

Logos as Branding: Making an Impression

By Robert M. O'Halloran and Kristine Miller

Logos in Hospitality: Exemplar

Given that hospitality associations have a charge for political activism for their members; trends indicate that activists are finding creative ways of publicizing their causes by attaching political messages to familiar corporate brands (Bennet and Lagos, 2007). Therefore, a hospitality association representing the region hotels and/ or restaurants can align their causes and logos with major brands as well as the logos from their industry in an effort to advance their cause. Associations with high profile logos, e.g. McDonald's, Hilton Hotels etc... that exert great brand strength can align with their respective lodging and restaurant associations to influence policy change.

Overview

The word logo refers to a "variety of graphic and typeface elements" (Bennett, 1995). A logo is the graphic design that a destination or organization uses with or without a destination name attached, to identify itself as a producer of quality products or services. As the visual representation of a brand, corporate logos have the potential to communicate and reinforce a brand's core values and principles, which we call its symbolic benefits (Park et al, 2014). For example, logos are part of a destination's sign system and are applied to communicate the destination's identity to internal and external audiences. In this way, logos can be regarded as a signature on materials (Snyder, 1993). Over time, the symbol an organization uses to represent itself, if managed consistently within all channels of visual communication, can build an emotional bond with consumers (Cassedy, 2001). Specifically, a logo can capture a restaurant's distinctive characteristics (Gerst, 2004). The tourism industry, in general, has increasingly evolved into an arena of fierce competition in which branding has become an important element of tourism management (e.g. Gnoth, 1998; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Cai, 2002; Keller, 2003). Logos, in particular are efficient tools in building brand awareness of destinations as well as in building an image of a destination. Logos contribute to identifying what a destination has to offer as a vacation product but also to differentiate the destination from competitors (Hem, & Iversen, 2004).

A logo, as the visual representation of a nonprofit brand, is of-

ten the first contact and impression an audience will have with an organization. Logos should make a connection with the viewer by evoking an emotional response (Leroux, 2001). There are numerous successful examples of logos that can be cited. Outside of hospitality and tourism, Nike, MasterCard, Shell Oil, the Underground logo for the London subway and the Panda from the WWF are all notable. Then, think about legendary brands such as McDonald's, Apple, Aflac, Michelin and Starbucks, and one of the first spontaneous associations is often with the brand logo: the golden arches, bitten apple, Aflac duck, Michelin man or Starbucks mermaid (Park et al, 2014). Visual symbols have traditionally been used by dominant groups to communicate institutional distinctiveness, common goals, values and a sense of belonging to subordinates as well as to outside groups (L'Etang and Pieczka, 2006). Perhaps some of the most prominent hospitality and tourism logos are the Olympic rings symbol, the previously noted McDonald's and its Golden Arches, Walt Disney World (WDW) using the Mickey Mouse ears, the Hilton "H" and many more.

These logos are especially notable in that no words are needed to recognize these products and companies. Logos and branding symbols have been used for many years with great success. For example, below in Figure 1, is the ribbon cutting ceremony by the children of Holiday Inn founder, Kemmons Wilson at the first Holiday Inn. This il-

Figure 1

Ribbon cutting by the Wilson Children at the first Holiday Inn, Summer Ave., Memphis, Tennessee



(Used with permission: Photo courtesy of the Kemmons Wilson Companies)

Robert O'Halloran and Kristine Miller are both affiliated with East Carolina University.

Figure 2

Bigger Than Life: Kemmons Wilson and the Great Sign



(Used with Permission: Photo courtesy of the Kemmons Wilson Companies)

illustrates an early lodging example of a logo and the visual recognition of the “Great Sign” becoming global. The desired goal was for a branded Holiday Inn logo that Kemmons Wilson created presenting a clean and consistent lodging brand that people could trust and afford.

Logos, as part of overall branding, provide differentiation as well as influence choice. Logos can be used in conjunction with the name of an organization to speed recognition of a brand (Aaker, 1996). Additionally, logos help brand builders develop brand equity through increased brand recognition and brand loyalty (Murphy, 1990). Logos are important company assets that firms spend enormous amounts of time and money promoting (Anson, 1998; van Riel et al., 2001). To emphasize again the strength of a brand Figure 2, illustrates the Bigger than Life: Kemmons at the Great Sign, photo used by Holiday Inns to emphasize the power and recognition of the logo. If a brand is perceived to be global, that perception creates value in the mind of consumers. Much of the value creation is through the fact that consumers ascribe products that are global to be of good quality (Yu, 2003). Wilson realized the value of the chain’s guarantee, logo and 1950s-esque roadside signs which he called the “Great Sign.” Wilson tried to register this logo, “Great Sign” with the U.S. patent bureau and was turned down several times because the bureau had no precedent for protecting such intangibles. That is no longer the case.

