand should drive ideas about the brand essence, which should in turn, should be the basis for briefing designers.

Henderson and Cote (1998) stress that the logo selection process must always begin with a company or brand taking a good look at their image and at the direction that the organisation is moving towards. The organisation must then identify the goals of the logo as well as the constraints then provide this to the logo designer to evaluate the potential designs accordingly. Logos bring an added value to an organisation if they have correct recognition and recall. Correct recognition means that stakeholders must remember seeing a logo. Recall means that on seeing

the logo the stakeholder is reminded of the brand or organisation name. As organisations want their name recalled, the logo serves as shorthand for the organisation (Henderson and Cote, 1998).

## **2.8 Components of a Logo**

To understand logos, we also need to understand what the components of a logo are. The following elements researched in the literature give us a deeper understanding of what a logo is comprised of.

### ***2.81 Logo design***

Logos consist of three elements: 1) stylised letter marks 2) word marks, of pictorial symbols 3) combinations of verbal and pictorial symbols (Miller et al., 2007, p. 258). An effective logo design depends on the situation and the objectives that the organisation has for that logo. When designing a logo, care is needed to ensure that the final design is *recognisable, meaningful and affectively positive* (Henderson and Cote, 1998).

A study by Stafford et al. (2004) looked into the effect of a logo on peoples' perceptions of a non-profit theatrical organisation found that investing in a logo is justified because of its ability to visually articulate an organisation's identity. A logos attractiveness and recognisability also had an effect on audience perceptions of the group's performance. The logo acts as a tangible clue, which can lead to inferences about the organisation itself.

Henderson and Cote (1998) conducted an empirical analysis of 195 logos to try and determine what made a useful or appropriate logo. They looked at the design factors of the logos and studied people's reactions to them. Seven logo design factors were identified: *natural*, *harmony*, *elaborate*, *parallel*, *round*, *proportion*, and *repetition*. A summary of these factors, including definitions and examples can be found in the following table:



**Natural** reflects the degree to which the design depicts commonly experienced objects. It is comprised of representative and organic.



**Representative** and its opposite endpoint, **abstract**, capture the degree of realism in a design. Abstraction in a design occurs when the elements of an object are distilled down to the most typical features. At its limit, total abstraction yields almost no clues as to what is being pictured (Dondis 1973). Logo strategy literature frequently suggests using representative logos (Block 1969; Clark 1988; Durgée and Stuart 1987; Keller 1993; Kropp, French, and Hilliard 1990; Masten 1988; Peter 1989; Siegel 1989; Vartorella 1990; Yeung 1988). In addition, experimental aesthetics research has found that the average viewer has difficulty interpreting and recognizing abstract designs (Koen 1969; Nelson 1971; Seifert 1992). Theoretically, representative logos should increase familiar meaning and correct recognition.



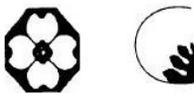
**Organic** designs are those that are made up of natural shapes such as irregular curves. Alternatively, geometric designs tend to represent less natural, more synthetic-looking objects. They will be more angular and more abstract. Graphic design literature suggests that organic designs are more meaningful (Dondis 1973).



**Harmony** is a congruent pattern or arrangement of parts that combines symmetry and balance and captures good design from a Gestalt perspective.



**Balance** is related to symmetry because symmetric designs are normally considered balanced. The reverse is not true, however (i.e., an asymmetric design is not necessarily imbalanced). Balance captures the notion that there is a center of suspension between two weights or portions of the design. Graphics design literature has suggested that imbalance is more upsetting to viewers (Dondis 1973).



**Symmetric** designs appear as reflections along one or more axis. That is, the elements on one side of the axis are identical to the elements on the other side. Gestalt psychology long has argued that symmetry is the primary determinant of "pattern goodness," which produces positive affect (Clement 1964; Garner and Clement 1963). In addition, graphic design literature suggests symmetry increases positive affective reactions (Bevlin 1989; Dondis 1973).



**Elaborate** is not simply intricacy, but appears to capture the concept of design richness and the ability to use simple lines to capture the essence of something. It is comprised of complexity, activeness, and depth.



**Complexity** can arise from many different design features such as irregularity in the arrangement of elements, increases in the number of elements, heterogeneity in the nature of elements, and how ornate the design is (Berlyne 1971; Schmitt, Simonson, and Marcus 1995). Optimal arousal theory suggests that complexity will have a  $\cap$  shaped relationship with affect (Berlyne and Lawrence 1964; Day 1967; Dorfman 1965; Eisenman 1966, 1967; Munsinger and Kessen 1964). Alternatively, logo strategy literature recommends simple logos because they are easier to remember (Robertson 1989).



**Active** designs are those that give the impression of motion or flow. This flow is the basis for the design notion of rhythm (Bevlin 1989). Experimental aesthetics suggests that active designs are more interesting and will be related to other characteristics like symmetry, balance, and complexity (Berlyne 1971).



**Depth** gives the appearance of perspective or a three-dimensional design (e.g., this design appears to have a raised triangular section that goes off into the distance). Depth is related to both complexity and representativeness, so it might affect recognition (Nemett 1992).



**Parallel** designs contain multiple lines or elements that appear adjacent to each other. No literature links this characteristic to the response variables.



**Repetition** of elements occurs when the parts of the design are similar or identical to one another. Conversely, identical elements that are simply part of a larger whole (e.g., needles on a pine tree) would be classified as one element (a pine). No literature directly addresses this characteristic.



**Proportion** is the relationship between the horizontal and vertical dimensions. One of the best known examples of proportion is the golden section. Gestalt psychology, graphics design literature, and empirical research suggest that certain proportions are more appealing than others (Bevlin 1989; Crowley 1990; Veryzer 1993). Note that  is a good example of the golden section.



**Round** designs are made of primarily curved lines and circular elements. No known theory links this characteristic to the response variables.

(Henderson and Cote, 1998, p.16-17)

In the Henderson and Cote (1998) study, subjects were asked to classify logos according to their design elements; these were then linked to their responses to the logo. An effective logo was defined as one that would elicit the following responses: *positive affect, familiar meaning, correct recognition* and *false recognition* (Henderson and Cote, 1998, p. 17). The definition of these responses is provided in the table below.



*Correct Recognition* occurs when consumers remember seeing the logo to which they have been exposed.



*False Recognition* occurs when people believe they have seen the logo when they really have not.



*Affect* simply refers to the evaluative emotional reaction created by a logo and is comprised of five measures: good, liking, quality, interesting, and distinctive.



*Familiar Meaning* refers to stimuli that easily evoke consensually held and therefore familiar meanings within a culture or subculture.

It was found that, a *positive affect* is achieved with moderately natural, moderately elaborate and a highly harmonious logos. Highly natural and moderately proportional logos which lead to *familiar meaning* and *correct recognition* is most often achieved with highly natural, moderately harmonious logos; while artificial looking, highly harmonious logos more often result in *false recognition*. Furthermore, *positive affect* and *familiar meaning* are positively linked with *correct recognition*. (Henderson and Cote, 1998).

An easily recognisable logo is important, as a logo reminds consumers of an organisation. *Positive affective reactions* to a logo are desirable because these feelings are transferrable to the organisation and its products. A *clear and familiar meaning* ensures the message is shared by all who see it and can aid recall and association between the logo and organisation it represents (Stafford et al., 2004).

Care must be taken when choosing a symbol that does not have a weak visual identity. A weak visual identity can be seen as a symptom of weakness in corporate strategy, corporate culture and formal communications policies (Baker and Balmer, 1997).

According to Schechter (1993), *pictorial logos* can add the most value to the brands they represent; *letter symbol logos* are logical and straightforward, but not the best at expressing corporate values; and *character logos* can most clearly express “who you are”; while *logos* are a safe choice. The appropriateness of a logo depends on what is considered the most important effect that the organisation wants the logo to have.

Symmetry in logo design can also have an effect on the perception consumers have of the brand. *Symmetry* is often used by designers as a visual device to express concepts such as cohesion, efficiency and equality. As such, organisations that use symmetrical brand marks are often perceived as being more ethically and socially responsible than those whose brand marks are asymmetrical. Symmetry’s association with cohesion and unification can also convey the organisational value of teamwork that can also increase consumers’ perceptions of the trustworthiness of a brand. Marsden and Thomas (2013) looked at the brand marks of financial institutions for their perceived symmetry and what was thought that marks said about the institution. They found that rotationally symmetrical symbols such as the Banamex symbol were assigned the value of “teamwork” due to the perceived “unification of individual parts”. In contrast, figurative asymmetrical symbols such as that of Merrill Lynch and RBC showed a low occurrence in the perceived value of teamwork.



Figure 4. Selected brand marks. Symmetrical symbols: (a) Bank of Yokohama, (b) Banamex, (c) DBS Bank, (d) PNC Global Investment Servicing. Perceived symmetrical symbols: (e) Garanti, (f) National Australia Bank, (g) VTB. Asymmetrical symbols: (h) Merrill Lynch, (i) RBC Royal Bank, (j) Nordea.

Marsden and Thomas, 2013, p.66

## 2.82 Colour

Colour is one of the marketing tools used to create brand images as it possesses psychological and emotional properties (Madden et al., 2000). Colours can alter meanings of objects, while colour preferences can serve as a good predictor of consumer behaviour (Aslam, 2006). Judgments are made about a brand from the logo design and consumers have strong opinions about which colours are appropriate for different organisation images (Hynes, 2009). Colour is sometimes referred to as the “silent salesperson as it exerts persuasive power at a subliminal level” (Hynes, 2009 p. 545). Madden et al. (2000) further point out that colours can be important image cues as they can have specific meanings associated with them. Colours can also become strongly associated with different brands and serve as a way to distinguish them from others. An example of this would be red for Coca-Cola and blue and red for Pepsi Cola. Colours and colour combinations are used to differentiate a firm from its competitors. A study from Melewar, Hussey and Srivoravilai (2005) looked at the effect of the re-branding of France Telecom. Among the effects, they noticed that

pertaining to the colours that they used with the new logo, the mostly orange and red logo made it stand out from its competitors (AT&T, Swisscom and Telecom Italia) which used mainly blues, greys and reds. In France Telecom's core western markets, orange and red are also used to convey the idea of warmth.

Colour is also an important part of logo design. Colours bring with them important meanings that have to be considered when designing logos. They can be used strategically to imbue desired meanings in logos and alter brand personality. Colour influences likability and familiarity of a brand as well (Labrecque and Milne, 2012).

Labrecque and Milne point out that "colour attracts consumers and can shape their perceptions. Through colour, a brand can establish an effective visual identity, include forming a strong relationship with a target market and position itself among competitors in the marketplace (2012, p. 501)".

Colour evokes a variety of associations that can be used to communicate a brand's desired image on the consumer's mind (Bottomley and Doyle, 2006). Colour reactions are thought to be either innate or instinctual. Innate reactions to colour are said to occur when colour signals the brain to trigger an affective reaction directly. Reactions to colour suggest preferences are learned over time or as a result of past experience; there is even a conscious associations in language, literature and myths with specific colours (Aslam, 2006).

Aslam states that colour can be an integral element of corporate and marketing communication as it “induces moods and emotions, influences consumers’ perceptions and behaviours and helps companies’ position or differentiate them from the competition” ( p. 231).

Aslam further indicates that there are three primary colours (red, blue and yellow), as well as the secondary colours (orange, green and purple), which are considered simple colours; all other colours (taupe, mauve, sea green, maroon, pumpkin, etc.) are considered sophisticated colours.

Bottomley and Doyle (2006) found that colours that are connotatively congruent with products are considered more appropriate. Specifically, functional colours (grey, black, blue and green), were considered more appropriate for functional products and services such as anti-freeze, power tools or solicitors. Sensory-social colours (red, yellow, pink and violet) were considered more appropriate for such products as amusement parks, chocolates or perfume.

Table 1

**Functional colors vs. sensory-social colors: a product-by-product analysis**

| Product                | Functional colors | Sen.-soc. colors | Mean diff. | Std. error mean | Paired t-test | p value (1-tailed) |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Functional</b>      |                   |                  |            |                 |               |                    |
| Anti-freeze            | 5.71              | 4.36             | 1.34       | 0.33            | 4.07          | .000               |
| Car tires              | 6.11              | 3.59             | 2.52       | 0.27            | 9.20          | .000               |
| Electrician            | 5.87              | 4.39             | 1.48       | 0.27            | 5.46          | .000               |
| Kitchen roll           | 4.67              | 5.26             | -0.59      | 0.29            | -2.02         | .026               |
| Power tools            | 6.36              | 4.36             | 2.00       | 0.31            | 6.53          | .000               |
| Solicitor              | 5.77              | 3.73             | 2.04       | 0.32            | 6.41          | .000               |
| <b>Sensory-social</b>  |                   |                  |            |                 |               |                    |
| Amusement park         | 4.41              | 6.51             | -2.10      | 0.34            | -6.14         | .000               |
| Chocolates             | 3.49              | 5.08             | -1.59      | 0.34            | -4.65         | .000               |
| Ice cream              | 3.69              | 5.61             | -1.91      | 0.32            | -6.00         | .000               |
| Night club             | 5.08              | 6.30             | -1.22      | 0.36            | -3.39         | .001               |
| Perfume                | 3.91              | 5.82             | -1.91      | 0.35            | -5.39         | .000               |
| Restaurant (expensive) | 4.73              | 5.16             | -0.43      | 0.38            | -1.14         | .131               |

Note: Mean appropriateness ratings for each product averaged across functional (black, gray, green, blue) and sensory-social colors (red, yellow, pink, purple).

Colours and colour combinations have different meanings across nationalities and cultures. For example, black on red signifies happiness to the Chinese and is often used for wedding invitations. Meanwhile, red over white represents celebration and signifies the life force to the Japanese. When attempting to enter a new market in a new country, brands should take a look at the colour of their logo design and make sure that the message it conveys is the one that they want. An attempt must be made to understand how these colours and their combinations are perceived in each location (Madden et al., 2000).

**Table 1.** The cross-cultural spectrum of meanings and associations of colour in marketing

| Country-Culture cluster |              |          |            |           |          |              |              |              |            |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Colour                  | Anglo-Saxon  | Germanic | Latin      | Nordic    | Slavic   | Chinese      | Japanese     | Korean       | ASEAN      |
| White                   | Purity       | =        | =          | =         | =        | Death        | Death        | Death        | Death      |
|                         | Happiness    | =        | =          | =         | =        | Mourning     | Mourning     | Mourning     | Mourning   |
| Blue                    | High quality | Warm     | =          | Cold      | =        | High quality | High quality | High quality | Cold       |
|                         | Corporate    | Feminine | =          | Masculine | =        | Trustworthy  | Trustworthy  | Trustworthy  | Evil       |
|                         | Masculine    | =        | =          | =         | =        | =            | =            | =            | (Malaysia) |
| Green                   | Envy         | =        | Envy       | =         | =        | Pure         | Love         | Pure         | Danger     |
|                         | Good taste   | =        | =          | =         | =        | Reliable     | Happy        | Adventure    | Disease    |
|                         | =            | =        | =          | =         | =        | =            | =            | =            | (Malaysia) |
| Yellow                  | Happy        | Envy     | Envy       | =         | Envy     | Pure         | Envy         | Happiness    | =          |
|                         | Jealousy     | Jealousy | Infidelity | =         | =        | Good taste   | Good taste   | Good taste   | =          |
|                         | =            | =        | =          | =         | =        | Royal        | =            | =            | =          |
|                         | =            | =        | =          | =         | =        | Authority    | =            | =            | =          |
| Red                     | Masculine    | Fear     | Masculine  | Positive  | Fear     | Love         | Love         | Love         | =          |
|                         | Love         | Anger    | =          | =         | Anger    | Happiness    | Anger        | Adventure    | =          |
|                         | Lust         | Jealousy | =          | =         | Jealousy | Lucky        | Jealousy     | Good taste   | =          |
|                         | Fear         | =        | =          | =         | =        | =            | =            | =            | =          |
|                         | Anger        | =        | =          | =         | =        | =            | =            | =            | =          |
| Purple                  | Authority    | =        | =          | =         | Anger    | Expensive    | Expensive    | Expensive    | =          |
|                         | Power        | =        | =          | =         | Envy     | Love         | Sin          | Love         | =          |
|                         | =            | =        | =          | =         | Jealousy | =            | Fear         | =            | =          |
| Black                   | Expensive    | Fear     | Fear       | =         | Fear     | Expensive    | Expensive    | Expensive    | =          |
|                         | Fear         | Anger    | Anger      | =         | Anger    | Powerful     | Powerful     | Powerful     | =          |
|                         | Grief        | Grief    | Grief      | =         | =        | =            | =            | =            | =          |

Multiple sources: Oyama *et al.* (1963, cited in Hupka *et al.*, 1997), Kreitler and Kreitler (1972, cited in Grossman and Wisenblit, 1999), Ricks (1983), Jacobs *et al.* (1991), Schmitt (1995), Hupka *et al.* (1997), Schiffman *et al.* (2001) and Neal *et al.* (2002). The country clusters are adapted from Ronen and Shenkar (1985). The absence of any concrete reported research findings for particular cultural clusters are denoted by dashes.

