

Enhancing Brand Recognition through Simplified Visual Identity: Impact and Benefits

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Abstract. This study on the simplification of brand visual identity primarily explores the necessity of simplifying brand logos and visual elements and their impact on brand recognition. The findings indicate that a simplified visual identity not only enhances brand recognition in digital environments but also improves consumer memory and associations with the brand. By reducing extraneous design elements, brand imagery can more intuitively convey core values while maintaining consistency across multiple platforms. Additionally, minimalist design aligns with modern consumers' aesthetic preferences, projecting professionalism and a sense of trendiness, thereby enhancing the brand's market competitiveness. Simplified design also facilitates cross-cultural communication for brands in the global market, increasing their international influence. This paper summarizes the various advantages of simple visual design and offers several practical recommendations, providing theoretical support for brands seeking sustainable development in a complex and dynamic market environment. The study employs literature review and case analysis methods. Using the well-known automotive brand Audi as a case study, it analyzes the need to balance visual simplicity with brand uniqueness during the simplification process to avoid the loss of brand personality.

1 Introduction

The changes in consumer aesthetics present a significant challenge for brand visual identity [1]. Against the backdrop of different eras and cultures, consumers' aesthetic tastes and preferences are constantly evolving. Brands must continually pay attention to and adapt to these changes. Otherwise, they will be unable to resonate with consumers. As a result, many brands are continually altering their brand visual identities to keep up with consumer aesthetics, allowing them to establish a foothold in the market. Research shows that complex brand visual identities have become a thing of the past in today's society, simple designs stand out in this complex digital media landscape, creating resonance between consumers and brands. In existing research papers, analyses of brand visual identity simplification are not very detailed, and there is a lack of focused analysis on this aspect, most discussions about brand visual identity also broadly touch on simplification. This paper carefully analyzes various aspects of brand visual identity simplification. In this paper employ literature review and case analysis methods.

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2 Characteristics of simplifying brand visual identity

2.1 Clarity

In today's rapidly developing society, consumer aesthetics evolve along with societal progress. In the current complex landscape of digital media, overly intricate brand visual identities can severely impact a brand's development [1]. Overly elaborate brand visuals can cause visual fatigue among consumers, reducing both the memorability and recognizability of the brand. Therefore, brands need to simplify their visual identities by removing unnecessary elements and lines, such as shadows and excessive colors, while retaining important components. This approach ensures sustainable brand development. Moreover, a simplified visual identity does not imply that the brand is modest or lacks design. On the contrary, simplifying the brand's visual identity can better highlight the brand's features and core values. In this age of information overload, streamlining brand visuals allows consumers to quickly and accurately identify the brand, thereby enhancing both its recognizability and memorability.

2.2 Adaptation

As society develops, this paper are now in a digital media age where most consumers interact with brands through websites or apps rather than physical stores. This shift highlights the importance of how brand visual identities are presented across different platforms. Brands need to ensure that their visual identities can adapt to various websites and screen sizes. By simplifying their visual identities, brands can effectively display their image whether on large billboards or small mobile devices. Complex brand visuals can be hard to recognize on smaller screens or websites. In contrast, a simple brand visual identity ensures consistency across all platforms, making it easy for consumers to identify the brand no matter where they are.

2.3 Immutability

Fashion and aesthetic tastes continually evolve with societal development. Overly complex designs or those overly focused on current trends can quickly become obsolete. In contrast, simple brand visual identities offer greater stability and are more likely to endure in the marketplace. Additionally, the design of simple brand visuals often removes superfluous decorative elements, highlighting the brand's unique characteristics and core values. This approach can better emphasize the essence of the brand and make it easier for consumers to recognize. Moreover, simple brand visual identities can adapt well across various platforms, ensuring a consistent long-term brand presence.

2.4 Emotional connection

Although brands have simplified their intricate and complex visual identities, they can still convey rich brand characteristics and cultural values to consumers through simple colors and lines. This approach effectively resonates with consumers. Even though the visual identities have been simplified, minimalistic design does not mean the brand is basic or lacks creativity. It allows for a better focus on expressing the brand's personality. This aids in establishing a lasting sense of identity between the brand and its consumers.

3 Case introduction

The paper will use the Audi brand as an example to discuss the changes in its visual identity from the past to the present. In 1899, August Horch founded the August Horch Company in Cologne, and subsequently, in 1909, established Audi Automobilwerke GmbH in Zwickau. In 1932, Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer merged to form Auto Union AG, adopting the four iconic rings as their emblem. Today, Audi has a significant market presence and influence worldwide. It continues to invest in expanding its global reach [2-5].

