

# **BRAND-EVOKED MENTAL IMAGERY: THE ROLE OF BRANDS IN ELICITING MENTAL IMAGERY**

## **Abstract**

This research provides evidence of the role played by a brand in the stimulation of mental imagery. We anticipate that a familiar (vs. unfamiliar) brand will evoke higher levels of visual mental imagery in the consumer. Additionally, if the consumer exhibits favourability towards the brand, the visual mental imagery evoked will be enhanced. Therefore, we provide evidence of the moderating role of brand favourability in the relationship between brand familiarity and visual mental imagery. Our findings suggest that brands are evocative and are able to enhance (or reduce) information processing and, thus, the generation of visual mental images that we name “brand-evoked mental imagery”. The results contribute to the literature on branding and mental imagery and have several practical implications for marketers.

**Keywords:** branding; mental imagery; brand familiarity; brand favourability; moderation analysis; information processing

# **BRAND-EVOKED MENTAL IMAGERY: THE ROLE OF BRANDS IN ELICITING MENTAL IMAGERY**

## **1. Introduction**

Brands are amongst the most valuable and enduring assets capable of boosting a company's success (Kotler and Pfoertsch, 2007). In the marketing domain, since Keller (1993), there is ample agreement that certain outcomes in consumer behaviour are due to the presence of the brand. Browsing the pages of any popular social media account or even the push notifications on a mobile encourages customers to imagine themselves experiencing hundreds of products or services of different brands. Attractive shop window designs and virtual reality entice consumers to visualise their consumption experience through products and brands' visualisation (Bogicevic, Seo, Kandampully and Liu, 2019; Derbaix and Gombault 2016).

Mental imagery has extensively been studied in the marketing field's literature due to its powerful ability to create expectations, foster persuasion and influence a consumer's attitude, mood, behaviour and interpretations (Heyes et al., 2017; Kamleitner and Feuchtl, 2015; Escalas, 2004; Bone and Ellen, 1992; MacInnis and Price, 1987). In situations in which products cannot be experienced physically, people tend to form mental images of themselves using the brand or product by bringing to mind their previous experiences with it (Argyriou, 2012). Therefore, mental imagery is defined by consumer behaviour researchers as a process by which sensory information is represented in working memory (MacInnis and Price, 1987).

Research in the marketing context has identified different stimuli as being antecedents or facilitators of mental imagery in order to identify effective imagery-evoking tactics. These include visual stimuli, such as pictures (Holmes et al., 2008; Fennis, Das and Fransen, 2012;

Gavilan, Avello and Abril, 2014; Gao, Zhang and Lowrey, 2017) and video vs. audio (Kim et al., 2014), cognitive stimuli, such as words (Elder and Krishna, 2009), web design (Lee and Gretzel, 2012) and emotional facial expression (Suess and Rahman, 2015) as well as the visual depiction of products (Elder and Krishna, 2011).

As a consequence of the experienced mental imagery, a wide range of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses have been studied: attention (Rodero, 2012); ad recall and attitude towards the ad (Chang, 2013; Unnava, Agarwal and Haugtvedt, 1996; Bone and Ellen, 1992); advertising trust (Gavilan et al., 2014); intention to purchase (Argyriou, 2012); the generation and duration of positive feelings (Lee and Qiu, 2009); immersion experiences (Derbaix and Gombault, 2016); and brand beliefs and recall (Mikhailitchenko, Laroche and Mikhailitchenko, 2009).

One element capable of evoking abundant mental images that is consistently present in all marketing communications is the brand. Consumers are continuously exposed to brands throughout their everyday life (Brakus et al., 2009). Despite the importance of mental imagery in marketing and advertising literature, it is remarkable that this research is silent with regard to the study of real brands and their imagery-evoking abilities; a great number of conclusions have been drawn based on empirical results that used fictitious brands as stimuli in their experiments (Chang, 2013; Lee and Gretzel, 2012; Fennis, Das and Fransen, 2012; Miller, Hadjimarcou and Miciak, 2000; Unnava, Agarwal and Haugtvedt, 1996; Bone and Ellen, 1992). This study differs from previous studies in mental imagery that have exhaustively studied attitude toward the brand, attitude toward the ad and purchase intention as outcomes. However, no studies we are aware of have measured the effect that real brands will have in mental imagery and exerting vivid, numerous and elaborated mental images. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the role played by a brand in the stimulation of mental imagery when consumers are exposed to advertising.

