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"Yes They Can?" - An Empirical Study on the Effect of Slogans in Brand Awareness

Paulo SILVEIRA[1]*, Susana GALVÃO[2], Graça PENTEADO[3]

Abstract

Slogans are a verbal or written expression of the brand marketing positioning and, consequently, should aim to benefit the brand. The brand equity concept includes several dimensions, and those might be developed or reinforced by each branding marketing action. Brand awareness is a component of brand equity and, therefore, might be influenced by marketing communications, which includes the slogan. The main research question addressed in this paper is to analyse if slogans might influence brand awareness. To achieve that goal, an empirical quantitative study was conducted among a sample of three hundred and seventy mobile telecom service consumers, gathering primary data via an on-line questionnaire. The variables considered were slogan recall, slogan recognition and spontaneous brand awareness for three different mobile telecom brands. The results obtained reveal a positive association between slogan recall and brand awareness in two of the brands in study. The results also show that those two brands were the ones with the highest awareness levels.

Keywords: Slogans; branding; brand equity; brand awareness.

1. Introduction

Marketing communication is an input for individuals, with mental cognitive and affective effects of intermediation, before provoking a

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behavioral response directed to the advertised brand, which is explained by the S-O-R paradigm applied to marketing [25], [7]. Those marketing communications may include slogans, as well as other marketing stimuli, such as brand name, logos and jingles [33]. Slogans are important and common in marketing, used to provide continuity to advertising campaigns or to advertise brands [24].

The present study is directed to brand slogans, which can be defined as "short phrases that communicate descriptive or persuasive information about a brand" [32]. These written (and verbalized) expressions are often repeated to increase its memory and recall potential [36]. Brand slogans contribute to the identity of a brand and help create brand differentiation in consumers' minds [20]. Brand slogans are the type of slogans that assists the brand selling proposition [12], albeit slogans may be used in other contexts, such as religious or political (e.g. the slogan "Yes We Can" use by Obama's Presidential campaign).

Therefore, slogans are a verbal or written expression of the brand marketing positioning and, consequently, should aim to benefit the brand, which might be measured according to the brand equity concept [1]. Due to that, "ideally, slogans inspire lasting impressions and favorable memories about specific attributes or values delivered by the associated brand" [31]. More specifically, slogans are designed to promote brand awareness and/or to create, protect or change the image or perception of a brand [3].

This paper begins with the literature review in brand equity, distinguishing its dimensions, and establishing the influence of marketing communication efforts, which include slogans, in the brand awareness component of brand equity. Then, summarized findings from previous academic studies on the effects of slogans in individuals are presented, leading us to the research question and hypothesis formulation. Next, the research method is described, followed by results obtained and finishing with conclusions.

2. Problem Statement

Distinctive definitions have been given to the brand equity concept by different researchers. According to Aaker [1], brand equity is "a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers." For Keller [19], the brand equity concept refers to the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer perceptions,

preferences and behavior to the marketing mix of the brand. Yoo, Donthu, and Lee define brand equity [35] as "the difference in consumer choice between the focal branded product and an unbranded product given the same level of product features".

Aaker [1] posits that brand equity has four dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Keller [19] also refers brand awareness as an essential component of brand equity, by stating that two dimensions distinguish brand knowledge: brand awareness and brand image. Investigating the similarities between these two conceptualizations, brand awareness (which refers to consumers' ability to recall and recognize brands [19], as a member of a particular product category under different conditions), and the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind [2], is an essential component of brand equity. The brand awareness may result from brand familiarity, provided by repeated exposures to a brand. According to Keller [19], higher levels of exposure to a brand may lead to greater brand familiarity and awareness. Gerber, Terblanche-Smit and Crommelin [15] also state that "anything that causes the consumer to notice and pay attention to the brand can increase brand awareness".

Several marketing communication activities may be effective in increasing brand familiarity and awareness levels by integrating the brand components or identities [19] in advertising campaigns, promotion vehicles and various nature sponsorships. These brand identities include names, terms, signs, symbols, designs, or combinations of them, but also logos, slogans, and other trademarks [19]. Kohli, Leuthesser and Suri [20] also refer name, logo and slogan as three essential components of a brand's identity. Slogans often referred to as brand signatures, can provide a unique and significant contribution to a brand's identity, by explaining the brand and capturing its meaning [21]. Effective slogans are intended to increase brand awareness and strengthen the brand attitude, helping to define a brand's identity and reinforce its positioning [17]. Therefore, the marketing actions of the communication-mix might produce effects on the components of brand equity [1].