4 The advantages and disadvantages of simplifying the brand's visual identity

4.1 Graphic simplification

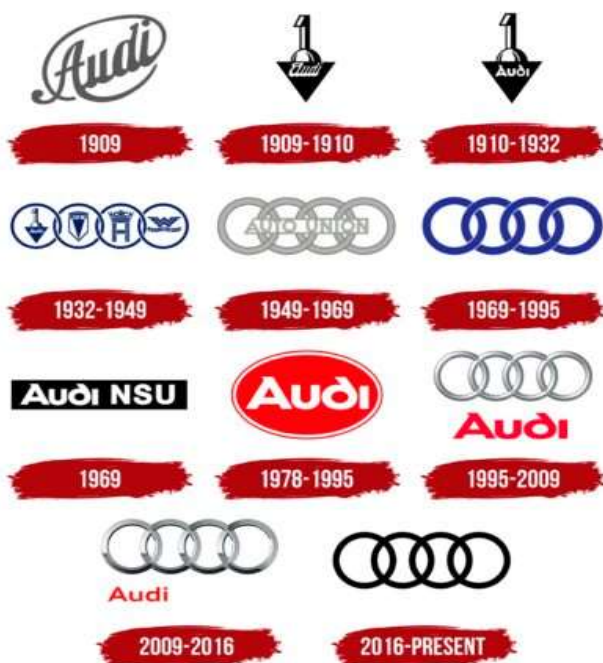


Fig. 1. Changes in Audi Brand Logo(1909 to present)[3]

As shown in figure 1, Audi's visual brand identity has undergone several changes from 1909 to the present. It evolved from complex geometric shapes and patterns to a minimalist design featuring just four interconnected rings. Audi has eliminated many unnecessary elements and lines, but no matter how much its visual identity changes, it still conveys the idea that Audi was originally composed of four car brands, representing the automotive alliance. Today, the name Audi serves as the collective brand name [2,3].

4.2 Color strategy

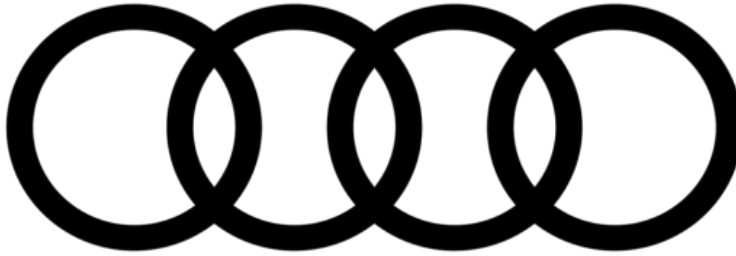


Fig. 2. Audi Logo (present)[3]

The brand increases visual impact and memorability by changing its colors, using fewer colors or a single tone. Audi is known for its luxurious and expensive brand image, with a vision of elegance and meticulous presentation. As shown in figure 2, previously Audi used gray, blue, and red, which came across as plain and lacking in design. The simple four rings did not provide much visual impact for consumers. However, the silver color, combined with some three-dimensional elements, gives a sense of high quality and futuristic technology. This conveys Audi's ongoing message to consumers of high quality and expensive materials [2,3].

4.3 Font selection

Overly complex fonts can complicate the consumer reading experience, increasing comprehension difficulty and reducing brand recognition and memorability. In contrast, using simple, clean fonts and minimizing unnecessary decorative elements, such as shadows, images, and gradients, can enhance brand recognition and readability. The choice of font directly impacts how a brand's visual identity is conveyed. Simple fonts can express professionalism and a sense of style, aligning with the aesthetic preferences of today's consumers for sustainable market development.

As shown in the image, although Audi previously used the four interconnected rings design accompanied by the logos of its four common brands, this made the appearance overly complex and cumbersome. However, as Audi grew in prominence, it shifted its visual identity from the intricate logos within the rings to finally adopting just the four interconnected rings. The current Audi visual identity appears simple, stylish, and highly readable [6-8].

4.4 Layout optimization

In today's digital media society, brands need to establish a global image that can be easily adjusted and expanded across different screen sizes and media. This includes careful typography and layout to ensure a consistent brand identity across various channels, enhancing the consumer experience. Brands should effectively use space and color combinations to highlight key elements that attract consumer attention and improve visual engagement. Audi now features just four simple interconnected rings, making it easy for consumers to recognize the brand regardless of the screen size or medium. The simplicity of the four rings means that, whether enlarged or reduced, the shape and design remain clear. This consistency across different media not only enhances the user experience but also strengthens brand recognition [6-8].