Aslam, 2005 p. 19

Hynes (2009) points out that an organisation that carefully selects a colour on the basis that it can support the corporate image it wants to present will have a logo that will be able to aid in visual recognition and create a competitive advantage. On the other hand, an organisation that chooses a colour inappropriate to its overall image will send conflicting signals to its audience. This would

require them to make extra efforts to reinforce their corporate identity and send the message that they want. Special consideration is also needed to ensure the synchronisation of colours chosen with other logo elements, such as a symbol, name and typeface. A summary of Hynes (2009, p. 553) is shown below.

| SUMMARY OF RESULTS  |                                     |   |                                       |  |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Logo  | Associated words                    | Colour chosen by respondent (brackets theory-driven colour) | Words given in mission statement      | Colour associated with mission statement | Colour meaning associations correctly made |
|    | Homely<br>Dependable<br>Warm        | Blue/Brown (blue)   | Dependable<br>Trustworthy<br>Reliable | Blue                                     | Green, Red<br>Yellow, Pink                 |
|    | Protective<br>Stability<br>Reliable | Blue/Brown (blue or brown)                                  | Protective<br>Homely<br>Stable        | Brown/Blue                               | Green                                      |
|    | Fun<br>Imaginative<br>Energetic     | Yellow (yellow or pink)                                     | Fun<br>Energetic<br>Healthy           | Pink/yellow                              | Yellow                                     |
|    | Happy<br>Cheerful                   | Yellow (yellow)   | Energetic<br>Cheerful<br>Friendly     | Yellow                                   | Yellow                                     |
|   | Passionate<br>Playful<br>Exciting   | Purple (red)  | Passionate<br>Dynamic<br>Exciting     | Red                                      | Purple, Brown                              |
|  | Fun<br>Playful<br>Happy             | Red (orange)  | Fun<br>Playful<br>Happiness           | Orange                                   | None                                       |
|  | Stability<br>Contemplative          | Green/Purple (green/purple)                                 | Visionary<br>Truth<br>Justice         | Purple                                   | Pink, Red                                  |
|  | Prestigious<br>Security<br>Dynamic  | Blue (Green/Red)  | Prestigious<br>Secure<br>Grow         | Green                                    | Yellow, Orange, Brown, Blue                |

Authors show that various meanings are linked to specific colours, saturation levels and value / lightness (for examples refer to Aslam 2006; Bottomley and Doyle, 2006; Hynes 2009; Labrecque and Milne, 2012; Madden, Hewett and Roth, 2000) and while some meanings of colours may be pancultural, they are culturally defined and can vary significantly between cultures (Melewar, Hussey and Srivoravilai, 2005). This shows that designers should be cautious when choosing colours and must consider local market specifics. Logo colour choices should also take into consideration the nature of the product or service, as research shows that “colours that are connotatively congruent with the product will be rated as more appropriate” (Bottomley and Doyle, 2006, p.74).

An example of the different meanings that colours can have can be seen in a study by Grohmann, et al. (2013). The study found that, while colour did not affect competence or sincerity, it did affect other perceptions. For example, green fonts increased perceptions of ruggedness, but decreased perceptions of sophistication. This could be because green is often associated with the outdoors and this association lent itself to the overall brand perception. In contrast, despite the colour red being commonly associated with excitement, red fonts didn't increase excitement perceptions compared to blue or green fonts (Grohmann et al., 2013).

Most research linking colour to logo effectiveness has an important limitation worth considering – colours are usually studied independently, while logos commonly use various colour combinations. This means that possible synergies of using colour combinations are rarely tested in academic literature (for exception look at Madden et al., 2000).

### ***2.83 Typeface***

Typeface characteristics have been studied extensively in marketing literature (Childers and Jass, 2002; Doyle and Bottomley, 2004; Doyle and Bottomley, 2006; Hagedt, 2011; Henderson et al., 2004; Grohmann, Giese, Parkman, 2013). Typeface has a proven impact not only on readability and memorability, but also on brand identity, attitude and personality perceptions (Grohmann et al., 2013). Just as a spokesperson projects an image of an organisation, a typeface has the potential to influence the impressions created by corporate communications and marketing efforts, thus

using the same typeface can ensure consistency in the corporate identity strategy (Henderson, Giese, Cote, 2004).

Typography deals with the design of the typeface. Typeface factors that affect the appearance of the actual letterforms include: “style, size, x-height, weight, slant, stress, colour, and, in the case of electronic media, movement” (McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002, p. 665).

Typeface designs create their own meanings that are processed independently of the actual word written in the typeface (Doyle and Bottomley, 2004). The effect of the meaning that people assign to a font is similar to the effect of the meaning that they assign to the product’s name itself (Doyle and Bottomley, 2006). As such, it functions as ‘the voice’ in logo (Childers and Jass, 2002).

Fonts are classified by graphic artists and typographers according to their typographical features and their overall appearances. There are five major design families recognised by typographers and fonts fall into one of these. These design families are *Serif*, *Sans-serif*, *Modern*, *Monospace*, *Script/Funny*. Typeface designs or font convey mood, attitude and tone plus they take on distinct personas based on each font’s unique features.

Shaikah et al. (2006) conducted a survey in which they asked participants to rate 20 font samples using 15 personality adjectives and found that personality traits are attributed to fonts based on their design family.

**Table 2. Five font factors. Fonts are listed in order of factor loadings.**

| <i>All Purpose</i> | <i>Traditional</i> | <i>Happy Creative</i>   | <i>Assertive Bold</i> | <i>Plain</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Sans Serif         | Serif              | Script/Funny            | Modern Display        | Monospaced   |
| Calibri            | Constantia         | <i>Gigi</i>             | <b>Impact</b>         | Courier New  |
| Century Gothic     | Georgia            | Kristen                 | <b>Rockwell Xbold</b> | Consolas     |
| Arial              | Times New Roman    | <i>Rage Italic</i>      | Agency FB             |              |
| Verdana            | Cambria            | <i>Monotype Corsiva</i> |                       |              |
| Corbel             |                    | Comic Sans              |                       |              |
| Candara            |                    |                         |                       |              |

Shaikh, Chaparro and Fox, 2006, p. 4

The Shaikh et al. (2006) study found that serif fonts were thought of as stable, practical, mature and formal. Fonts in the sans-serif family were not particularly associated with any personality traits. Additionally, fonts in the modern design family were thought of as masculine, assertive, rude, sad and coarse. On the other hand, fonts in the mono-spaced design were thought of as dull, plain, unimaginative and conforming. Those fonts in the script/funny design were seen as youthful, happy, creative, rebellious, feminine, casual and cuddly.

Based on this, the authors believe that designers should take care to use a typeface that is better suited to the personality that they want to project with their logo. Typeface used in logos can thus help project a desired persona for a brand.

Impressions based on typeface have an important effect on logo perception, especially with lesser-known or new brands (Grohmann et al., 2013); typeface choices should be deliberate and well thought out. Though brand names can be presented with semantic information, they also frequently appear in isolation. In those cases, typeface may be the only clue a brand can give as to the desired image they want to project. Memorability of a logo was also found to be increased by

the use of typeface. Ensuring consistency among typeface semantic cues, advertisement visual cues and advertisement copy claims increased memorability.

Grohmann et al. (2013) conducted a study on the extent in which type font characteristics affect perceptions of brand personality. They asked participants to evaluate a brand name typed in a certain font and rate the font according to five brand personality traits: sincerity, excitement, ruggedness, sophistication and competence. The authors found that when a brand name is typed in a font that is considered high in harmony, natural and flourish, the brand is considered exciting, sincere, sophisticated, rugged and competent. Increasing the type font weight enhances ruggedness and competence; decreasing the weight signals sincerity, excitement and sophistication. As type font design characteristics of naturalness, flourish and harmony, are the most important drivers of differentiated brand personality, it is important to use type fonts with these characteristics to instill personality in a brand. Additional type font characteristics, such as weight and elaborateness, can then be used to further differentiate the brand in a competitive context, in terms of ruggedness or competence. In other works, main typeface characteristics are usually defined based on the work of Henderson et al. (2004) and include harmony, naturalness, elaborateness, weight and flourish. Harmony relates to font symmetry and balance; naturalness is usually linked with organic designs; elaborateness with complexity and depth; weight is a measure of how compressed and heavy the font is; while flourish is linked with serif fonts.

Typeface evokes four main types of impressions: pleasing, engaging, reassuring and prominent. Pleasing impressions are commonly associated with natural, harmonious and flourish type fonts;

engagement increases with elaborate and natural type fonts; reassuring impressions are linked with harmonious fonts; while prominence increases with font weight (Henderson et al., 2004).

The different typefaces and the meanings they convey are especially important for logos that heavily feature the brand name. Though brand names are often presented with other information – such as an icon or symbol – there are times when they can appear in isolation. In that case, type fonts may provide the only clue that a viewer has as to the brand's identity and personality (Grohmann et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, Childers and Jess (2002), identified the four elements of design for typefaces including: line, weight, orientation, and size. Line is the basic element that gives form to a letter and determines the style of the type. Weight is the volume of white space its letters replace with ink within a contained area. Weight can vary from “light” to “medium” to “ultra-bold.” Orientation refers to the vertical position of the type style. Size is determined by the sizes of the three components of any letter: the x-height, the ascenders and the descenders. Combining different values of the properties of line, weight, orientation, and size creates distinct styles of type.

Research has suggested that visual features of words influence verbal processing at an earlier stage than the actual semantic processing of the written message (Childers and Jass, 2002). The “appropriateness” of a typeface, how effectively it conveys its message, is determined in part by the degree to which it shares features with the application context (e.g., “sturdy” and “heavy” typefaces as appropriate for “sturdy”, “heavy” professions such as construction work; Childers and

Jass, 2002). A good typeface is one that “dresses up” or costumes words appropriately. This costume should send the appropriate message independently of the words that they clothe.

The authors demonstrate that typeface semantic associations could influence consumer perceptions of brands. For example, if copy was presented for a car ad in a typeface that was perceived as “practical”, then the car was seen as significantly less luxurious than the same ad with copy presented in typeface that was perceived as “luxurious”. While the content remained the same, viewers assembled the information presented to them differently, according to the physical appearance of the type.

According to McCarthy and Mothersbaugh (2002), typefaces can affect consumers via semantic associations. Semantic associations are the connotations that consumers can derive about a text or brand that go beyond the text’s actual semantic content. An example would be the association of ornate fonts with elegance and inferring that a brand using these fonts is elegant or stylish. That is an impression that a customer can get from the visual of the typeface itself without necessarily being explicitly stated by the text.

Semantic associations may be activated via one of three paths to meaning, or some combination of these three paths, including (a) through consistent use in a particular situation, (B) through a direct relation with the perceptual qualities generated by the visual patterning of the stimulus, and/or (c) via association with abstract connotative dimensions (Childers and Jass, 2002, p. 104). If a brand can convey certain impressions through the use of a typeface, a typeface that is used consistently to represent a brand name that can also acquire certain semantic associations centred

on the meaning of the brand. Using the right typeface can contribute unobtrusively over a long period of time to the image and sales of the brand. Doyle and Bottomley (2006) suggest that typefaces are considered appropriate for a certain brand when there is congruity between the meaning conveyed by the product and the meaning conveyed by the font.

An example of how typefaces convey a meaning beyond what the text says would be a study on incomplete typefaces completed by Hagedt (2011); the authors studies the impact of incomplete typeface logos on consumer perceptions. Incomplete typeface logos are logos in which parts of the characters in the organisation name are missing or blanked out. The study found that an incomplete typeface logo is capable of “speaking” for itself and in certain situations could help a brand convey a positive message. The missing spaces lend an air of ambiguity to an incomplete typeface logo that could make it look interesting and creative. However, incompleteness will also convey a lack of clarity, which leads to a diminished perception of a brand’s trustworthiness. The study suggests that, there is a regulatory focus that moderates the influence of incomplete typeface logos (Hagedt, 2011). Brands for which a reputation for trustworthiness is important, should avoid an incomplete typeface logo while brands that want to position themselves as innovative might do well with an incomplete typeface logo.

Typefaces help signify whether or not a brand is more masculine or feminine. Brand logos using bold or angular type fonts were found to be perceived as more masculine, while brand logos with slender, round type fonts were perceived as more feminine (Leiven et al., 2015). Grohmann, et al. (2013) cited a Pan and Schmitt (1996) study that showed congruity between type fonts used in a brand name and product category associations in terms of masculinity and femininity. Brands in

masculine product categories elicited more favorable attitudes and higher purchase intentions when they appeared in masculine font. The same was found with brands in feminine product categories, with more favorable responses when paired with feminine fonts.

In contrast, Doyle and Bottomley (2004) found that there was no interaction of gender with font. In particular, women did not prefer feminine fonts. The equality between the sexes “should make life easier for the organisation that would use a font to project its brand(s) in mixed-gender markets” (Doyle and Bottomley, 2004, p. 879).

Brand personality perceptions were found to be influenced independently by typeface and colour. Either of these can be used to create desired brand personality perceptions without too much concern about interactions that could undermine the desired personality. However, the impact of typeface was found to be stronger than colour (Grohmann et al., 2013).

### ***2.84 Icon or symbol***

In some cases, an icon is used synonymously for logo, but while a logo may have an icon, an icon is different from a logo. A logo is a graphic element (symbol, emblem, icon, sign), that has a logotype (a distinctively set and arranged script) and makes up a brand mark. Logos can have an icon (such as the Window’s symbol to represent the Windows brand) or they can have a logotype and no icon (the Coca Cola logo with its distinctive cursive). An icon can appear without a corresponding logotype to convey brand identification and meaning (Kilic et al., 2010). The table below shows some examples of icons and logos used by brands.

**Table 1:** Illustrations of icons and logos

| <i>Brand name only</i> | <i>Icon only</i>  | <i>Full logo</i>   |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Mercury                |    |    |
| Lexus                  |    |    |
| Windows                |    |    |
| Honda                  |    |    |
| Chevrolet              |   |   |
| Nippon Life            |  |  |
| McDonald's             |  |  |
| Mitsubishi             |  |  |
| Prudential             |  |  |
| Yamaha                 |  |  |

Most logos come in two types: there are the corporate names or trademarks that are written in a distinct form or entirely abstract logos that are unrelated to the corporate name and activity. Examples of the first type include Coca-Cola, Dunhill, Mars and Kit-Kat. None of these brands use a logo that is separate from the brand name. Examples of abstract logos are the Mercedes star, Nike's swoosh, Adidas' three stripes, and the spectrum coloured partially-eaten apple of Apple Computers. Logos are visual devices divorced from the corporate name, but with a close and obvious association with the brand name or with the activities of the business (Hem and Iversen, 2004).

Park et. al. (2013) identifies three types of brand logo based on whether or not the logo uses a symbol. Logos may show the brand name alone (e.g., Intel, Ford, Samsung, IBM) or in combination with a unique visual symbol (e.g., McDonald's golden arches, Mercedes Ben's three-pointed star). In the latter case, it is the symbol that serves as the actual brand logos and the brand names merely complement the symbol. Following this, brand names might be dropped altogether, and a visual symbol can serve as the logo alone (e.g., Apple, Target).

More firms are presenting logos with little or no copy, making the visual element of a logo even more important. The logo's symbol then becomes a visual signature for the brand and is responsible for conveying the brand's personality (Cian et al., 2014). A well-designed logo should thus include a symbol or an icon that will be able to communicate to some extent what the organisation stands for based solely on what association the symbol or icon evokes (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Logos then come to reflect the meaning of a brand and, therefore, serve as summary information about a brand's marketing efforts (Park et. al., 2013).

Visual shapes or symbols have their own meaning and the original perception of the logo or visual shape are coloured by associations with a certain organisation (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). The properties that a symbol comes to take, due to associations with an organisation, are known as extrinsic properties. These are defined by the behaviour of an organisation in the past, and by the intensity of the communication by which they express their values to external and internal audiences (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Visual symbols personalise a brand and provide customers with a sense of connection because symbols are an effective means of communicating information. Symbols are perceived as a richer, more tangible representation of a firm over words or names and they often work better for brand differentiation. They also help brands become more salient and vivid in an individual's mind, having been found facilitating favorable attitude formation and memory retrieval (Park et. Al, 2013).