In local hospitality and tourism associations, logos can also be useful to communicate a brand to policy makers, potential members (lodging and restaurant operators) vendors and others. For example, the Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association logo has been successful in transitioning from a lodging association only, to a hospitality association for lodging and food service, to its current hospitality and tourism association status. Figure 3, Tennessee Hospitality & Tourism Association logo is typical of a successful regional brand.

Additionally, a logo can be used in place of the name when there is a space or time constraint (Walsh, 2005). Collectively, color, symbol,

Figure 3

Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Logo



shape and lettering contribute to what Lightfoot and Gerstman (1998) define as visual equity. Visual equity is the value derived from ‘visual form’, that is the ‘look and feel’ of the brand (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006). Past logo research has developed a typology of logo elements and examined how some of these elements (such as color) affect underlying brand attitudes (Walsh, Mittal & Page, 2007). These issues are further discussed in this case.

Developing a Brand and a Logo

A firm’s logo should be adapted for use in every visible component of brand marketing to produce thematic consistency among all materials to which the potential logo recipients will be exposed (Yesawich, 1979). One of the keys to developing a logo or a brand is to have an understanding of who you are as an organization and what you represent. Brand-backed marketing efforts and familiar logos keep a company as well as its products at the forefront of recipients or target market minds. We communicate how the logo should make a person “feel” using a combination of the following graphic elements (Leroux, 2001).

1. Typefaces
2. Imagery
3. Color

The hospitality industry knows very well that they must create an image for a strong, powerful and effective logo for their business as well as additional logos for various programs, services, events and special deals. Both profit and non-profit organizations engage in branding. Donnelly (2005), for example, noted that city branding has been around for a decade or more. Officials from several cities say increased competition for tourist and development dollars makes brand and logo development essential. However, firms in the business of selling cities say the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on their expertise buys much more, including research into what residents and nonresidents think of a city, what strengths the city has to offer and how best to sell them. For example, one individual stated ‘he was particularly pleased with the community of North Warren’s logo incorporation of an Adirondack chair.’ “That is a visual image that people around the world associate with our region, with that chair; you don’t even need to put Adirondacks in the logo” (Donnelly, 2005). Hospitality associations are typically non-profit and serve the needs of their membership but need to be able to extend their reach to all of the

industry. Their functions vary but often include marketing aspects, legislative advocacy and policy formulation to represent its restaurant, hotel and tourism member's best interests.

Logo creation and evaluation is not easy and matching an organization's vision, mission and values requires the analysis of these topics. Ferree (2013) highlighted the keys to effective logos as: memorability, meaningfulness, uniqueness, professionalism, timelessness, differentiation of colors, unity among elements in the logo and scalability. The consistent use of the logo contributes to the projection of a unified property image (Yesawich, 1979). Hospitality association logos target various segments such as hospitality operators, vendors, legislative and policy makers as well as education. In addition to these segments, associations target consultants, educators and students. Therefore, hospitality association logos need to be attractive, modern and meaningful to retain members and attract a new generation of members. Hospitality educators have introduced students to industry associations for a variety of reasons, scholarships, guest speakers, etc... Association leadership representatives are typically hoping that the new generation of managers and industry leaders will join them to benefit their own businesses and the industry. Association vision, mission and values represent who they are and how they see themselves. Subsequently, the association's logo should be the visualization of their actions. Therefore, these statements become part of the basis for brand and logo development.

Developing a Logo: How to start

Logos are symbols that usually are easily recognizable and as such are valuable means to identify an organization or product. Additionally, logos provide clues about an organization's corporate culture (Hem & Iversen, 2004). A class exercise introduced students to the Hierarchy of Effects (HEM) model which notes that while liking a logo is important, it is probably not enough to spur membership (Hollis, 1995) and, therefore, students need to investigate more than just the overall appeal of the logos. The HEM includes the following steps: Awareness—first becoming aware of the product and its name; Knowledge—learning more about product features and benefits; Liking—positive feelings about the product and/or company; Conviction—concluding that one product over another; and Purchase—the actual decision to buy and the act of buying the product (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). A study by O'Halloran and Miller (2013) showed students found the liking, conviction and purchase steps from HEM useful in their evaluations of the logos and utilized these steps in combination with a model called AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action). The AIDA approach was introduced to students to give them an easy model to use when evaluating the effectiveness of logos. The AIDA approach states that an advertisement or, in this case, a logo should attract attention, maintain interest, stimulate desire and generate action (Strong, 1925). This model focuses on remembering

who the message is for, using the language of your target audience, focusing on the benefits that your product has to offer customers and creating a positive image. The AIDA approach also stresses avoiding exaggerations, using powerful language and being creative without overpowering your primary message (Kwortnik and Mancini, 1997).