Since brands differ in familiarity and favourability (Park and Stoel, 2005; Aaker and Stayman, 1992), in the present research, we explore the extent to which mental imagery is affected when the brands that evoke it differ in familiarity and favourability. Specifically, this research attempts to contribute to the literature by providing a better understanding of mental imagery evoked by brands by analysing the interaction of brand familiarity and brand favourability in the generation of mental images.

This research also has practical implications for marketers. This is because practitioners are eager for knowledge that helps them not only to increase brand equity, but also to benefit from this asset through the development of more efficient communication strategies. For example, the use of rich push notifications where the presence of the brand, and the imagery that it evokes, can exert a significant effect on the improvement of click-through rates or the ads inserted in social media, as most of them including a picture and the brand. All of this communication relies on the ability of the brand and the picture to elicit mental imagery.

In the following sections, we present the literature review and our hypothesis, then we give detailed information on the study that has been conducted and, finally, we conclude by addressing the research's specific contributions and presenting suggested lines of future research in this area.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis**

### ***2.1. Mental Imagery***

Mental imagery, sometimes referred to as “visualising” or “seeing in the mind’s eye”, has been defined as “a process by which nonverbal information is represented in working memory” (MacInnis and Price, 1987). This mental representation encompasses all sensory modalities: visual, auditory, olfactory, kinaesthetic, gustatory and haptic. However, research has primarily focused on its visual dimension due to the dominance of visual images in our

perception; two-thirds of all perceptual information that reaches the brain comes through the visual system (Zaltman, 1997).

Visual mental imagery differs from the mere act of seeing in that it focuses on recognition and object identification. Visual mental imagery involves the generation of quasi-perceptual mental images that transform visual input at will (Adaval, Saluja and Jiang, 2019). Imagery describes a quasi-sensory experience of which we are self-consciously aware and that exists in the absence of those stimulus conditions that are known to produce their genuine sensory or perceptual counterparts. As part of the perceptive experience, it is often formed in the consumer's mind prior to develop behavioural intentions. In fact, consumers often use imagery to facilitate decision-making (Huh, Vosgerau and Morewedge, 2016). For instance, they imagine what a dessert tastes like to assess their preference for a choice when eating at a restaurant. Imagery also elicits physiological responses such as salivation when a mental representation of the smell is available (Krishna, Morrin and Sayin, 2014).

An individual's cognitive style may exert a difference in their experience of mental images when, as consumers, they are faced with the same stimuli (Childers, Houston and Heckler, 1985). Cognitive style refers to a consistent way of acquiring, processing and organising information. Thus, high visualisers, who are characterised by being image oriented, preferring to be shown images, and enjoying visual information, tend to experience more intense visual mental imagery in response to imagery evoking stimuli (Fennis et al., 2012). Visual processing, the tendency to form images, seems to be fairly innate rather than a preference primed by situational factors (Amit, Hoeflin, Hamzah and Federenko, 2017).

Visual mental imagery can also be explained as a result of the nature of the stimulus. For example, certain features of the images, such as concreteness (Petrova and Cialdini, 2005), vividness (Gavilan, Fernández-Lores and Martínez-Navarro, 2020) and the manipulation of the images that encourage mental simulations (Cian, Krishna and Elder,

2015) facilitate imagery spontaneously from pictorial inputs. More recently, as technology has created new interactive experiences, new types of imagery-evoking tools have emerged. These include digital games, mobile advertisements, virtual models that enable online shoppers to “try on” products and three-dimensional product or store visualisation (Ha, Huang and Park, 2019).