Check-Teck (2001) studied the effectiveness of e-logos, which tend to be symbol heavy, and found that the attractiveness of an e-logo is associated with the greater complexity and greater use of symbols. A creatively designed symbol is more attractive than one that is merely complex.

Henderson and Cote (2008) studied the characteristics of logos or icons by asking participants to evaluate 195 different logos. They found that an icon representative of objects that have familiar and widely held meanings were more effective for correct recognition and positive affect than abstract symbols. Additionally, icons that are balanced and symmetric in design are better liked than those that are imbalanced and asymmetric. The authors also found that moderately complex icons were better liked by consumers than more complex or very simple icons.

Cian et al. (2014) focused on the visual element of a logo's ability to engage with consumers. They found that visuals that give a sense of dynamic imagery resulted in greater consumer engagement. They defined dynamic imagery as an image the viewer perceives to have a sense of movement. They noted that Henderson and Cote (1998) defined activeness in a logo as the logo's ability to give the impression of motion or flow and listed it as a key factor in logo design that could influence recognition, affect and overall meaning.

A logo utilising dynamic visuals can be more engaging and enhance consumer attitudes unless dynamism is incongruent with a brand's image. As such, traditional brands should avoid dynamism, while more modern and progressive brands should embrace this (Cian et al., 2014)

. Research by Park et al (2013) has shown that logos which include visual symbols allow for greater self-identity and expressiveness, better communication of functional benefits and can also significantly improve the aesthetic appeal of logos. This also shows that symbols used in logos improve brand commitment and firm performance.

As noted by Kohli et al. (2002), the use of symbols or icons in logos, in conjunction with a brand name, help enhance recognition of a brand. A picture enhances the memory for accompanying words and the use of pictures in a logo can be used to stimulate the memory for a brand directly, as well as help the viewer remember the brand name. This is echoed by the research of MacInnis et al. (1999), which found that depicting a brand name pictorially, using a symbol or icon in a logo, is useful for achieving recognition memory. Visual symbols are a valuable factor to a logo's effectiveness. If the brand has a strong set of positive or negative associations and a symbol

becomes affiliated with that brand over a long period then it becomes symbolic with that brand (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001).

With non-verbal processing, all elements – text and graphics – are processed simultaneously, whereas verbal processing follows a sequence. Thus, pictorial representations are retrieved from memory much faster than non-pictorial ones, especially when there is consistency across the various elements of brand identity. Because all logos contain some degree of pictorial representation (even logotypes, a stylised presentation of a name), retrieval is faster and more efficient because all elements will be processed simultaneously and it does not have to follow a sequential pattern (Kohli et al., 2002).

Kilic et al. (2010) further found that icons representing familiar objects with widely held meanings are more likely to cause correct recognition and positive affect than abstract symbols. This was confirmed in the study conducted by Machado et al. (2012), which showed that abstract logos are less likely to convey meaning, are less recognisable and more difficult to remember than figurative logos.

Henderson and Cote (1998) also found that highly abstract logos are poorly recognised and not always well liked. They did find however, that recognition, affect and familiar meaning for an abstract logo improved it by making it more meaningful, natural, elaborate, and harmonious in design. As an example, they cited the Nike and Coca-Cola symbols which have been made more meaningful by being named (swoosh and wave); linked with the organisation (used with slogans) to improve recall; and use natural or non-geometric shapes in their design.

Kilic et al. (2010) found that symmetric, balanced and moderately complex icons tend to be more likeable. They point out the benefits of interactive icons (i.e. icons that combine items in integrated or reciprocal fashion). Similarly, Cian et al. (2014) find that dynamic imagery, showing perceived movement, increases consumer engagement and can enhance brand attitudes. Their work shows that depictions of forward movement evoke feelings of modernity, while backward movement is linked to traditionalism.

Machado et al. (2015) looked at the effect of logo design on the affective or positive response that a consumer would have towards a brand. This has focused on the graphic element of a logo design and the different types of natural designs (organic and cultural) versus abstract designs. Organic designs represent objects from the natural world, while cultural designs represent manufactured objects. Abstract designs were identified as having no connection with the real world, which are artificially constructed and non-representative. The study found that the naturalness of a logo design had a high affective response to the logo. Natural logos were clearly favored over abstract logos and, within natural logos, organic designs were favored over cultural designs. The study implies that for maximum positive affect, icons with natural designs should be incorporated into logos (Machado et al., 2015), Henderson and Cote (1998) stress the importance of logo recognition through the visual symbol or graphic design the organisation uses to identify itself and its products. Recalls are seen as a product of design and, given equal exposure, a logo with a memorable design will be recognised more easily and become associated with an organisation and facilitate recall for that organisation and often times, the products and services it provides.

**Table 1.** Definitions and examples of logos included in each category

| <b>Abstract</b>   |   | <b>Natural</b>   |   |
|---|---|--|---|
|   |   | <b>Cultural</b>  | <b>Organic</b>  |
| <p>A logo that has no connection with the real world, is artificially constructed and non-representative (i.e., squares, rectangles, triangles, horizontal or vertical stripes, circles and dots, ovals, arcs and swooshes, etc.)</p> |   | <p>A logo representing manufactured objects (i.e., buildings, furniture, transport vehicles, everyday objects) or other cultural symbols (i.e., written symbols)</p> | <p>A logo representing objects from the natural world (i.e., flowers, fruits, vegetables, animals, faces, bodies, landscapes, etc.)</p> |
| <b>Known</b>  |   |    |   |
| <b>Unknown</b>  |  |   |    |

Machado et al., 2015, p.7-8

Both abstract and figurative logos (where the object is the name) can produce an effect known as repetition blindness. Repetition blindness is a phenomenon in which two identical items presented in a rapid serial visual presentation are encoded as being only one instance of the item. A picture, symbol and a word denoting the same concept can produce repetition blindness. As both abstract and figurative logos produce repetition blindness, this indicated that logo/name association occurs

regardless of symbol form. Provided that there is exposure, organisations can be sure that a symbol can quickly come to be associated with a brand regardless of abstractness. All forms of visual representation can then be said to have the potential to create brand logos that uniquely identify an organisation's brand image (Buttle and Westoby, 2006).

### ***2.85 Space, Form, Shape and Size***

While these four elements are often mentioned as being components of logo design, there is very little reference, and in some cases no references, to the effect that these elements have individually on a logo's design. Hynes (2009) identifies shape and size as one of the various elements of design - including image, style and colour – in a corporate logo. These elements of design must be clearly linked to the organisation it represents in order for a logo to serve as a visual signature.

McCarthy and Mothersbaugh (2002) mention spacing when talking about typography. They define spacing as the distance between words, between letters within words, and between lines of text. They also mention size as a factor that affects the appearance of typeface. Spacing and size can lead to or detract from the legibility of text and affect the logo recognition.

Spacing will affect the appearance of an ad. Having unusually large or small spaces around a logo will help it stand out and lend it an unusual or complex look or feel (McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002).

There is significant research into the effect of shape on a logo design, but only in connection to how it links to other elements of logo design, such as colours and symbols. There are no studies on how shape alone will impact a logo design.

Bottomly and Doyle (2006), in their study on appropriate colours in a logo's effectiveness, cited Grimes and Doole's (1998) definition of visual equity to include shape. Visual equity is the value derived from the look and feel of the brand and helps contribute to brand recognition

. A study from Walsh et al. (2011) found that changing a logo from an angular shape to a rounded shape will change how a viewer feels about the brand and affect their commitment to it. Committed consumers tended not to like change, while uncommitted consumers are indifferent. Brand commitment positively influenced brand attitude when participants were exposed to the original angular logo. However, brand commitment negatively influenced brand attitude when the logo shape was rounded.

Salgado-Montejo et al. (2014) linked shape to the brand components of typeface and logo symbols. They found that simple line segments and shapes conveyed emotional meanings, with rounder shapes being linked with positive emotions and generally preferred over more angular shapes.

A study from Pittard et al. (2007) found that there is a universal preference to logo designs in shapes that follow the divine proportion (a ratio of 1:1.618). As the divine proportion is ubiquitous in nature, this leads to a marked preference for the use of icons that are based on forms found in

nature, rather than abstract logos. For abstract logos, there was a preference for symbols with proportions that followed the ratio of 1:1. The study observed that there is a proliferation of multinational companies whose abstract logos conform to the 1:1 ratio. Because of the ubiquitous quality of these abstract logos with the 1:1 ratio, consumers have been socialised to prefer these abstract symbols as they now think and feel that these are “natural,” compared to others that do not follow the ratio.

The universal appeal of these symbols based on their proportions allows for the possibility of a universal positive affect that has implications on brands seeking to compete globally. Brands looking to enter the international market need to create standardised logos that appeal on all local levels. The universal appeal of icons that follow the divine proportion will allow brands to use these icons to increase positive affect across all cultures. Without any need for alterations, the icon can then be used as a universal framework, a symbol that can be accepted across all cultures. Using an icon as a constant framework, a brand can then add additional design characteristics to specifically appeal to certain cultures (Pittard et al., 2007).

## **2.9 Logo Component Discussion**

Logos are frequently the first exposure consumers have with a brand or an organisation. An effective logo can be presented with little or no copy, becoming a visual signature for the brand and responsible for conveying the brand’s personality (Crihan et al., 2004). A brand’s logo is a vital part of a brand’s visual identity (Grohmann, 2008). While it plays a key role in building brand recognition, other aspects must also be considered. A thoughtfully designed logo should

communicate brand values, help differentiate and position the brand. To achieve this logo design should firstly consider the desired message the logo should convey. This message should be in line with other elements of the brand's visual identity; it should help position the brand in a desired product/service category and allow for differentiation from other brands in the category.

As Stafford et al. (2004) find in their study, a good fit between a brand's logo and brand image improves consumer perceptions of the brand, leading to more favorable evaluations of the products or services. A logo should not just convey appropriate meanings; it should suggest something about brand benefits, especially if they represent a service organisation because of the intangible nature of their offerings (Miller et al., 2007).

As pointed out by several studies (Buttle and Westoby, 2006; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Keller and Lehmann, 2006; Kilic, Miller and Vollmers, 2010; Machado, de Carvalho and Torres, 2015; Olavarrieta and Friedmann, 2007), effects of logo design have rarely been studied systematically and in detail. There is a significant gap in knowledge that should be addressed, as the design of logos often warrants significant investment and is an integral part of branding. If the logos "evoke negative evaluations, are unrecognisable and hurt the corporate image" (Henderson and Cote, 1998, p.14) then the logo does not serve its purpose.

As various studies show (Check-Teck, 2001; Grohmann, 2008; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Henderson et al., 2003; Kilic et al., 2010), when evaluating, selecting or modifying logos, consumer reactions to the logo are a crucial consideration. A logo can only be successful if consumer responses to it are in line with brand image goals, quality perceptions or other goals. As

Buttle and Westoby (2006, p.1181) aptly term it: “logos should also convey the ethos of the brand they represent”. Logos help brand builders develop brand equity through increased brand recognition and brand loyalty (Hem and Iversen, 2004).

Brand logos that are easily recognisable, yet do not convey the brand’s symbolic and functional benefits or do not provide aesthetic gratification, while failing to take full advantage of their own potential (Park et. al., 2012)

A change in the firm’s logo or visual identification system is often the most prominent feature of a wider organisational identity change (Melewar et al., 2005). In the case of a brand change due to a merger or acquisition, brand managers should keep in mind that the icon or logo may play as important a role in maintaining a customer’s trust as the organisation name. Keeping a familiar element, such as the icon, is reassuring to customers as it implies that there will be a connection to the brand’s part and shows respect for the brand’s heritage (Machado et al., 2012).

The introduction of a new logo can lead consumers to perceive a brand as more modern (Mueller, Kocher, Crettaz, 2013).

Pimentel and Heckler (2000) found that the meaning attached to a logo design is of great importance. If a logo is to be changed, it should be changed for a specific, compelling reason and not just because there are concerns that customers could be growing tired of it. If a brand is trying to change its image then that might be a compelling reason to redesign a logo, however, because of the importance of recall and affectivity, the changes should be slight, and the logo should remain

familiar. Changes will be tolerated as long as the changes are slight enough so that the new logo design falls within the stakeholders' latitude of acceptance.

Schechter (1993) also recommends holding off from drastic changes in established logo designs. A dramatic change will always denote a major change in an organisation or its branding. Therefore, when dealing with a substantial consumer franchise, a dramatic change is rarely appropriate as it could squander the trust that familiarity has built up between a brand and consumers. The study recommends a slower or "evolutionary" change that retains some of the original elements of the established logo design in the new logo design. Melewat et. al (2005) point out that before a new visual identity is established for a brand, it is important to analyse a firm's brand values and its strategy direction. The new logo needs to accurately reflect these aspects of a firm's corporate identity.

Hem and Iversen (2004) offer three characteristics of a good logo; it is recognisable, meaningful and affective. *Recognisable* builds on the rationale that images are perceived faster than words. There are two levels of logo recognition. First, consumers must remember having seen the logo earlier (recognition). Second, logos must be connected to the correct destination (recall). Recall depends largely on design, facilitating recall starts with the selection of a design that are easily recognised and creates a sense of familiarity. *Meaningful* means that it should have the same intended meaning for people and communicate a clear message. *Affective* needs to evoke positive affective reactions that can transfer from the logo to the destination.

False recognition of a logo is something that logo designers should guard against. Such false recognition occurs when people believe that they have seen the logo when they have not. Strategically, false recognition induces a sense on knowing that might affect choice among unknown competitors (Henderson and Cote, 1998).

There is a certain universality of design perception and response to logos that can help brands implement a global marketing strategy. Olavarrieta and Friedmann (2007) studied and compared the responses to logos from consumers in the US and Chile; results showed that logo design characteristics are commonly recognised in the US-setting garnered the same effects in Chile. Van der Lans et al. (2009) tested logo responses from ten countries: Argentina, Australia, China, Germany, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore and the United States; results showed that dimensions underlying design are found to be similar across the different countries. This suggests that elaborateness, naturalness and harmony are universal design dimensions and that a standardised core logo featuring these dimensions has potential cross-cultural value.

Henderson et al. (2003) also studied consumer response to logo design in different countries. Their research focused on the US and two Asian countries – China and Singapore. They found that in all three countries, elaborateness, naturalness and harmony created positive affect and quality perceptions, with clear meaning and true recognition. This also suggests that the three design dimensions are universal and that logos, especially the visual symbols used in a logo, will lend themselves to the creation of an internationally consistent image, helping organisations overcome language barriers.

The study further looked at the added effect that the design element of Feng Shui for Asian countries. Feng Shui is the art of design and placement of cities, buildings, and interior spaces used to achieve balance and harmony with nature. This explains Asian preferences for organic and nature-based features as well as curved elements and an opposition to angular features, which are associated with bad luck. This suggests that, while there are universally recognised features of a good logo, there could still be some cultural differences that logo designers and brand managers should be aware of when designing. Further research is needed to improve understanding of logo meaning according to culture (Henderson et. al, 2003).

Madden et al. (2000) studied different colour meaning associations from eight countries: Austria, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and the US. They found similarities in responses to certain colours in all the countries. As before, this suggests that there are intrinsic properties of colours that are multi-cultural or at least commonly shared across cultures. When colours were combined for logos, then cultural differences began to emerge. Because of this, simply taking the colours of a particular logo design from one market to another market should not be done without understanding how colours and such colour combinations are perceived in each location.

Despite a general consensus in academic literature about the importance of logo design, research on this subject is limited at best. Most academic articles focus on only one (or two) aspect(s) of logo design and fail to consider the possible interactions of various design elements. To develop clear guidelines for logo design, a more holistic approach is needed, where various design elements will be studied concurrently.

Further academic research in this field would help designers think strategically in terms of desired logo message and offer invaluable insights in terms of various logo design elements. However, caution is needed when generalising between industries and cultures, as different design elements can elicit different industry related or culturally conditioned meanings.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This research seeks to understand if SMEs in Ireland are satisfied with their logos. While the question is relative simple, the nature of the topic under study is that it is multifactorial, time variant, with uncertain scope and it cannot be easily answered from available data in Ireland. Therefore, the present study must be exploratory, adaptive to newly discovered findings and seeking rich information to help form a deeper understanding of a topic that is understudied. Hence, a qualitative research methodology is indicated to best understand relevant approaches in logo development by SMEs while also collecting quantitative data using a comprehensive survey with experts in the field.