The literature review made found previous studies on slogans, which may be divided in two groups. One group regards the desirable characteristics slogans should have [8], [4], [16], [29], [20], [30], [3], [21], [10]. The other group concerns the effects of slogans on individuals, specially consumers [18], [8], [34], [13], [5], [28], [27], [6], [22], [9], [29], [14], [30], [11], [23]. The respective main findings of the second group are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings of previous studies on the effects of slogans

Authors	Findings
[18]	Slogan familiarity increases with the age of individuals for some products and decreases for other products. Familiarity with slogans increases with consumption. There is a significant incorrect recall for slogans, especially in heavily advertised markets with products lacking differentiation.
[8]	Shorter slogans are learned more quickly than complex ones.
[34]	There are conditions when advertising slogans enhances memory. Memory for advertising slogans was improved when the slogans were integrated into the advertisement in the form of a jingle/song.
[13]	Slogans affect the beliefs about the product.
[5]	Slogans influence the acceptability of potential brand extensions. There are significant relationships between the theme of a slogan and the product categories it can be applied to.
[28]	Younger individuals had better slogan recall ability. The figure of linguistic devices (amount and type of wordplay) in a slogan has a significant positive effect on correct identification rate.
[26]	Slogans can either support or undermine brand extensions, by drawing attention to attributes that the new product has in common/conflict with the existing.
[6]	Syntactic complexity did not influence the comprehension of advertising slogans.
[9]	Slogan learning was biased by the brand equity and, consequently, slogans of stronger brands were normally better favored.
[30]	Mismatching of slogans and brands can be explained by the different memory processes utilized by individuals.
[14]	Slogans frequently try to associate brands with personal dreams and ambitions, exerting benefits to consumers.
[11]	Unconscious impact of polysemous brand slogans might be more influential than intuitively expected. Individuals with high automatic access had stronger implicit connections between the advertised brand and the negative feature involved in the secondary meaning.
[31]	Slogans are most effective when they are geared toward a specific audience.

Analyzing Table 1 within a brand equity perspective, a research gap was found on the previous studies referred, since no one has specifically and

empirically analyzed the effect of slogans on brand awareness. Identifying and understanding factors that influence the perceptions of brands is important because brands are one of the most valuable corporate assets [18].

Due to that, the present study has the general purpose to contribute to the debate if slogans are an effective branding tool or more an "ornament".

3. Research Questions

From the literature review, it is expected that the marketing communications (where slogans fit into) might positively contribute to brand equity and brand awareness [3].

So, it is possible to assume that slogans might be carriers of brand equity [3], [9]. Besides that, in mature brands, the key of effective slogans is to be noticed, not to be liked [29]. That means that it is even more important to find ways to ensure sufficient processing of the brand-slogan link.

As mentioned, it might be expected that the marketing communications might positively contribute to brand awareness. Since slogans are a possible component of marketing communications, the main research question established in the present research was "To analyze if slogans do contribute to brand awareness". From that question, the testable hypothesis was formulated as "the spontaneous slogan recall has a positive effect on the brand awareness level".

4. Research Methods

To address the research question, an empirical quantitative study was designed to gather consumer perceptions about the three main brands in the Telecoms industry, which is a very competitive and advertised business sector in Portugal. This market is clearly dominated by those three brands (a multinational and two national companies) which slogans have been consistently used and highly exposed (high media weight [21]) in advertisement.

The information used in the study was primary data, gathered via an online questionnaire.

The variables measured were:

- The spontaneous brand awareness (non-assisted) for each brand, which corresponded to the open question "Which telecom brands do you remember, even if only by the name?". This allowed us to

obtain an ordinal scale, hierarchizing the order in which the brands were mentioned.