5 Shortcomings of the simplification of the Audi brand visual identity

5.1 Disconnect from brand heritage

Audi is a century-old automobile company. Although the brand's visual identity is now very simple, achieving consistency across various media, it conveys a sense of high quality [3]. However, being a century-old brand, Audi should retain some classic elements even as it evolves its visual identity. Only consumers who deeply understand Audi knows that it was originally comprised of four car brands, with the four rings representing these different brands. New consumers, however, may not be aware of this history, making it difficult for them to connect with and resonate with Audi's legacy. This lack of continuity with the brand's history can also diminish new consumers' sense of identification with the brand.

5.2 Reduced cross-cultural adaptability

Audi operates in multiple global markets, and consumers in different markets may have varying aesthetic expectations for brand identity and design [9]. The simplified design may lose its original appeal in certain markets, making it difficult to adapt to diverse cultural needs.

5.3 Risk of consumer acceptance

There may be differing levels of acceptance among consumers regarding the simplification of the brand's visual identity, especially among those accustomed to traditional designs. The new simplified brand image may not meet their expectations, leading to a decline in brand loyalty.

6 Development suggestions

6.1 Enhance digital platform experience

To captivate users and foster a deeper connection with the brand, it is essential to integrate advanced technological features into digital platforms. This can be achieved by incorporating dynamic elements, 3D effects, and interactive visuals that engage users and create an immersive experience. By leveraging virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, brands can offer innovative services such as virtual test drives and online vehicle configuration displays. These services not only enrich users' intuitive experience of the brand and products but also combine modern technology with traditional brand experiences, thereby strengthening brand recognition among new users.

6.2 Emphasize brand sustainability

Sustainability is a crucial aspect of any brand's identity, and it should be reflected in its visual components. By incorporating green or environmentally friendly design elements, brands can showcase their commitment to sustainability. This can be done by using eco-friendly paper and ink in promotional materials or adopting virtual electronic display methods. By combining nature and technology in the design language, brands can create an

image that is both eco-friendly and cutting-edge, integrating natural elements with a modern technological feel.

6.3 Embrace minimalism and luxury

A minimalist design approach should be continued by focusing on the core design elements and details of the vehicles during product presentations, emphasizing Audi's refinement and luxury [10]. Additionally, classic black and white tones or a single color scheme should be used to convey a high-end, professional brand image.

7 Market effects of simplifying brand visual identity

First, a simple brand visual identity enhances consumer recognition. In today's information-saturated market, consumers are bombarded with vast amounts of information from various media and brands. A streamlined visual identity allows a brand to stand out clearly in the market, increasing its exposure. Compared to complex and cumbersome designs, a simplified visual identity makes it easier for consumers to remember and grasp the brand. This not only strengthens the brand's presence in consumers' minds but also supports sustainable development in the market. Additionally, a simple brand visual identity is often perceived as a symbol of professionalism and trendiness. In an era that values minimalist design, straightforward visual identities better align with consumer aesthetic preferences. A clean and elegant global brand image conveys professionalism, reliability, and sustainability. In contrast, overly complex brand identities may seem outdated and unappealing, hindering market development. Moreover, simple visuals help consumers more easily remember and connect with the brand. In the digital media age, where attention spans are limited, simplifying visual identities can attract and retain consumer attention, reinforcing long-term brand memory. Finally, a simple brand visual identity facilitates cross-cultural communication. In globalized world, brands must navigate cultural differences to gain recognition and acceptance across regions. Complicated visual identities can lead to unnecessary confusion. In contrast, a straightforward visual identity minimizes the impact of cultural differences, fostering recognition among diverse consumers. This uniformity benefits the brand in global markets and enhances its influence in international arenas.

8 Conclusion

Brand visual identity and recognition are key factors for a brand's success. In today's ever-changing market environment, creating a lasting impression and a positive image in consumers' minds presents a significant challenge for brands. Simplifying brand visual identity is an effective solution. Brands can streamline their graphics by eliminating unnecessary elements and lines, emphasizing their characteristics and cultural values. Using simple, single colors can convey the desired image to consumers, for example, black and silver can evoke a sense of luxury and futuristic technology. Brands can also enhance their visual identities by selecting clean, straightforward fonts. This approach makes it easier for consumers to understand the brand image, fostering long-term memory. A simple brand visual identity allows for consistency across different screen sizes and media, enhancing recognition and recall. Moreover, in the globalized world, a simplified visual identity reduces the confusion caused by complex designs, making it more accessible and acceptable to a diverse range of consumers. This benefits the brand's effectiveness in global

markets. In summary, simplifying a brand's visual identity can enhance consumers' memory and recognition, supporting sustainable development in the market.

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