### **3.2 Methods chosen**

This work applies an exploratory method using a qualitative approach and a quantitative survey to allow for quantifiable information. This was deemed appropriate given that one needs to define what the main issues are in developing logos for SMEs (Thorne et al., 2004). Interviews with subject matter experts will be conducted as an exploratory method that seeks to better define the nature of what makes a good logo. Qualitative research is the chosen direction because this is an exploratory method (Bliss & Ogborn, 1989) and the number of potential respondents is limited, making the work more conducive for a qualitative-based approach, although the number of

subjects could potentially be increased in the future. As qualitative inquiry is often a useful technique in cases where phenomenon is poorly understood and is focused on topics of attitudes or beliefs, it is deemed that qualitative methods are the most appropriate in this case (Creswell, 2003). This research is also focused on determining when attitudes diverge from stated ideas; this requires a more descriptive presentation sampled from cases, where qualitative techniques have shown particular strength (Lincoln et al., 2011), particularly in cases where research context details are important. Based on this, it was decided that in-depth interviews with managers was advisable, as they enable researchers to gain a more accurate and clearer picture of a respondent's position or behaviours, as well as enable clarity in cases where contradiction may have been evident (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Furthermore, the method allowed contextual data to be explored in greater detail through follow up questions, helping to better understand concepts that have been researched only to a limited extent.

The qualitative method used will incorporate semi-structured questions (Edwards, R., & Holland, 2013), with qualified experts, where relevant information on what qualities and characteristics one can consider in a logo of high or better or improved quality will be the focus. This allows the research to produce useful insights without having to conduct a large and expensive survey that may simply take too long for this research and add no additional intrinsic value. The intent is to get, from experts interviewed, a more detailed and qualitative perspective of how good logos are developed and achieved. This concept is deemed appropriate because it can be delivered in a timely manner and can be checked for quality using expert testimonies. Qualitative data can be validated using other experts whose testimonies can be checked against each other (Zumbo & Hubley, 2017). This provides a measure of quality assurance with the results. In this case, it was deemed

appropriate to undertake semi-structured interviews. These are seen as appropriate in allowing controlled and measurable responses that can be compared, while the open-ended approach allows flexibility of responses from participants (Galletta, 2013). As part of the quantitative data analysis, participants were given the option to leave comments if desired as well.

Since the investigation incorporates intuitive views, it is vulnerable to social desirability bias. This requires that great care be taken when collecting data to delineate between personal views versus general observations of the given industry or logo (Brunk, 2010; Mohr et al., 2001). Hence, to reduce social desirability bias, several measures have been taken: the use of face-to-face interviews rather than focus groups that help to minimise self-presentational concerns (Wooten & Reed, 2000), helping to reduce pressure on interviewees to "do and say the right thing" (Bristol & Fern, 2003). Interviews were conducted away from participants' workplace to create a comfortable setting. Participants were advised that there were no right or wrong answers to questions and reassured on the confidentiality of their personal and organisation details. It was evident from the way interviewees addressed the questions and the topics involved that they were sincere and answers reflected the true practices of the businesses and their personal views. As qualitative research focuses on relatively more in-depth exploration, a small, but diverse sample is recommended.

### **3.3 What are the main characteristics of qualitative research?**

Qualitative research has been applied by researchers because it provides self-reflective, contextual, and richly descriptive data (Tracy, 2013). Self-reflexive data helps to express the researchers'

perspective; therefore, qualitative research often assumes biases or points of view that the researcher brings into any study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Tracy, 2010). Qualitative results help to provide this perspective through the information gathered from the point of view of the researcher. They are also generally better than quantitative methods in providing more contextual data, which can be particularly important in subjects that are less understood or not as frequently researched (Fossey et al., 2012). Furthermore, qualitative results are generally more descriptive, which provide more detail and nuances of information that differentiate cases (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In other words, it is able to avoid more generalised results and provide detail that may highlight subtle, but important differences between studied cases.

The main benefit of qualitative research is it enables more detail and contextual information from respondents (Patton, 1987). This is particularly useful when dealing with relatively less understood or under-researched topics. Some important findings on why qualitative methods might be useful have indicated that they provide rich descriptions on complex data, are good at delineating unique or unexpected results, illuminate experience and interpretation of events by actors with very different backgrounds and roles, allowing those who do not typically voice their opinion to voice their opinion and conduct initial explorations to develop theories and generate hypotheses (Sofaer, 1999). Expressive information is often best detailed using qualitative methods (Gummesson, 2000). Furthermore, because of its more deeply investigative nature, qualitative research is usually limited to smaller sample sizes than quantitative research. Sometimes, even a sample size of one is used. A consequence of this is that results, while providing potentially useful and deep insight, are not generalisable to a broader population. Trends observed in qualitative research may actually be more limited to certain cases, because it often only studies a relatively small number of cases.

### **3.4 What common methods are used in qualitative research?**

Qualitative methods include participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups (Miller & Dingwall, 1997). Participant observation is conducted on natural phenomena, observing behaviours of participants, human or non-human (Spradley, 1980). Using in-depth interviews, participants are asked questions, and variations on such interviews can occur with different cases (MacDougall & Fudge, 2001). Focus groups included multiple participants, which include interviewing with in-depth responses and discussion by the researcher and group participants (Gill et al., 2008). There are variations within all these methods that sometimes combine different methods, such as focus groups that integrate in-depth interviews (e.g., see Padgett, 2008). Other methods try to improve common problems with qualitative methods by producing several rounds of research through a structured method. This helps with validation by enabling an easier way that could potentially be replicated by other studies in order to compare data from different rounds or between different participants; it also allows research to focus respondents on specific types of questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

### **3.5 What methods will help initially for the research question?**

As discussed above, structured methodology within qualitative approaches can allow for comparability in measuring responses and guiding respondents around given questions. Structured interviews, using set questions, are one-way that research could apply qualitative and structured study (Gill et al., 2008). Semi-structured methods apply a combination of open format and structured methods for interviews (Barriball & White, 1994). Other related methods include

structured communication methods that are often used in larger group settings when multiple individuals are giving responses or feedback (Jamil, 2018). Similarly, structured focus groups are used as group techniques where the group follows a similar set of methods for individuals and helps in the formation of consensus building (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). One benefit of a focused group technique is that it allows consensus building in answers, which can help to achieve common responses that are agreed upon by a set of experts. Consensus helps to achieve acceptable answers for relevant questions without having to depend on experts who may only divulge opinions or ideas that might be relatively rare in a given industry or area of study.

For this research study, a cross section of sources was used in conducting the interviewees. A small set of SMEs and two designers were used in interviews. This was considered appropriate, based on the research philosophy presented earlier, where the samples included targeting those in a LinkedIn database of SMEs who were known to the author and the SMEs who offered to participate. This included managers and executives such as CEOs (Creswell, 2013). This makes the approach a purposive *ad hoc* approach to sampling, but also uses experience and expertise by the author in making relevant choices (Hakim, 2000).

### **3.6 Why conduct interviews with seasoned entrepreneurs?**

Entrepreneurs often need logos to market their products. They try to have their products recognized and are the most likely to be in the processes of developing logos that relate to new products and services that require logos (Sprott et al., 2009). As discussed, interviews and focus groups help to provide descriptive data and contextual information needed from a group that is likely to be very

active and interested in logo design. Furthermore, combining the two allows the data to be more trustworthy, as questions can be validated against different respondents and consensus formation. Facilitating group discussions can also assist interviewers to produce insight and information about phenomena that is agreed upon by industry insiders (Shenton, 2004). This approach can produce relevant material in relation to the research goals because it focuses on consensus among experts that have insight into the research. In effect, it is a form of data quality control, since it gets experts to agree on identified variables, events, process and other phenomena. Data quality is among the most important characteristics of results that can be gained from experts (Seale, 1999).

### **3.7 Expert interviews to investigate initial research?**

The use of expert interviews is widely applied in the social sciences, where it is applied to give understanding of studied phenomena (Rowley, 2002). Expert interviews help to provide tangible examples when discussing complex ideas that also give contextual detail. They also provide ways in which to take concepts and test them with other subjects in a wider society through other methods, such as questionnaire surveys (George & Bennett, 2005). These types of interviews are perhaps most useful in helping others to be persuaded that there is value in given research, where results provide descriptive detail and real-life examples (Siggelkow, 2007). Furthermore, expert interviews are often less complicated and easier to manage for researchers, including in trying to develop theory. Whereas large empirical studies are more difficult to interpret, particularly in complex or relatively poorly understood concepts or phenomena that have been minimally studied (Hartley, 2004).

### **3.8 What outcome are expected from the methodology?**

The intention is to develop a key set of concepts that are derived through a consensus that experts agree to; this revolves around how logo development is achieved by SMEs and whether they are satisfied with the development. This methodology allows a level of quality checking in ideas and theme development to be more evident (Fink et al., 1984). Given the track record of the method in similar areas, the process could allow rigorous capture of qualitative data in understanding how logo design could be developed in a step-by-step manner. The interviews also allow exploratory conversations with experts (Conchin & Carey, 2017). The intent is to have a clearly defined understanding of how SMEs achieve their logos that can then be used to best relate those processes to wider concepts. After the results are presented, what was once a phenomenon that was less understood could be better informed. It also then allows wider studies, possibly using surveys, to see if similar observations are evident in the wider business community in relation to logos.

### **3.9 How do I know I have useful results from the method(s) chosen?**

The goal in this work is to make the quality of the data the best it can be. This includes checking data to determine if they are similar in regard to the same question or at least demonstrate a similar process. Very different results or processes could indicate possibly low-quality results. The benefit of recursion in the methodology will allow poor results from initial findings to be reassessed (Geist, 2010). Collecting data from the research methodology should uncover common threads that illustrate inefficiencies that occur when achieving logos within SMEs. If the methods are undertaken with rigor and no obvious problem commonalities are apparent, then it might be that

applied methods were unsuccessful. This could simply indicate the need to generalise questions to experts or conduct more surveys (Raskin, 1994).

### **3.10 Research Design Rationale**

### **3.11 Epistemology**

Crotty (1998) defined epistemology as a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know. The questions addressed by epistemologies as theories of knowledge, according to Stanley and Wise (1990), are who can be a knower, what can be known, what comprises and authenticates knowledge and what the relationship is or must be between knowing and being.

Epistemology can be understood either more broadly or narrowly. Epistemology, in general, deals with issues that have to do with the formation and distribution of knowledge in specific areas of inquiry, while specifically, epistemology is both a justified belief and a study of knowledge. As a justified belief, the intention is to learn how the concept of justification should be understood, what makes justified beliefs justified, and whether justification is internal or external to an individual's mind. As a study of knowledge, this seeks essential and adequate conditions of knowledge, including sources, structure, and limits.

This thesis intends to show, through my research, that the methods used are factual and that the research is rich in content for the reader. However, as Crotty (1998) says, research epistemology is still grounded in subjectivism, while it is often crucial. By considering the appropriate

epistemology, it is ensured that the study has a thorough philosophical basis for deciding what types of knowledge are achievable and how their adequacy and legitimacy are ensured (Crotty, 1998).

### **3.12 Theoretical Perspective**

Crotty (1998) stated that theoretical perspectives on research design include ways of viewing the world from a different perspective by research. The author goes on to say that the theoretical perspectives on research design also include positivism, feminism, post modernisation and interpretivism. There are numerous epistemological views, such as objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. This study will be grounded in objectivism, subjectivism and interpretivism.

Crotty (1998) describes objectivism as the epistemological view that things exist as significant entities separately from consciousness and experience that they have truth and meaning dwelling in them as objectives and that thorough research can accomplish that objective truth and meaning. It is implied that a single truth or objective meaning does exist and with effective research, where it can be discovered (Roe, 2010). Subjectivism, on the other hand, requires understanding human behaviour stems from consciousness and is derived from human perception (Crotty, 1998). Numerous truths, or knowledge, may be derived from human perceptions.

With the epistemological view being based on subjectivism, interpretivism puts forward the most applicable and suitable theoretical perspective; it is most closely related to constructivism in terms of epistemology (Gray, 2004). Interpretivism suggests the need for researchers to follow and to

recognise differences between humans in terms of their role as social actors (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2006).

In the research, data are collected and analysed to understand any patterns that may emerge, which in turn may suggest any relationships between the data found on the premise that it constructively educates the reader on findings during the research which underpins the research question and gives reason and fact to the conclusions of the research as well as provides an overall answer to the question. In summary, data collected are the foundation of the research, which help determine the answers to the research question.

### **3.13 Defining Research Methodology**

Method is defined as a procedure, technique, or way of doing something in answering a research question, especially in accordance with a definite plan, while methodology is defined as a set or system of methods, principles and rules for regulating a given discipline, as in the arts or sciences. Blaxter et al. (2006) stated that the major difference between methods and methodology is that methods relate mostly to the tools of data collection or analysis, while methodology has a more philosophical denotation, and typically denote the approach or paradigm that supports the research. What is highlighted by this difference is the significance of recognizing the most suitable methodology prior to deciding the methods necessary to perform any research project.

The two major research methodologies are quantitative and qualitative research (Wisker, 2008). According to Saunders et al (2006), the selection of research methodologies is essentially

associated with and concluded by the principle of the research question and objectives. Wisker (2008) states that quantitative research is related to the assessment of variables and confirmation of hypotheses or theories on hand or examination of them concerning different variables, while qualitative research is performed when one intends to comprehend, describe, or analyse meanings, interpretations, beliefs, experiences, concepts and values.

What allows for the progress of the abundant data to be discovered in the qualitative orientated methodology in the form of beliefs, experiences, concepts and values? Through qualitative data, the meanings of social activities can be examined and put in an appropriate social context (Goodwind, 2004). In order to obtain points of view and insights of social media and the participants who participate in this field, research tools will be composed of open-ended questions for the most part.

The main paradigms this study uses are positivism and critical theory, through the use of experimental testing and critical theory (Myers, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2011). Social inquiry should combine rather than separate research perspectives to advance relevant knowledge creation. The ontology taken is critical realism. Information can only be captured probabilistically and imperfectly, where science is imperfect, but some knowledge can be gained during an on-going process. Knowledge is iterative and imperfect, but empirical research can achieve a greater knowledge than what otherwise would have been possible. The research paradigm applies positivism, but acknowledges both emic and etic views, in the context of its epistemology. The paradigm supports the use of both interpretivism and positivism, rejecting methodological individualism (Myers, 2013). The general term used for methodology that is subjective is post-

positivism, although critical realism incorporates aspects of positivism and post-positivism together to achieve results that demonstrate greater knowledge. The intent here is to take the strengths of positivist and non-positivist methods and apply them together (Creswell, 2003). Deeper insight might be gained from case-based results, but more general and potentially broadly applicable results could also be obtained.

In order to implement a methodology that incorporates critical realism, the method has to sufficiently provide useful data, but also be reasonably accomplished in the timespan of this research. This means that data needs to be gathered from experts, as the literature review has indicated academic literature is lacking in distinguishing a way to understand the achievement of a better corporate logo. On the other hand, expert practitioners are more likely to have experience with logo design, understand applied design methods and are familiar with techniques used by the industry. By utilising expert knowledge, one can begin to demonstrate where gaps in logo design are, specifically the design process. One potential problem is that interviewing experts may actually lead to many different results as to what designers apply.

### **3.14 Research Philosophy**

Two main research philosophies guide this research. The first is critical realism. The paradigm of critical realism holds that information can only be captured probabilistically and imperfectly (Cruickshank, 2003). The paradigm rejects methodological individualism (Myers, 2013). The term is subjective post-positivism, when it incorporates aspects of positivism and post-positivism together. It uses strengths from different types of epistemological and philosophical approaches,

so that it is flexible to different views that allow knowledge to be gained without being wedded to traditional paradigms (Fletcher, 2017). In other words, it is not wedded to one approach, but uses many to gain or advance knowledge about a particular topic. The philosophy permits using this option that takes the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods and applies both as needed to advance new knowledge (Creswell, 2003). Insight might be gained that allows broad or general results for wider phenomena as well as addressing specific cases. Research is often imperfect, as it is assumed that a given approach may not fully obtain knowledge about a topic, but by producing new knowledge one can potentially obtain knowledge that improves insight into given phenomena. Pluralistic approaches have been called for as a way to break strict paradigm views that positivists and post-positivists often apply in their empirical and critical assessment (Mingers 2003; Mingers 2004). This represents a challenge but it opens opportunities for research methods to be adaptable and attempt to utilise different ways in achieving a consensus-based approach, such as that utilised here.