- The consumer spontaneous recall perception of the slogan for each of the three brands, corresponding to the open question "What is the actual slogan for brand X?". Each response was qualitatively codified by the researches in one of the following classes: "totally correct slogan", "partially correct slogan", "wrong slogan", "older slogan of the brand", "competitor slogan" and "campaign tagline instead of brand slogan".
- The assisted recognition of the perceived right slogan for each brand. For each brand, four options of slogans were presented: the actual and correct slogan of the brand, an older slogan of the brand, the oldest known slogan of the brand, and the slogan of a competitor brand.

Regarding the sampling procedures, a non-random technique was used, obtaining a sample of 370 valid consumers.

5. Findings and Discussion

In order to provide answers to the research question, a preliminary assessment of each slogan recall and recognition rates was made, presented in Table 2 and Table3. This is an important first analysis, because a slogan should be readily associated with the brand it represents [30], otherwise it can't be useful to brand awareness [20], [21]. According to Kohli et al., recall, with variations such as top-of-the-mind recall, unaided recall and aided recall (or brand recognition) is considered one of the most effective measures of slogan success.

On Table 2 it can be seen that the correct recall of slogans was not high (maximum of 20% and minimum 7%) which is consistent with previous studies in the way that individuals do not easily remember slogans without assistance, even if the brands are highly advertised [18], [28]. Also, the slogans presented were non-jingle slogans which may identically support these results [34].

On the other hand, the correct recall of brand A and brand C slogans are higher than brand B. This result may be due to slogan complexity of brand B, expressively longer (6 words) than the other two brands (2 and 3 words) [8].

Table 2. Correct and incorrect spontaneous slogan recall rates

Brand	Class	%	Subclass	%
A	Correct slogan	19,9%	totally correct	19,6%
			partially correct	0,3%
	Incorrect slogan	36.9%	wrong slogan	1,6%
			older slogan	34,9%
			competitor slogan	0,5%
			campaign tagline	0%
	Doesn't know	43,2%	-	-
B	Correct slogan	7,2%	totally correct	6,7%
			partially correct	0,5%
	Incorrect slogan	30,3%	wrong slogan	4,3%
			older slogan	7,8%
			competitor slogan	0,8%
			campaign tagline	17,4%
	Doesn't know	62,5%	-	-
C	Correct slogan	20,4%	totally correct	20,1%
			partially correct	0,3%
	Incorrect slogan	4,5%	wrong slogan	2,9%
			older slogan	1,3%
			competitor slogan	0,3%
			campaign tagline	0%
	Doesn't know	75,1%	-	-

Albeit the low spontaneous slogan recall rates, the assisted recognition of each slogan presented a different situation, with the detection of the correct slogan being much higher, ranging from 36% to 78%, as presented in Table 3.

These results support the findings in literature that suggest that the longer a brand is present in advertising, the stronger the link between the advertised message (which include the brand slogan) and the brand [15], increasing assisted brand recognition. The three brands studied have been consistently and repeatedly advertising in the Portuguese market for several years, through multimedia campaigns including TV, Press, Outdoor and Radio ads, always presenting their brand identity elements, such as logo and slogan.

Table 3. Correct and incorrect assisted recognition slogan rates

Brand	Class	%	Subclass	%
A	Correct slogan	36,5%		
	Incorrect slogan	62,4%	older slogan	47,7%
			oldest slogan	3,8%
			competitor slogan	11,0%
	Doesn't know	1,1%		
B	Correct slogan	67,3%		
	Incorrect slogan	28,1%	older slogan	13,4%
			oldest slogan	7,2%
			competitor slogan	7,5%
	Doesn't know	4,6%		
C	Correct slogan	78,0%		
	Incorrect slogan	17,2%	older slogan	4,3%
			oldest slogan	2,9%
			competitor slogan	9,9%
	Doesn't know	4,8%		

Concerning the brand awareness levels (ranging from the first brand mentioned, to not being mentioned, ie, max=3 and min=0) the awareness means varied between the maximum in brand A (N=370; X=2,13; Stdev=0,890) and the minimum of 1,54 in brand B (N=369; Stdev=0,787), while brand C had a mean of 2,10 (N=361; Stdev=0,854).