Using various models as a framework to review impressions, there appears to be considerable doubt that many of the logos can spur individuals to action. With regard to associations, the logos would hardly be a catalyst for someone to join an association. In the O'Halloran and Miller study (2013) many respondents found it was not clear what the logo(s) represented. A brand's logo has typically served as a means for resolving the problem of indistinguishability (Park et al, 2013). As one of the most salient visual elements of a brand (Wallace, 2001), logos facilitate the identification of the brand and its differentiation from competing alternatives (Janiszewski and Meyvis, 2001 and MacInnis et al., 1999). Park et al (2013) stated that their research indicated that managers need to consider brand logos as more effective and powerful tools in the management of customer-brand relationships than previously thought.

In the absence of additional materials, or better developed context, some logos do not appear to effectively communicate the intended message. Some of the logos are attractive, colorful and very noticeable. The best are also clear in terms of their message. Respondents in the O'Halloran and Miller study felt many logos needed to be more clear and modern. The logos did not include much information and students did not feel that the logos provided much incentive for an individual to want to know more. Therefore, as indicated above, it is not clear if the logos would prompt someone to join the association.

It is clear that logos are related to creativity and advertising. The issue of using or needing creativity rests on what type of decision-making and action a logo is intended to create. If hospitality professionals employ critical and creative thinking skills, logos can be effective tools in reaching an association's target markets. Hospitality associations should follow the leads of their successful members (operators / vendors) and strive to make their logos or brands distinctive. We know that a logo can act as a powerful symbol and represent a company in the most favorable manner. Also, designing a logo that matches the business can help create the desired impression upon the target audience and create visual recognition (SKYJE, 2011).

To frame this discussion and business problem Leroux (2011) noted the following questions when assessing a logo:

- Is it legible?
- Is it easy to read and understand?
- Is it impactful?
- Does it stand out and catch your eye?
- Is it meaningful?
- Does it support your organizations goals and objectives?
- Is it differentiated enough from your 'competition' and does it

Figure 4

North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association (NCRLA): Vision, mission and values

NCRLA Vision: To be the recognized voice of advocacy and indispensable resource for the hospitality community across North Carolina, where membership is necessary for optimal business success.

NCRLA Mission: To advocate for the hospitality industry across North Carolina and provide significant business value to our members.

NCRLA Value Statement: The restaurant and lodging industries are continuously evolving, and the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association has a responsibility to its members to adapt and respond to those changes. The core values listed below are the Association's constants; guiding NCRLA in a direction that strengthens the industry and delivers genuine value to members: Integrity, Community, Engagement, Service, Excellence, Expertise and Innovation. (North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association, 2014).

avoid obvious visual clichés?

- Is it authentic?
- Does it have enduring value?
- Is it flexible?
- Will it work for you both in color and in black and white?
- Do you need a tagline with it and if so, will it accommodate one?

Business Problem

Based on this discussion, the question that needs to be answered is: Which hospitality logos are effective? More specifically, how do you create logo for hospitality and tourism businesses or organizations? The development of hospitality logos focusing on operators and vendors could also yield additional data useful for logo development. This could be useful for advertising and logo creation, emphasizing creativity skills. A good logo can be a synthesizer of a brand that is readily used by customers for identification, differentiation and positive associations (Park et al, 2014).

As an industry consultant to a hospitality association, you have been asked to assess their current logo, create a new logo and make recommendations to better position their brand. You will analyze the organization's mission, vision and core values. You have decided to use the advertising models you are familiar with as a starting point. You are asked to consider additional research focusing on measuring perceptions, recall and recognition of logos. The clarity of a logo and which logos are most visible as well as which logos are recalled most

often should also be considered (Robinson and Bauman, 2008). Be aware, that despite the commonly understood benefits of symbols versus text, surprisingly few companies take advantage of separate visual symbols. Logos with separate visual symbols thus represent a largely untapped opportunity in reaching out to consumers (Park et al, 2014). While you may not be able to answer these questions currently, your client would like you to propose a method to assess their logo. You are provided the following, Figure 4, North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association (NCRLA): vision, mission and values to begin your process as well as Figure 5, the NCRLA logo as starting points.

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Figure 5

NCRLA Logo



(North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association, 2014).

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