For this work, while a qualitative understanding of a potentially unique case is applied in the methods chosen, the research also applies deductive reasoning, that is starting from a premise about logo design to answering the research goals. This is a characteristic of the critical realism philosophy, where empirical findings can be deduced, even if they are imperfect (Al-Amoudi & Willmott, 2011). Results could be then utilised to develop testable hypotheses for wider or larger-scale research. It is deemed that using advantages of different methods is the best approach in critical realism. In this case, qualitative data can be used to better contextualise information so that potentially important knowledge, such as context to the data, is not lost, which has been the case with pure quantitative methods (Danermark et al. 2001). This is particularly the case when faced

with phenomena often poorly understood, such as logo design and theory that affects how firms decide to undertake or choose design and designers.

The second philosophy that guides this research is constructivism. Although constructivism is sometimes seen as different to critical realism, the two are complimentary and utilised together. For constructivism, learning is seen as an active process that is also affected by subjective views of the researcher (Knorr-Cetina, 2014). Information is interactive, and both the phenomenon studied and the researcher could actively learn and engage with each other. Knowledge is gained as a researcher engages in his/her activities, but that knowledge could be reflective of the researcher's views. In other words, similar to critical realism, biases are potentially understood to be part of the process, even while the researcher works to minimize it. Epistemological realism is primarily a key tenet of constructivism, which complements critical realism, seeing that knowledge gained is largely imperfect and subject to the researchers' limitations (Fiaz, 2014). Within constructivism, observation is crucial. That observation is also continually critiqued, including by other researchers who may see problems or flaws with given results, and evaluated for informative content (Neimeyer, 2003). Where knowledge is imperfectly gained, new rounds of research using different and often mixed approaches, is seen as a way to best create knowledge.

Within both these philosophies, different methods could be applied. On the one hand, qualitative methods provide an idea of how decisions are made and what factors might be relevant. These can then be refined into testable information and formally investigated. On the other hand, a quantitative survey is appropriate to find larger trends and meaning for observed phenomena, where qualitative methods are often restricted by the fact that only relatively few people could be

studied in high detail (Morgan, 2007). Qualitative methods offer in-depth details of underlying processes, while helping frame hypotheses that can then test functional relationships. On the other more empirical assessments, such as through survey, related to determining the relevance of processes and detail if there are wider patterns or observable trends in understood phenomenon.

Due to time limitations, the focus here will be on better understanding the phenomenon of logo design and its process within a firm using qualitative approaches. This is particularly needed as a first step in cases where very little is known about a topic and falls within the philosophies of critical realism and constructivism. For this study, it is felt that the researcher's role is to elicit decisions undertaken by the interviewees in order to determine reasons, variables or factors affecting decisions relevant to the development of logos. These aspects of the research are in line with the ontological and epistemological stance of critical realism and constructivism that acknowledge that the researcher cannot be completely objective; however, to gain insight, a researcher should determine how key decisions-makers decide on the hiring of logo designers. Case-based insight is critical for understanding decision making strategy and reasons for decisions undertaken, particularly for areas where relatively little data exists (Gasser, 2014). Furthermore, for a researcher subscribing to critical realism, empirical understanding cannot be perfectly measured or replicated. The researcher here presents the idea that logo design represents constant evolution, which is impacted by an individual's ideas and the external environment, including social influences affecting that person (Welch et al., 2011). Evaluators and subjects should be aware of each other's epistemological stances and backgrounds, as these can be presented as background to the research, while acknowledging that views given by either could influence perceptions (Smith et al., 1994). Nevertheless, having multiple subjects can expose the researchers

to different ideas that allow a blending and wider understanding of how subjects may view the phenomenon of logo design. Biases are, on the one hand, expected as they are introduced by the researcher and subjects, but on the other they could be minimised through forms of consensus building or cross-evaluation between subjects and evaluator.

Taking these two philosophies, one can see that the two demonstrate that knowledge is imperfect. Any singular method will not always be effective in cases as evaluators need to be aware of how built-in assumptions could affect outcomes. What this implies is that a mixed-methods approach could be relevant to producing useful outcomes, but as a first step this research chooses a qualitative approach that focuses on determining contextual information about logo design. This allows one to leverage qualitative understanding that could then build hypotheses that could be tested later using formal quantitative methods (Holton & Lowe, 2007). Qualitatively, consensus building among subjects is the key in any approach, where interviewees are asked to provide their ideas, but any one idea does not dominate unless it overlaps with others' perceptions. Both constructivism and critical realism are applied together to formulate questions and focus on trying to develop a wider consensus among respondents in relation to the logo design process. The thesis does not believe it can gain absolute knowledge in this area, but consensus among experts. An interactive approach is used that allows subjects and the researcher to interact and share knowledge, helps as a first step in developing a strategy to create new data and fits well with how both conceptual philosophies used here have shaped wider research.

## **4. Findings & Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This research paper was aimed at finding whether SMEs in Ireland are satisfied with their logos. And in answering this question, the study focused on both qualitative (expert interviews) and quantitative (semi-structured questionnaires) research methodologies. In conducting interviews with Irish SMEs, the respondents were either CEOs or others that had undergone the logo development process in the last 24 months. Expert logo designers were interviewed with a view of understanding whether a discrepancy exists between the owners of the SMEs and the designers on the issue of logo development and the value it portrays to the brand, customers and competition. The section below captures the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative data.

### **4.2 Expert Interviews Findings**

As stated in the methods, an *ad hoc* sampling method led to the selection of interviewees. The following results will detail the findings from those interviews.

### **4.3 Interviews Conducted with Irish SMEs**

Interviews were conducted on a selection of Irish SMEs who have recently undergone logo development in the last 24 months. The interviews asked questions specifically around the upgrade

of their recent logo and whether the outcome was considered to have improved their business performance and was it received and valued better in the eyes of their current and new customers. The information gathered was to ascertain whether their logos were considered more effective than what they previously were and how they evaluated whether a logo had fulfilled their goals more than other logos. The interviews were conducted with the CEO of the organisation or person who had undertaken the redevelopment work of the logo. The following people and companies were interviewed. 1) Dan Gallagher of Gallagher Kitchens 2) Tony McEnroe of Sirius XT and 3) Philip Harvey of Harvey Auctioneers. (Profiles attached in Appendix.) Additionally, interviews with expert logo designers Keith Mc Guinness from Red & Grey design who developed the logo for the “Wild Atlantic Way” and Con Kennedy for the long-established EPA Logo for Ireland. These interviews will help gather further insights into what constitutes a more effective logo and demonstrate if logos might achieve improved business performance, greater brand presence, improved customer loyalty and/or possibly gain a greater share of a given market.

#### **4.4 Implementation of Methods**

Brief interviews were conducted with the owners of small and medium sized enterprises and logo designers based in Ireland. The interviewees were identified through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling strategies and the sample size was determined using the principle of data saturation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The interviews lasted between 7 and 15 minutes each, with the express agreement of the interviewees, the interviews were audio recorded. The audio recordings were transcribed with the use of the automated transcription service Happy Scribe, and by hand into individual Microsoft Word documents (Happy Scribe, 2019). The data were organised

according to the date of the interview and the interviewee and a thematic coding procedure was used to analyse information (Silverman 2011). Thematic data analysis involves three stages of data analysis. In the first phase, all of the transcripts are read completely in order to identify any emerging themes which are highlighted or coded. In the next phase, the statements made by interviewees are grouped together according to theme. Finally, the selection and identification of relevant themes and sub-themes (Smith & Firth, 2011) are made using academic software resources. Interview questions are listed in the Appendix attached at the end of this thesis.

#### **4.5 Results: Expert Interviews Analysis**

The below results report on an empirical study into the process of logo development for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ireland. Based on the above literature, the desire to interview people could be qualified as experts sought. How effective design and application of logos to the desired business goals and strategy were key criteria in determining what makes an effective logo. While expertise and design judgement might be subjective, the above literature demonstrates some are more qualified than others to provide relevant opinions and ideas in an area that has general subjectivity. This understanding is used to guide the interviews and results presented.

The thematically categorised data is analysed after the results are presented in order to identify patterns or deviations from overall patterns. Each theme is then described and substantiated with the use of verbatim statements from the interviewees.

## 4.6 Importance of Logos

There was a consensus among the interviewees that development of a better logo is a crucial activity for Irish SMEs, especially those that plan to scale up, or those that plan to become global firms. There was a good understanding of how logos represent, or are part of the wider brand message, and how they serve to communicate professionalism to stakeholders. A statement from an SME owner illustrates this:

*“And it was fine for a while, but it wasn’t very professional. So, to just bring us into the next level of where we are now, that has helped us. So, I feel it’s very important”*

- Dan Gallagher, SME owner

This was echoed by a logo designer:

*“It’s incredibly important for any business, small, medium or large to have some kind of visual identity and some kind of visual presence at a basic term that differentiates the product or service from somebody else”*

- Con Kennedy, Logo designer

However, one of the logo designers did not believe that SME owners were fully aware of the benefits of an improved or more effective logo. The interviewee also made the point that this was specific to Ireland, due to the lack of education in the arts at primary school level in the country:

*“...for every pound that’s spent on buying design, the client will recoup something like 5 pounds back in increased sales. So, design is a business tool. It’s just not as appreciated here as it is elsewhere”*

- Con Kennedy, Logo designer

#### **4.7 Market Research**

Interviewees were asked about the process of market research that went into the development of a logo. Generally speaking, market research activities were directed into two activities. The first was looking at competitors to better understand the competitive landscape and to situate the organisation within a given market. The second was market research into the professional design agencies themselves, that is to support the procurement process. A comment from one of the interviewees sums up the market research process in which SMEs engaged:

*“Well, we initially looked at three different companies to work with us in terms of developing our logo and a brand, and then we chose a company, we’ve done some workshops, and looked at our competitors to basically see where we would fit in to or where we feel we fit into that sector”*

- Dan Gallagher, SME owner

#### **4.8 The Logo Development Process**

Both designers and representatives of SMEs were asked whether there was a process involved in the development of logos. There were some differences in the logo development process depending on the level of involvement of SME managers. Some managers and teams were heavily involved in the process. For example:

*“We [held]... I think maybe three or four workshops covering all aspects of competitors, what we do, colours, what the existing logo is, what colours we want in our brand, what type of logo we want. We came up with five different logos and then we narrowed it down to one that we think represented our company the best”*

- Dan Gallagher, SME owner

Others, however, preferred to use the process that was recommended or adhered to by the professionals that they employed. In this sense, the role of the SME is merely to provide the brief for the professional designers to follow. Thereafter, professionals are left to come up with ideas that are amenable to the client. For example, one respondent commented:

*“...We had the designers go ahead and design logos with both, to see which we felt was more effective, and once we had taken a decision to run with the branding Harvey, things were fine with different versions, and so on, so forth”*

- Philip Harvey, SME owner

Another SME owner pointed out that professional design agencies have skills which the owners do not. For this reason, they felt it necessary to employ an expert to develop the new logo:

*“And then we really tried to go with a white sheet approach to the design agency and to get their views. Because we didn't know what... we were conscious that we were all very technical founders and that we might end up with something very technical and we wanted something that somebody non-technical might associate with. So, we went to experts and we wanted to bring an expert into the, into the process”*

- Tony McEnroe SiriusXT, SME owner

#### **4.9 Beneficial Logos**

A key aim of the interviews was to understand, from the perspective of designers and owners, what the meaning was of the term ‘improved’ logo or a logo that satisfies their goals. When asked why they had decided to redevelop their logos, SME representatives generally said that this was driven by a desire to update the feel of the brand:

*“Broadly speaking...a redesigned version of our historic logo which is perceived to be dated. And, we wanted to modernize the look and feel of the business too”*

- Philip Harvey, SME owner

In effect, this means a more modern logo, which represents the first theme identified. However, when it came to discuss the constituent elements or characteristics of a better logo, there were some differences of opinion. One viewpoint associated better logos with the connection to the brand message:

*“A better logo is one on which you can build a brand story. I mean you can build an image of your company on that logo”*

- Tony McEnroe SiriusXT, SME owner

*“I suppose there are a couple of things you can think about. Which is: does the logo communicate the brand essence? And, does the logo reflect the product or service? Does the logo reflect also what's going on with the zeitgeist? What's happening with trends at the moment?”*

- Con Kennedy, logo designer

Another characteristic that was mentioned repeatedly was simplicity. This represents a second theme. Interviewees agreed that a simple logo is better than a complex logo and a professional design agency can achieve this:

*“I think if we had done it on our own, we'd probably have ended up with something that looked a lot more complex and was confusing to our target customers. One of the benefits of a professional design agency brings is that it brings simplicity into design, but still you know it still brings...they still have the depth of the that you need in a brand. But, it's nice and simple to look at”*

- Tony McEnroe SiriusXT, SME owner

*“Usually, it’s something that’s simple, something that captures the essence of a brand or an organisation. We kind of look at a logo as a signature, a signature, one that represents part of your brand and represents your brand personality”*

- Keith McGuinness, Logo designer

A further viewpoint stated, was that a better logo is an improvement on what has gone before:

*"Oh yeah because our previous logo compared to our now logo is just chalk and cheese because one is way better than the other. It's modern, it's trustworthy, it's clean and sharp, it's deep colours, it looks professional and that"*

- Dan Gallagher, SME Owner

Clearly then, there is heterogeneity when it comes to understanding of the concept of a better logo. However, generally speaking, participants believed that having a better or beneficial logo is key to brand equity and presence; it has the potential to drive success in the long-term.

#### **4.10 Measuring Logo Success**

SME owners and logo designers alike, seem to use both objective and subjective criteria when measuring the success of a logo. Subjective criteria relate to the perception of a logo by key personnel within the organisation as well as those others who interact with the firm. For example, one respondent commented:

*“We are the view ourselves that it's cleaner, it's easier to interpret and we wouldn't have gone the route of spending the money involved in a branding change if we didn't feel that it would benefit us as a business in the medium- to long-term”*

- Philip Harvey, SME owner

This viewpoint was echoed by other respondents:

*“I think it certainly has made a professional impression on our corporate customers”*

- Tony Sirius, SME owner

The objective criteria used to measure success tend to be quantitative measures of the performance of the business, such as revenues and level of new business:

*“Number one, our turnover. Number two, our workload” (in relation to measuring logo benefit on a business' financial performance)*

- Dan Gallagher, SME owner

#### **4.11 Data coding from Interviews**

Thematic coding was used as the dataset does not lend itself to narrower coding because it is too small of a dataset. For thematic coding, one needs to identify patterns across interviews, where coding occurs at the lowest possible level to accomplish this. For example, there is no code for 'colour of logo' because only one interviewee mentions this. If we narrowed the codes in that way,

there would be no clear patterns. This is also why there are few verbatim statements from Red and Grey, a design agency. The insights that the interviewee provides are good, but often, there are no consistent patterns across the interviews. From the results, the two themes that emerge are simplicity and modernism as being key aspects of logo design. These two themes seemed to be emphasised more to make a logo improved from what it was before. Additionally, one way to identify if a logo has emerged to become successful is if it can be linked to increased sales, revenues or reputation for an organisation. A potential subjective theme identified is that logos should look professional. While the dataset is narrow, the quality shows clear indications that there is a need for well-developed or better logos for SMEs and that using professional resources helps greatly in the development of a new logo. It is evident that there is no real designated development process used to create the brief for a designer and SME stakeholders that can aid the production of the project.

#### **4.12 Limitations to Dataset**

It is evident from the results that there are multiple aspects one needs to consider in looking for a sufficient logo design. A more case-based focus could allow deeper analysis into given topics, explore why there are multiple factors to consider, identifying along the way what those factors are and the context that shapes them (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). In the next steps, a case-based approach, building from the questions presented here, but having more follow-up questions and more time devoted to a candidate will be applied (Montani et al., 2010). This is a method that allows a fuller example to be built and will allow the researcher to explore the gaps identified and the multiple facets that are evident in logo design and application. For businesses, case based

studies are one alternative when one needs greater clarity and depth in issues that result in ambiguity (Otley & Berry, 1994).

#### **4.13 Survey Questionnaire Findings**

One thousand connections of the author's database in LinkedIn, consisting of, marketing managers and CEO's of SMEs in Ireland, were provided an online survey to gather data on logos and logo design. Companies have chosen to hire the author for a variety of reasons, which are addressed within the survey. While qualitative research provides valuable data for use in the design of a product, quantitative studies offer data that can be expressed in numbers, which is considered more concrete in many cases (Madrigal and McClain, 2005).

For the purposes of this study, a comprehensive online survey of 10 core questions and a series of sub-questions were sent to the database. The questions are addressed below individually as well as the individual statistics that resulted from those answers provided. This method allows respondents to answer authentically without concern of any type of reprisal. Though previous clients were asked to participate, there was neither any compensation nor reprisal for participation in any way. Through the questions, the intent is to discover if business managers who commission new logos are satisfied with those new logos. Additionally, the intent is to determine what business managers think about the effect of a new logo on the various aspects of business performance and what conditions give rise to a "successful" and alternatively "less successful" logo according to research.