Crosstabing the results of these brand awareness level with the spontaneous slogan rates (Table 4 and Table 5), in brand A and brand C it seems to emerge a positive relation when a brand is spontaneously mentioned in the first awareness place and the correct identification of that slogan. For those two brands, such relation seems to decline for the second and third levels of awareness. So, if a brand is able to stand out in a top-of-mind awareness level, the slogan might be more easily recalled, favoring the brand equity.

Table 4. Brand awareness levels vs spontaneous slogan rates

Brand	N	1st brand mentioned	2nd brand mentioned	3rd brand mentioned	row sum
A correct slogan*	71	53,5%	29,6%	16,9%	100%
B correct slogan*	26	19,2%	15,4%	65,4%	100%
C correct slogan*	75	53,3%	33,3%	13,3%	100%

* partially correct slogan + totally correct slogan

Table 5. Brand awareness levels vs totally correct spontaneous slogan rates

Brand	N	1st brand mentioned	2nd brand mentioned	3rd brand mentioned	row sum
A correct slogan*	70	54,3%	30,0%	15,7%	100%
B correct slogan*	24	20,8%	12,5%	66,7%	100%
C correct slogan*	74	54,1%	33,8%	12,2%	100%

* totally correct slogan

In order to statically test if the spontaneous slogan recall of each brand had a significant effect on the probabilities of brand awareness level, the ordinal regression PLUM with link logit function was used.

Appling such statistical technique for brand A, the model was validated ($X^2_P(4)=0,835$; $p=0,935$; $D(4)=0,827$; $p=0,934$) and the adjusted final model fit also proved to be better than a model with only the constant/intercept, revealing that the model is statistically significant ($G^2(2)=12,334$; $p=0,002$). The effect verified was low ($R^2_{CS}=0.033$; $R^2_N=0.036$; $R^2_{MF}=0.014$), but it was observed a higher probability of higher brand awareness levels in the "correct slogan" class in relation to the reference class "does not know the slogan" ($b=0,708$; $X^2_{Wald}(1)= 7,172$; $p=0.007$).

Considering brand B, the model was also validated ($X^2_P(4)=7,434$; $p=0,115$; $D(4)=7,945$; $p=0,094$) and the adjusted final model fit also proved to be better than a model only with the constant/intercept, meaning that the model is statistically significant ($G^2(2)=7,251$; $p=0,027$). The effect obtained was very low ($R^2_{CS}=0,019$; $R^2_N=0,022$; $R^2_{MF}=0,009$) and it was found a lower probability of higher brand awareness levels in the "correct slogan" class in relation to the reference class "does not know the slogan" ($b= -0,082$; $X^2_{Wald}(1)= 0,043$; $p=0.836$). An eventual explanation for this is that brand B was the one with the lowest mean of brand awareness.

The model was also validated for brand C ($X^2_P(4)=1,562$; $p=0,816$; $D(4)=2,115$; $p=0,715$) and the adjusted final model fit also proved to be better than a model with only the constant/intercept ($G^2(2)=9,570$; $p=0,008$). The effect found was low ($R^2_{CS}=0.025$; $R^2_N=0.028$; $R^2_{MF}=0.01$), but, just like in brand A, it was found a higher probability of higher brand awareness levels in the "correct slogan" class in relation to the reference class "does not know the slogan" ($b=0.735$; $X^2_{Wald}(1)=8.828$; $p=0.003$).

In a global analysis, the results of this study are aligned with [29], in the way that coherence and repetition of the brand messages are important in creating and establishing the brand positioning.

Our study has limitations due to the brands analyzed (since they were brands from the same industry) and also limitations related to the

universe studied and sample used. This means that more studies are needed to test the results on other samples and industries.

6. Conclusions

The major findings of the present research are that the effect of slogans on brand awareness was not equal across all the brands studied and, in two of the brands analyzed; it was found a higher probability of higher brand awareness levels in the "correct slogan" class. In fact, the results found revealed a positive association between slogans recall and brand awareness in two of the three brands in study. The results also show that those two brands were the ones with the highest awareness levels.

Keeping in mind that brand equity is a long-term continuous "work" and the respective effect of each marketing positioning element needs time to be built, established and reinforced, the results of the present study might be a manifestation of the need for this long-term consistency.

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