To answer such questions, we must first define the business parameters, which include revenue increase, profitability increase, footfall increase, eyeballs increase, and clearer demographic identity. Each of these will be defined in relation to SMEs and/or new logo and website creation.

The parameters used to describe and define success in a business are all related to increase. These include revenue, profitability, footfall, and eyeballs. This relates to getting more people to view, enter, and make a purchase from a site or brick and mortar store. It is a basic form of knowledge to understand that a strong logo helps attract more people to view or look up a product and the more views are given to a product then it is more likely a person will buy that product. These are all measurable aspects of logo development; increased revenue is tracked by a daily count and foot traffic can be counted or is noticeable simply by the number of people on a given day visiting a site or store. These are all important factors that can show the successfulness of a new logo or brand redesign.

#### **4.14 Survey Description**

Though the actual survey is included in the Appendix, it will be further explained in this section. The survey began with a question of why the organisation or individual decide to develop a logo or new logo. The options included that the old logo was not aesthetically pleasing, did not look professional, or did not communicate the brand essence, product, or service. There were also options of developing a new logo because it was a current market trend, no previous logo existed, or to modernise it. These are all strong and valid reasons for seeking a new logo to improve an organisation or sales levels. The next two questions focus on resources and preparing for the

change. These include the resources used to develop the original logo and preparation prior to choosing a new logo. The next question focuses on the design chosen for the new logo.

The fifth question asked participants which areas were explored in the development of the logo, which are measurable factors, such as customer needs, competitor analysis, organisation values, market trends and a need for innovation. However, a final option allows participants to “add other” reasons for those who may have another reason for logo development. This particular option could lead to further research. The remaining questions offered a scale rating that will provide quantitative evidence to the need or success of a variety of logo-related aspects on a numerical scale. All results are shared in the following section.

#### **4.15 Participants**

The participants for the survey were individuals, companies, and organisations that were known to the researcher that may have redeveloped or produced a logo within the last 24 months. One thousand participants were asked to complete the survey. Participation in the survey was optional, with 200 responses obtained. The survey was emailed to potential participants with no incentive to answer.

#### **4.16 Areas of Concern**

Though the quantitative results are promising, the qualitative analysis explores these questions further. Some of these areas of need were also addressed in the comments section of the survey

which had 40 responses. Areas of concern included some companies having not had a redesign in many years and logos are just one area of a brand redesign. Logos are seen as a component and not a specific area that can be accurately analysed as a whole for the business. One respondent also found the questions confusing in that some options were not applicable to their situation. These problems cannot be fully corrected at this time but could be taken into consideration in limiting the timeframe in which companies had redesigned their logo.

#### **4.17 Importance of Logos**

There was a consensus among the interviewees that development of an effective logo is a crucial activity for Irish SMEs, especially those that plan to scale up, or those that plan to become global firms. There was a good understanding of how logos represent, or are part of the wider brand message, and how they serve to communicate professionalism to stakeholders. These sentiments were also echoed by a logo designer who exemplified the significance of SMEs having some kind of visual identity and some kind of visual presence as highly fundamental in differentiating of products or services from their competitors. With specific reference to Ireland, results highlighted the fact that SME owners were fully aware of the benefits of a better logo but were less aware of what was needed in developing an effective logo. This was attributed to the lack of education in the arts at primary school level in the Ireland; thus, leading to the little appreciation to the process of logo development.

#### **4.18 Market research question**

On this aspect, it was evident that efforts channelled towards the activity of market research is mainly focused for the purposes of competition. Most of the SMEs in Ireland undertook an in-depth competitor landscape analysis to understand their place in the industry. Thereafter, an organisation engages services of expert designers in developing their logos and brand with a view of managing or surprising competition in industry.

#### **4.19 The Logo Development Process**

The interviews conducted here were mainly geared towards ascertaining the levels of involvement of managers and teams in the entire process of logo development, which revealed that SMEs in Ireland utilised different approaches during the process. Some of the SMEs demonstrated the use of in-house workshops and seminars to deliberate on the kind of logos they require and that best exemplifies their brand identity before procuring the services of expert designers to customise their logos. Other SMEs prefer to take a 'back seat' and engage the use of professional design agencies from the onset, with the believe that they are best trained and qualified to design logos that suit the needs of the customers. For these SMEs, the research found that the role of the organisation is merely restricted to minimal briefs on things that add value to the logo.

#### **4.20 Effective Logos**

The question on what constitutes an effective logo attracted varying responses, perhaps signalling the realisation that there lacks accepted standards among the designers and SME owners on what effective logos contain. From interviews, there was a consensus that effective logos should demonstrate modernity and simplicity at a basic level. Respondents identified the importance of modernising a logo as a way of augmenting the brand identity and exemplifying the image of the organisation. Simplicity was also identified as a key characteristic in representing the essence of the brand personality and improving the image of the organisation. Most importantly, interviewees agreed that a new logo should not be entirely different but a modernised and improved version of the existing logo that improves the brand equity and presence in the market.

#### **4.21 Measuring Logo Success**

Some SMEs use a subjective criteria by evaluating the perception of the logo by key personnel within the organisation as well as those others who interact with the firm in introducing the desired changes. This, they argued, is the most effective way of professionally impressing their corporate customers and justifying not cutting costs related to branding change for long-term business gains. However, for other SMEs, the objective criteria used to measure effectiveness tended to be quantitative measures of performance, such as revenues and level of new business with the aim of increasing turnover rates.

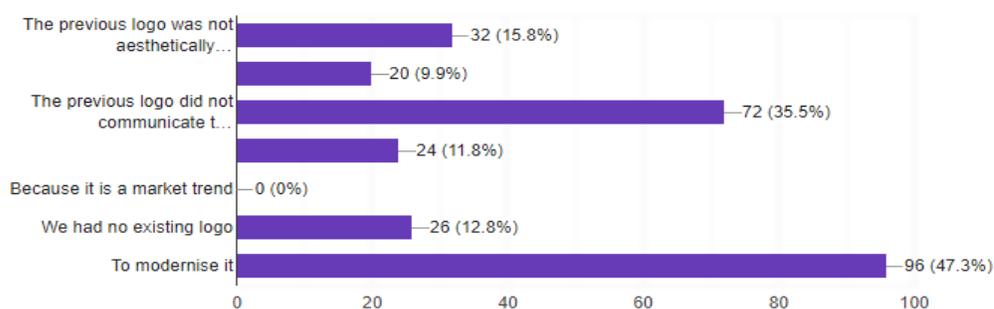
## 4.22 Results: Questionnaire Analysis

From the quantitative approach, this study utilised a comprehensive online survey of 10 core questions that were emailed to individuals, companies and organisations that were known to the researcher and that may have redeveloped or produced a logo within the last 24 months. While the survey was meant to elicit responses from one thousand participants, just over 200 responses were obtained that helped the researcher to analyse various questions.

Most interestingly, none of the participants stated that a new logo was needed due to market trends, which points to the idea that trends are not the main reason or even much of a consideration in choosing a new logo. However, a large portion of the respondents (47.3%) identified the need to modernise as the key motivation behind the development of a new logo, while 35.5% identified the lack of accurate communication of the brand by the previous logo. The remaining 20% of the respondents felt that the development of a new logo was necessary because the organisation did not have a logo or that the existing one did not improve the brand identity and essence or was simply unpleasant.

### 1) Why did you decide to develop your logo?

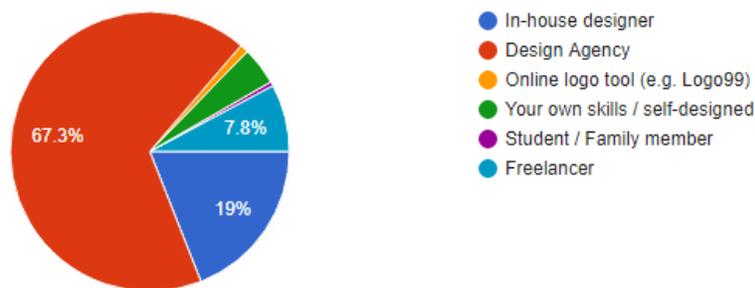
203 responses



From the responses, it is evident that most of the SMEs in Ireland (67.3%) utilise the services of design agencies as the main resource for developing logos. Some of the SMEs depend on in-house designers (19%) and freelancers (7.8%). Therefore, while the remaining percentage was divided among using self-design, a student or family member, or an online tool to create a logo, it is evident that most companies trust the competency of professional designers over trying to complete the task on their own after the previous logo becomes outdated or ineffective.

## 2) Which of the following resources did you use to develop your logo?

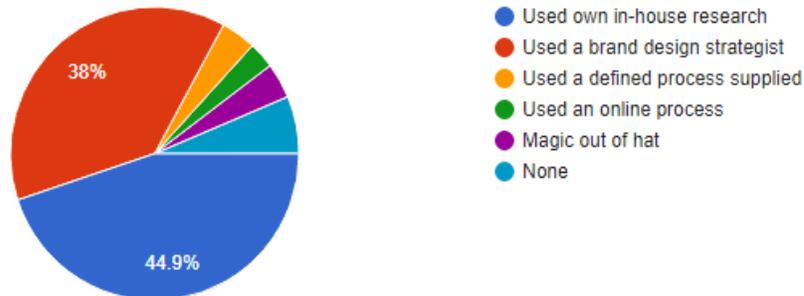
205 responses



In undertaking logo preparation, 44% of the companies utilised the knowledge and skills of an in-house researcher, while 38% utilised the services of a brand design strategist. The other categories were relatively evenly split, showing that some research prior to hiring an organisation was completed to find the best solution.

### 3) What preparation did you undertake before you engaged the design solution undertaken to generate your design brief?

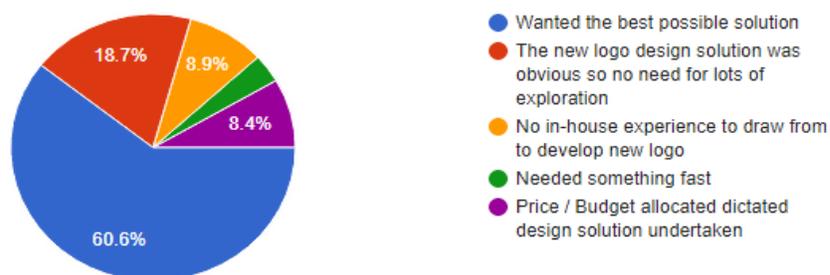
205 responses



Regarding the most incisive factor in the choice of design solution for the logo, 60.6% of the companies agreed that there is a need for a best possible solution, while 18.7% felt that the need for the new logo design vs. obvious and required in-depth explorations. Other negligible factors on the choice of a new design constituted less than 10%, including the need for fast, budget allocations for logo design.

### 4) What was the most incisive factor in your choice of design solution taken?

203 responses

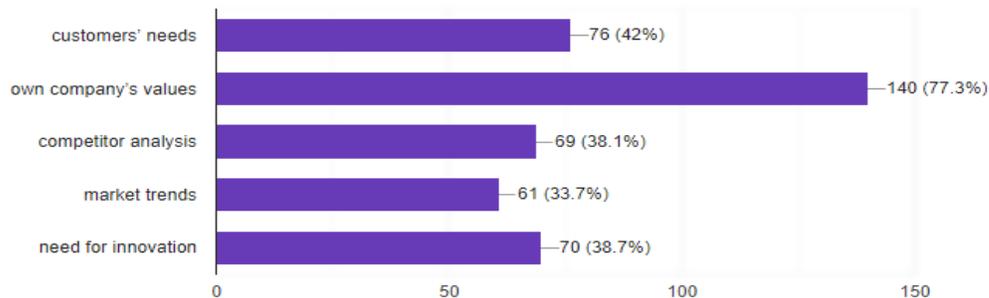


The importance of considering an organisation's values when designing a new and innovative logo was identified (77.3%), as the most important area of exploration in conducting market research on the logo development of an organisation. The need to focus on customer needs (42%) that included innovation (38.7%) and competitor analysis (38.1%) were also identified as

critical areas for exploration. However, the focus on market trends (33.7%) was rarely a reason an organisation innovates and changes a logo, though it can have a limited effect on the overall decision.

5) If market research was conducted on your logo development which of the following was explored?

181 responses

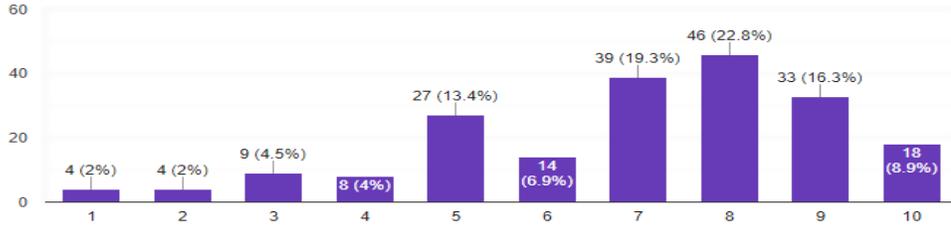


On average, about 200 responses were received on different areas regarding business impact on organisation development of a new logo. Over 60 % of respondents affirmed that the design of a new logo injected a clearer demographic identity; this indicates that the logo helps to identify the top demographic areas for an organisation. Likewise, slightly over 50% of the respondents indicated that the development of a new logo minimally increased its footfall. Other key areas of the business that were impacted as a result of logo development included increased organisation reviews, improved customer experience, increased revenue and positive association; over 70% of the respondents cited business growth in terms of sales. The development of a new logo was also associated with increased profitability (43.6%) and increasing over performance of the organisation (68.2%), exemplifying the overall goal of redesigning an organisation's logo.

6) In your opinion on a scale 1 to 10 what has the logo development brought to your company in terms of business impact?

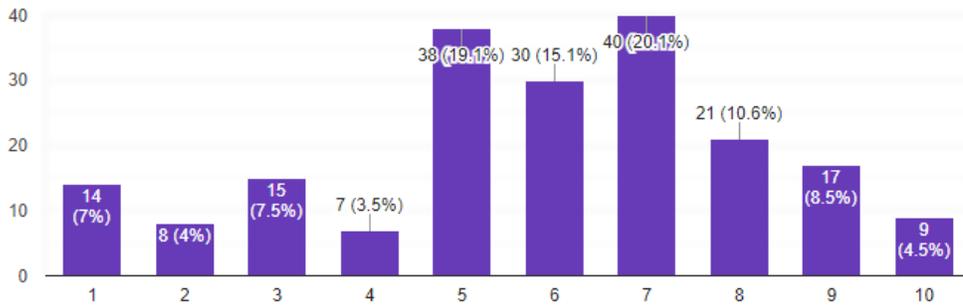
### Increased clearer demographic identity

202 responses



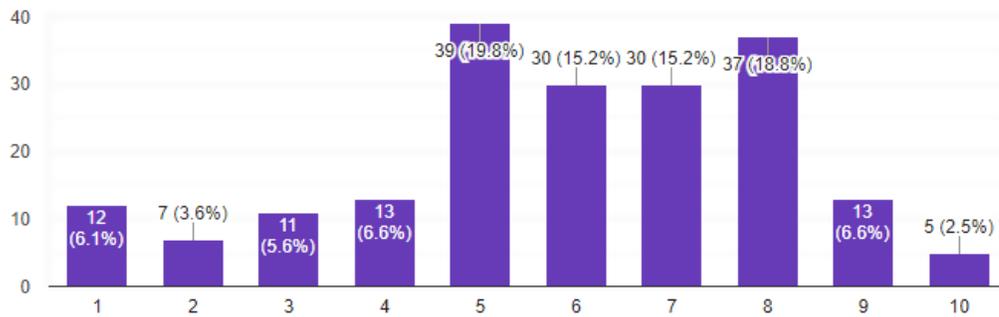
### Increased footfall

199 responses



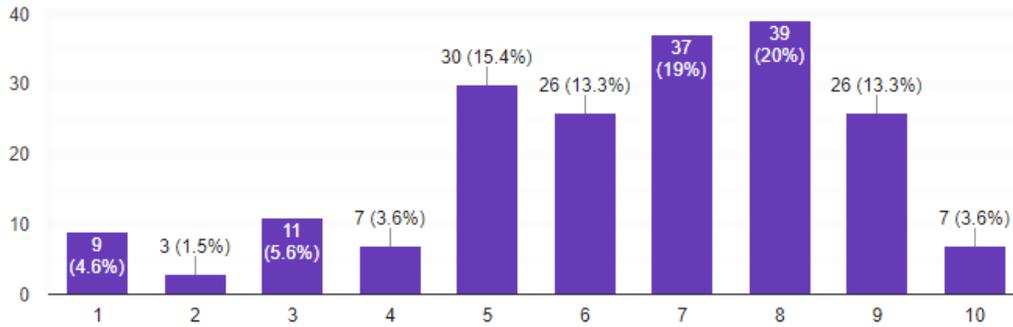
### Increased company reviews

197 responses



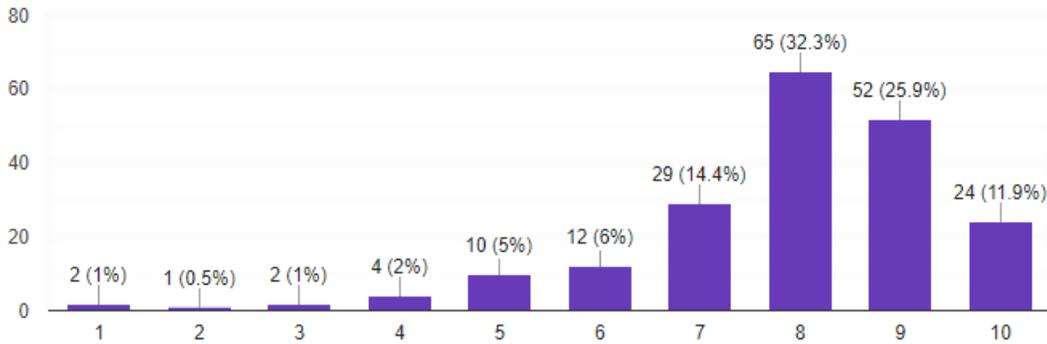
## Increased customer experience

195 responses



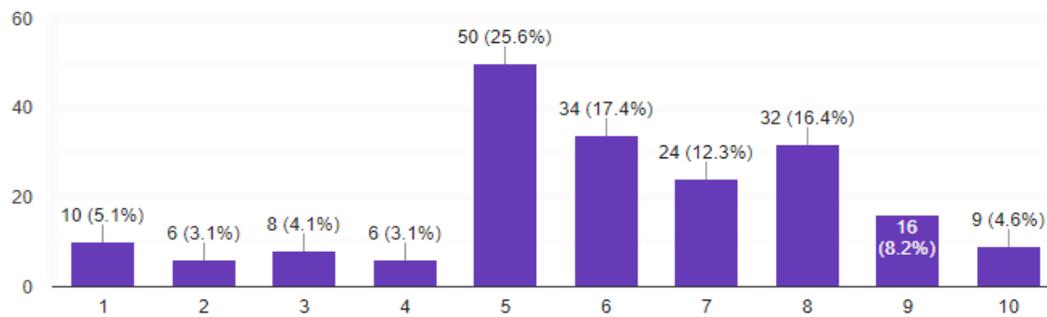
## Increased positive association

201 responses



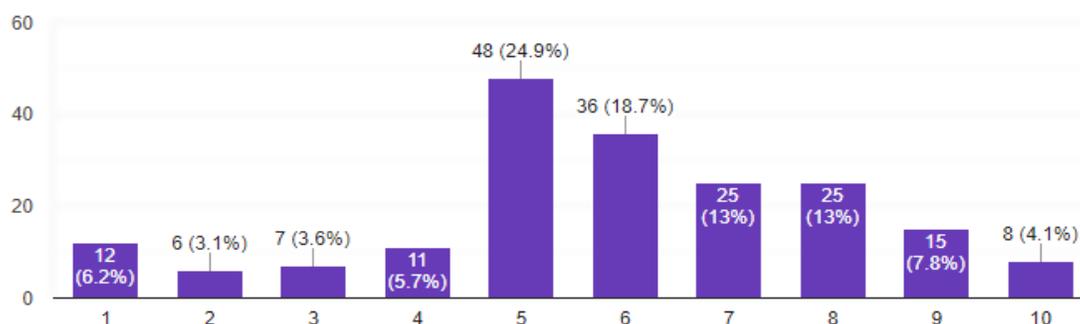
## Increased revenue

195 responses



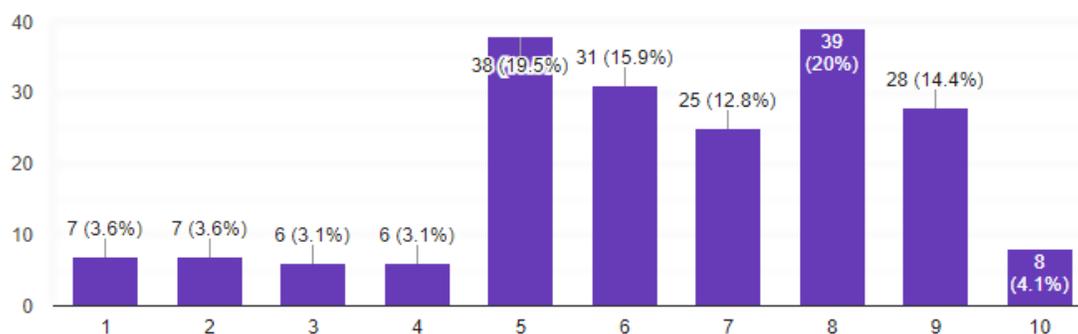
## Increased profitability

193 responses



## Increased overall company performance

195 responses

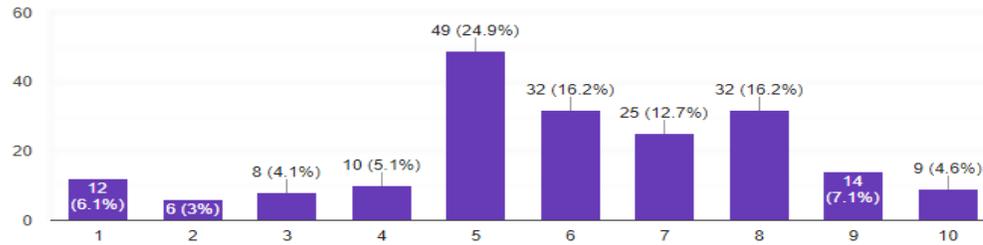


Regarding the impact of logo development on customer interaction, about 40% of the respondents cited increased sales leading to conversion rate, while the majority (59%) indicated a realisation in higher customer retention rates. Despite the predominant and gradual fall in re-purchases, about 60% of the respondents recorded increased purchases of products resulting from the development of a new logo. There was also an increase in organisation or product brand perception, averaging about 27.5%, which signalled an increase in future sales. Finally, with about 68% of the respondents citing an increased market reputation for the organisation, there is a higher indication that the development of a new logo could lead to a higher number of future customers.

7) In your opinion in a scale 1 to 10 what has the logo development brought to your company in terms of customer interaction ?

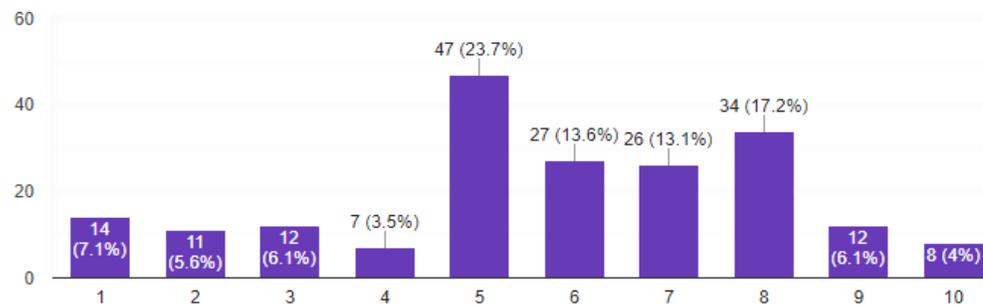
### Increased sales lead conversation rate

197 responses



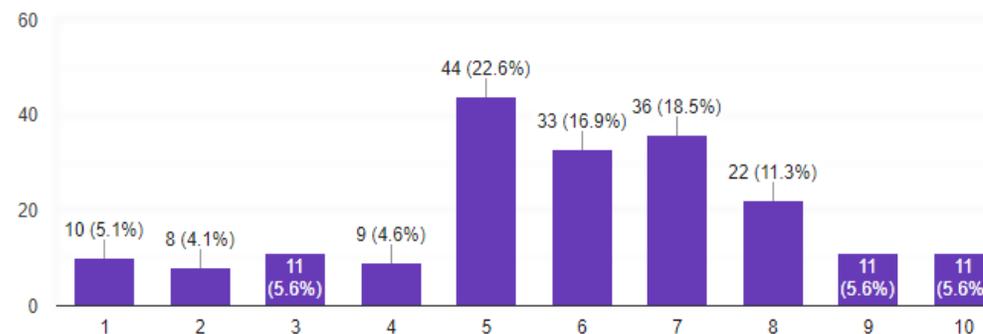
### Increased customer retention rate

198 responses



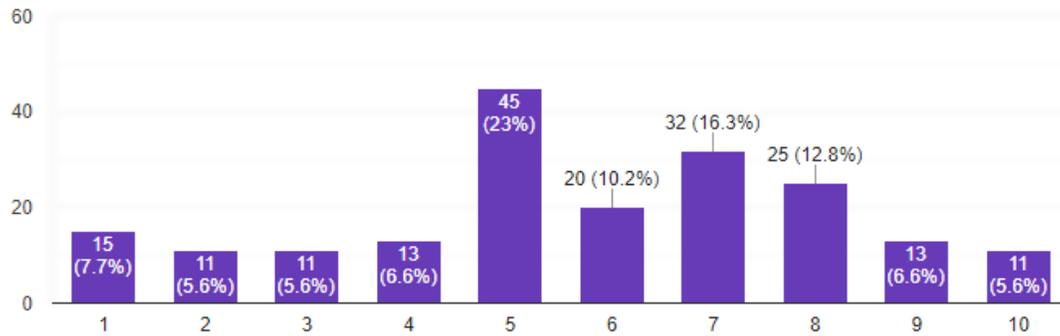
### Increased purchases of products

195 responses



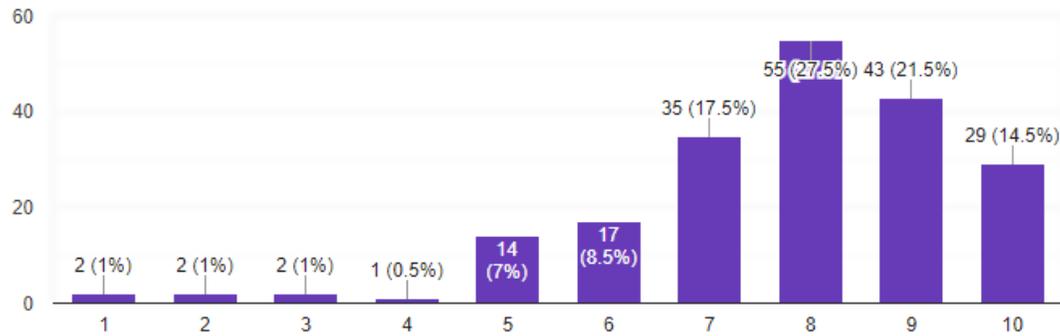
## Increased re-purchases

196 responses



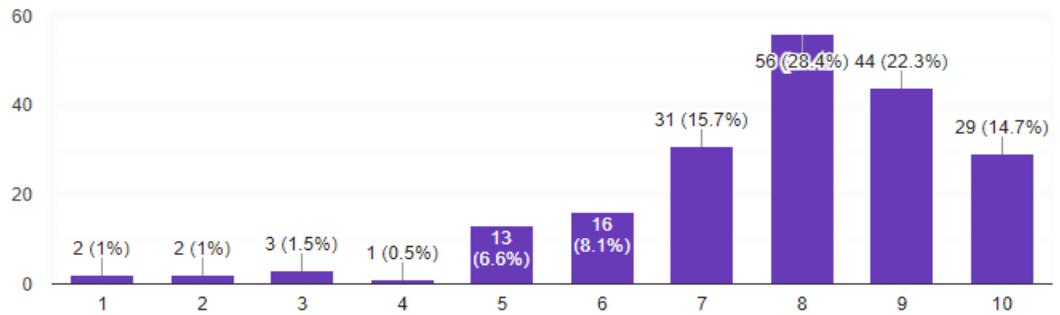
## Increased company or product brand perception

200 responses



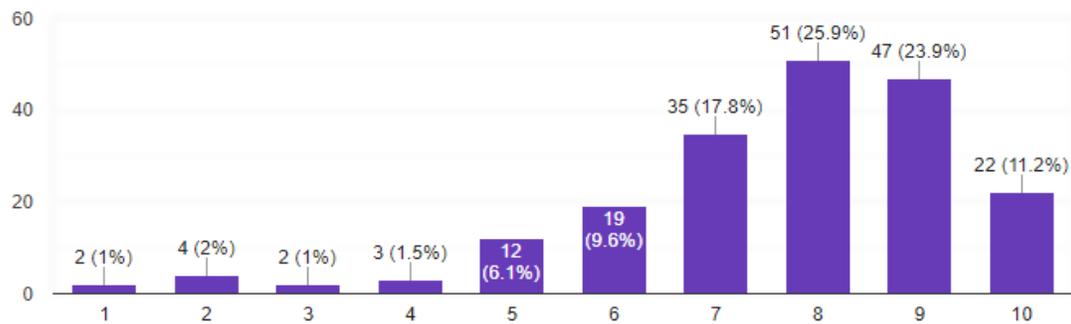
## Increased company or product brand perception

197 responses



## Increased market reputation

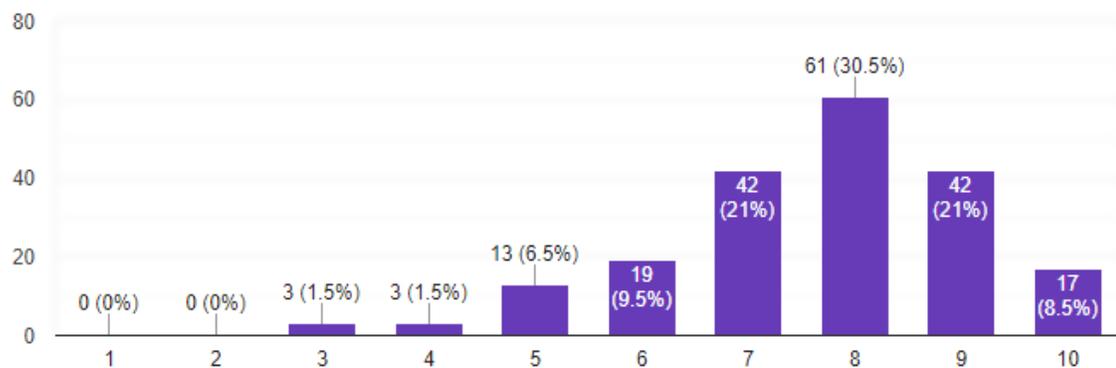
197 responses



From the findings, over 80% of the respondents were highly satisfied with the process of logo development. Therefore, the positive experience was quite impressive for a single design organisation focused on logos and websites.

## 8) On a scale from 1 to 10 how was your overall experience with your logo development?

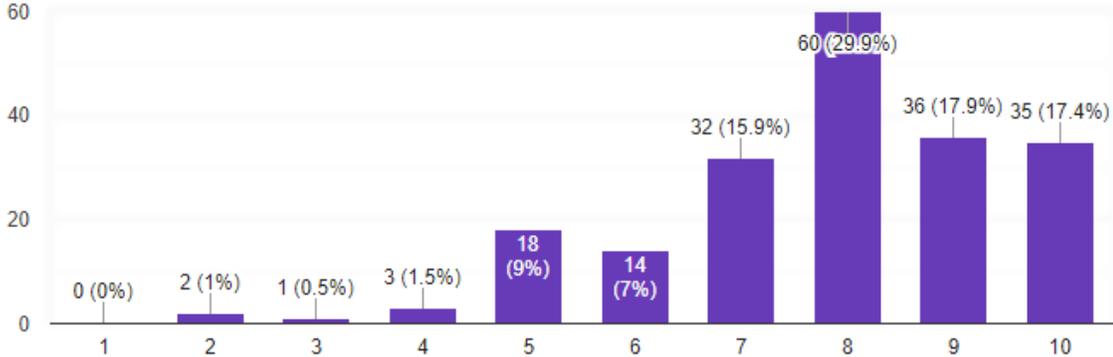
200 responses



Finally, over 80% of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the return on investment considering that they were satisfied with the new design received and find it useful for the business overall.

9) On a scale of 1 to 10 do you feel you got return on your logo development investment.

201 responses



## **5. Discussions**

Through the utilisation of qualitative (expert interviews) and mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative approaches), this study sought to determine whether SMEs in Ireland are satisfied with their logos. The target group for the interviews comprised of CEOs of SMEs that had undergone the logo development process in the last 24 months. In addition, expert logo designers were interviewed with a view of understanding whether a discrepancy exists between the owners of the SMEs and the designers on the issue of logo development and the value it portrays to the company, customers and competition.

The study focused on key areas for purposes of collecting information regarding the logo development and its outcome in order to measure the satisfaction levels. The analysis included asking the importance of logos for purposes of communication and marketing the brand, which included the process of undertaking market research in the development of a logo. Key discussion included the levels of involvement of the managers in the process of logo development and the degree of involving professional experts in the entire process. Opinions were sought on the benefits gained from re-designing their logos and the criteria that was used in measuring the benefits of logos, including increased profitability, revenue, and improved business among others. Overall, the areas information gathered from the study was divided into two broad areas namely; the expert interviews and the survey online questionnaire. From these two, the following discussions were deduced.

## 5.1 Key Results

The key results of this work determine the importance of logos to firms and benefits they produce to organisations. There was a good understanding among the interviewees on the significance of logos especially for purposes of communicating professionalism to the stakeholders as well as communicating the company values and or brand message. In addition, logo designers exemplified the importance of a logo in relation to visualising the identity of an organisation in differentiating products or services from competitors. However, different views were provided by SMEs who were not cognisant to the need for developing an effective logo as they were not aware of the benefits they could accrue. For instance, in one interviewees' opinion this was attributed to little or no importance given to the arts subjects at the primary school level in Ireland; this indicated relatively little appreciation given to the process of logo development from an early age.

Another key area of inquiry was the process of logo development, whereby the findings indicated that about 67.3% of SMEs in Ireland utilised the services of design agencies as the main resource for developing logos. Therefore, it is evident that SME owners are serious about improving their image to customers and improved relations rely on the use of professional design agencies from the onset, with the belief that logo designers are best trained and qualified to design logos that suit the needs of customers. This meant that there is little or minimal involvement of managers in the process of logo development, which often was restricted to minimal briefs on add value of the logo through seminar presentations and in-house workshops.

The aspect of logo development also corresponds well with market research where findings indicate the lack of creativity and innovation. This is because the majority of interviewees

indicated that a lot of market research on logo development is placed in competitor analysis, that is regarding brand identity instead of the customers. Therefore, the fact that SMEs in Ireland mostly focus on competitor analysis, with the intention of developing counter strategies and understanding market share, often what is evident is innovation and creativity is motivated by external factors. This resonates well with the observation that organisations rely on the services of expert designers in developing their logos and brand with a view for managing or surprising competition in industry.

The lack of accepted standards among designers and SME owners on what constitutes effective logos was also reflected in the findings. The point of convergence was demonstrated by the fact that the interviewees identified different characteristics on what constitutes an effective logo, including modernity and simplicity. While the interviewees agreed on the need for an effective logo, there were divergent views on suitable logo characteristics. On the one hand, the view sought indicated that a modern logo could be more effective, especially for the purposes of augmenting brand identity and exemplifying the organisation's image. On the other hand, others identified simplicity as the most essential characteristic in representing the essence of the brand and improving the image of the organisation. Most importantly, interviewees agreed that a new logo should not be entirely different but a modernised and improved version of the existing logo that benefits brand equity and presence in the market.

On the aspect of measuring the success of a logo, the interviewees alluded to the fact there was subjectivity that involved internal evaluation of the logo. In these cases, the best way of impressing corporate customers were proposals sought from within the organisation. However, some SMEs

initiated objectivity in measuring the effectiveness of a logo through quantitative measurement of performance, revenues and new level of business in relation to their competitors. This resulted in their selection of given logos based on quantitative metrics rather than individuals proposals often not based on clear measures.

From the survey online questionnaire, information was also sought on different areas regarding the development of logos. Overall, a 200 out of 1000 projected response rate was received, the sample was used for generalisation of the entire target group. From the findings, over 50% of the respondents single out the need for developing a new logo in terms of brand identity and modernisation, an interesting observation was made to considering that the aspect of market trends was not identified as a motivating factor towards the development of a new logo among SMEs in Ireland. This lack of internal motivation in the author's opinion based on experience from his own work, can be attributed to the lack of importance given to the arts subjects from the primary school level in Ireland as earlier identified from the expert interviews, which also pointed out the lack of awareness, of not only the importance, but also the benefits of developing an effective logo.

One of the most recognisable aspect of logo development is the fact that most of the SME's in Ireland highly rely on the services of professional experts and design agencies. From the preparation stage to the resources utilised in developing a logo, the findings clearly indicates that, there is a no real preference for brand strategists and the use of experts with minimal contributions or involvement by the managers. These findings can be positively connected with the information gathered from the experts' interviews whereby it was evident that the market research process that

goes into logo development is mainly geared towards the understanding of the competition levels as opposed to the differentiation of products or innovation.

Finally, from the findings, it is clear that most of the interviewees and respondents of the survey questionnaire are in agreement that, the development of a new logo positively impacts on the business. In addition to injecting a clearer demographic identity, the development of a new logo minimally increases a company's footfall, increases company reviews, leads to an improved customer experience and also assumed increases in revenue. The findings also indicted increased profitability, increased product perception, higher customer retention rates, increased market reputation and an increase in the overall performance of the company; thus, exemplifying the overall goal of redesigning a company logo.

## **5.2 Summary of Discussions**

To summarize, designing a new logo plays a fundamental role and positively impacts on the business on many aspects. From the findings, there is an overall observation that the respondents expressed satisfaction with the return on investment considering that they were happy with the new design and its impacts on the business. However, there is a need for more involvement by the managers on the logo development process because their input can play a vital role in exemplifying the company values, not only on the logos, but also promoting the brand. Another key area for improvement is the need to emphasise on the concentration of arts subjects from the primary school level in Ireland so that learners can develop and increase their interests on design. As reflected in the findings, it can be concluded that most of the SME's in Ireland are happy and satisfied with their improved logos when developed strategically and with designer support however there is a

need for democratisation within the industry and a need for a more comprehensive process that would inform the SME better of what to do when engaging with a design person or agency. Outside this cohort reviewed the majority of the SMEs in Ireland undervalue their corporate image and the need to innovate and resonate more with their customers. This cohort are much smaller companies.

## **6. Conclusions**

The primary objective of this research was to evaluate and understand whether SMEs in Ireland are satisfied with their logos. Furthermore, the research sought to understand the importance of SMEs attached to the need of undertaking market research activities prior to the development of a new logo; the criterion is used by SMEs in Ireland in measuring the success of a good logo. In view of these information, the following conclusions were reached.

While it is evident from the findings that logos are of exceptional importance to the organisation, there is no easy method for calculating the monetary value or return on investment. What is more, based on the qualitative approach (expert interviews) and the quantitative approach (semi structured questions from the online survey), the research developed some applicable conclusions. Despite the interviewees generally agreeing that creating a good logo is crucial for an SME sized enterprise in Ireland, there was indications that SME owners are not fully aware of the benefits of good logos.

The interviewees indicated market research activities are initially undertaken prior to the development of a new logo; this activity is focused on what competitors do and sourcing a designer that can deliver. This concurred with the findings from the online survey, which found that the market research undertaken by SMEs in Ireland are focused on exploring the organisation values, customer needs and the needs for innovation as their main priorities. While most of the SMEs preferred the use of in-house research before seeking the services of expert designers, it was evident that they relied on the use of design agencies as the main resource in designing their logos.

Therefore, despite the managers and team's involvement in the logo design and development process, a distinct disconnection between the designers and clients was evident; thus increasing the vulnerability to creating weaker or ineffective logos.

Also, while the interviewees mentioned simplicity and modernity as key components of a good logo, there was diversity in opinion regarding its characteristics and outstanding features. What is more, the measure of logo success was also not clear cut as both the objective and subjective measures were applied, thus making it difficult to assess the impact of logos to the business on various aspects such as profitability, revenues, performance, brand perception and customer retention. This prompted this researcher to potentially take a case-based approach to pursue these results further.

From these results, one conclusion to be made is that more seminars and workshops should be in place to sensitise and educate SMEs more on the need of working in tandem with designers; the process of logo development would focus more on the values of the organisation as opposed to just business. This can also be deduced to mean that in addition to using the services of professional designers, the owners of SMEs would be more involved in the design process by gaining new knowledge and skills, thus increasing their satisfaction levels with their logos.

Future research can begin to utilise the results of this thesis to expand its conclusions. Questionnaires and quantitative approaches can be taken to conduct wider or larger surveys to indicate if trends observed here have correspondence to other firms. Results can aid firms in better understanding the value of their logos and how creating logos can provide strategic benefits to

organisations. By demonstrating how designers create added benefit to logos and provide logos that create positive affect for customers, organisations could begin to see how hiring professional logo designers could potentially lead to more satisfactory logos and logo development process. While the work needs further research to validate the observations indicated here, given the limited number of respondents and individuals interviewed, the results do offer evidence that logos have great value for firms and further study could greatly benefit academic research and organisations interested in developing their logos.

## **7. Appendix**

### **Questions used in Expert Interviews.**

The following were questions used in the research. While interviewees were allowed to give more open-ended responses, these questions helped guide the conversation and addressed the main research question.

### **Questionnaire 1 (SME interviews, Dan Gallagher, Tony McEnroe, Philip Harvey)**

1. Have you recently conducted a logo development project for your company/organisation and if so, was it a new logo or a redesigned logo?
2. What market research was conducted prior to your logo development?
3. How closely related is your logo to your brand?
4. Did you use a professional design agency or a freelance designer or online tool?
5. Do you believe that using a professional logo design agency helped the final outcome of your logo?
6. In your opinion how important is it to create a logo for a Irish SME company/organisation?
7. If you were do it again could you achieve a “better logo” result?
8. Has your logo been successful and if so, how do you measure that success?
9. What is your interpretation of the term “better logo” ?
10. What is the difference between a great logo and a logo to you ?
11. Can you outline briefly what you done in the development of your logo?

12. Did you use a specific process to get the desired result?

13. Has your logo contributed to?

- a. improved business performance,
- b. greater brand presence,
- c. improved customer loyalty
- d. gain a greater share of a given market?

14. In your opinion is the WAW logo a better logo? (Effective)

**Questionnaire 2a (Con Kennedy Designer Interview) Please refer to your EPA logo design below for questions 5,6 and 8.**

1. What in your opinion makes a “better logo” than most logos?
2. Do you believe that experienced professional logo designers create “better logo’s” and if so why?
3. How important is it to create a “logo” for an Irish SME company/organisation?
4. When you are creating logos do you think you can achieve better logos consistently?
5. What market research was conducted prior to the logo development for EPA logo below?
6. Is the EPA logo the best logo you have every designed ?
7. What is your interpretation of the term “better logo” ?
8. Did you use any different approach or process to get the EAP logo produced?
9. In your opinion does a logo contribute to? (If so how/why?)
  - a. improved business performance,
  - b. greater brand presence,
  - c. improved customer loyalty
  - d. gain a greater share of a given market?
10. In your opinion would you consider the logos on the right a better logo than its predecessor on the left on page 12?



**Questionnaire 2b (Keith Mc Guinness Designer Interview) Please refer to your WAW logo design below for questions 5,6 and 8.**

1. What in your opinion makes a “better logo” than most logos?
2. Do you believe that experienced professional logo designers create “better logo’s” and if so why?
3. How important is it to create a “logo” for an Irish SME company/organisation?
4. When you are creating logos do you think you can achieve better logos consistently?
5. What market research was conducted prior to the logo development for WAW logo below?
6. Is the WAW logo the best logo you have every designed?
7. What is your interpretation of the term “better logo” ?
8. Did you use any different approach or process to get the WAW logo produced?
9. In your opinion does a logo contribute to? (If so how/why?)
  - a. improved business performance,
  - b. greater brand presence,
  - c. improved customer loyalty
  - d. gain a greater share of a given market?
10. In your opinion would you consider the logos on the right a better logo than its predecessor on the left of the page?



Logos Old / New Relating to Expert Interviews



GallagherKitchens



ESTD. 1991

GALLAGHER

KITCHENS | WARDROBES

CELL VIEW

SIRIUS XT



William  
Harvey

Industrial Property Specialists

HARVEY®

## **Profiles of Companies interviewed**

### **Gallagher Kitchens**

Gallagher Kitchens was established in 1991 and has grown in strength and continues to expand laying the foundation to offer professional quality workmanship with an honest and personal criteria. As a family run business they differentiate themselves by offering an extra sense of purpose and pride in their work with a commitment of value and service to their customers.

Gallagher Kitchens serves both the B2B and B2C marketplace in Ireland and some parts of Northern Ireland with a view to offer bespoke prestige kitchens to other parts of Europe.

Established by Father and Mother now their three sons have entered the family business to drive the company further into the future. With a staff of 30 and a turnover of nearly three million per annum Gallagher Kitchens is a profitable SME typical of Irish Industry.

For more information about the company visit. <https://gallagherkitchens.ie/>

### **SiriusXT**

SiriusXT is commercialising a disruptive and innovative solution for whole cell imaging that will help to accelerate progress in the fields of disease research and drug discovery. From the initial three co-founders, SiriusXT has now grown a team of highly-skilled physicists, engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs to develop the SXT100 – the first commercial, laboratory-based, soft x-ray microscope. SiriusXT has collaborated with UCD, School of Physics, Spectroscopy Group and the Conway Institute of Biomolecular and Biomedical Research, the Synchrotron-based soft

x-ray microscopy community as well the many early adopters of soft x-ray imaging. While the company is only recently established it has secured several million in funding and is currently selling services to organisations worldwide. The company has 12 employees and has a small turnover relative to a startup. SiriusXT is a typical SME start up and indicative of the companies in Ireland that require their logo to work hard for them.

For more information about the company visit. <https://siriusxt.com/>

## **Harvey**

Founded in 1979, HARVEY is the market leader in the Irish industrial & logistics property market with a proven track record. Harvey specialise in all aspects of industrial & logistics property including agency, investments, strategic consulting and a full suite of associated professional services. Harvey are recognised market experts and are continually involved in many of the largest property transactions in Ireland. Their significant experience, wealth of local market knowledge and deep understanding of market dynamics is unrivalled. The directors are actively involved in all instructions and strive to deliver best in class advice and results. Harvey act for many leading Irish and international companies, financial institutions, developers, investment funds, public sector bodies, private investors, owner occupiers, tenants and professional advisors. Harvey have a staff of six people with an estimated annual turnover of one and a half million.

For more information about the company visit. <https://harvey.ie/>

## Appendix B: Online Questionnaire

Hi I am Paul Mc Cann conducting a Survey for my PhD thank you for your time and help.

This survey is applicable to anyone who has completed a logo development project in the last 2 years. If you have completed one before that please do apply and leave a note in final box below as all data is greatly appreciated.

### 1) Why did you decide to develop your logo?

---

- The previous logo was not aesthetically pleasing
- The previous logo did not look professional
- The previous logo did not communicate the brand essence
- The previous logo did not represent the product/service
- Because it is a market trend
- We had no existing logo
- To modernise it

2) Which of the following resources did you use to develop your logo?

- In-house designer
- Design Agency
- Online logo tool (e.g. Logo99)
- Your own skills / self-designed
- Student / Family member
- Freelancer

3) What preparation did you undertake before you engaged the design solution

- Used own in-house research
- Used a brand design strategist
- Used a defined process supplied
- Used an online process
- Magic out of hat
- None

4) What was the most incisive factor in your choice of design solution taken?

- Wanted the best possible solution
- The new logo design solution was obvious so no need for lots of exploration
- No in-house experience to draw from to develop new logo
- Needed something fast
- Price / Budget allocated dictated design solution undertaken

5) If market research was conducted on your logo development which of the

- customers' needs
- own company's values
- competitor analysis
- market trends
- need for innovation











8) On a scale from 1 to 10 how was your overall experience with your logo

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     | 8                     | 9                     | 10                    |
| <input type="radio"/> |

9) On a scale of 1 to 10 do you feel you got return on your logo development

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     | 8                     | 9                     | 10                    |
| <input type="radio"/> |

10) On a scale of 1 to 10 how crucial is it for a SME to have a impactful logo in

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     | 8                     | 9                     | 10                    |
| <input type="radio"/> |

This survey is anonymous but if you like to leave a comment we would be delighted to hear your input.

Short answer text

---

Thank you for completing the Survey.

Paul [Mc Cann](#) [B.Des](#) [MA](#) [PDP](#).

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