Information retrieval is at the core of the information processing required to form visual mental imagery. Subsequent explanations of visual mental imagery suggest that the effects of imagery stem from the availability of imaginal information based on the notion of multiple retrieval paths (Paivio, 1990) as well as on the favourable subjective experiences that accompany the sensory information (Krishna and Schwarz, 2014). This elaborated thinking process allows customers to recover and mentally live or re-live past experiences, even from long-term memories, when such real experiences are not available. When stimuli elicit mental images, mental representations of diverse modality stored in the memory are reactivated (Suess and Rahman, 2015)

Mental imagery is assumed to be multi-dimensional. Babin and Burns (1998) established a three-dimensional model of mental imagery consisting of vividness, quantity and elaboration. Vividness refers to the clarity with which the individual experiences an image and reflects its quality, intensity and distinctiveness (Bone and Ellen, 1992). The quantity of images refers to the number of images that come to mind when evoked by a stimulus (McGill and Anand, 1989) and the elaboration of mental imagery refers to the activation of information, beyond that provided by the stimulus, in the generation of mental images (Babin and Burns, 1998).

Vividness has been widely considered responsible for enhancing message processing (Smith and Shaffer, 2000) and, thus, it is considered to be most representative of mental

imagery. However, a comprehensive set of dimensions of mental imagery is rarely taken into account.

## **2.2. Brand Familiarity**

Brands become familiar when consumers are exposed to advertising, have previous shopping experiences, have used the brand or have received information about the brand from their peers. Park and Stoel (2005, p. 150) define brand familiarity as “the number of brand-related direct or indirect experiences that have been accrued by the consumer”; it reflects associations that exist within a consumer’s memory. As such, the positive valence of these events increases its perceived familiarity (Monin, 2003). Research showed that brand familiarity influences the recall of advertising messages (Campbell and Keller, 2003) and determines the effectiveness of advertising appeal (Rhee and Jung, 2019). Therefore, familiar brands are likely to receive special attention and interest from consumers (Yu, et al., 2017) and, accordingly, consumers’ ability to recognise the brand under different circumstances facilitates message processing.

Based on Paivio’s dual coding theory (1990), the nature of mental representation that is triggered by a stimulus is based on the notion that there are two ways that knowledge is acquired and stored, verbal associations and visual imagery, and both can be used when recalling information. Prior experiences with the brand create multiple encoding processes and multiple retrieval pathways that will be tapped into at the time of recall. Thus, familiar and well-known brands, when appearing to combine visual and verbal inputs, such as online ads, facilitate multiple pathways to retrieve arguments with which to build visual mental imagery. The more information that is available at the time of the decision, the greater the representational richness of the visual mental imagery evoked.

Given these arguments, it is expected that brand familiarity will act as a pathway for the retrieval of visual mental images. Therefore, we would expect visual mental imagery

(vividness, quantity and elaboration) to be superior in situations where customers are familiar with the brand and inferior when familiarity is limited.

### **2.3. Brand Favourability**

Brand favourability refers to the ability of the brand to provoke positive feelings about the brand in consumers. These consumers' beliefs in the ability of brands to deliver high-quality functional benefits lead to higher brand favourability (Gupta, Czinkota and Melewar, 2013). Favourable brands are perceived as having positive associations, valuable attributes and offering benefits that consumers believe will satisfy their needs and wants (Keller, 1993).

As thoughts, feelings and behaviours are grounded in sensory experiences (Krishna and Schwarz, 2014), and customers experience the world through their senses, sensory information, such as the logo of a brand, evokes the accompanying subjective experiences available in the memory. According to the availability-valence theory (Kisielius and Sternthal, 1986), the cognitive elaboration of visual mental imagery representations may depend on the favourableness of the information stored in the memory at the time of judgment. A positive bias is associated with mental imagery because people are more prone to evoke positive than negative outcomes, thus associations with a positive valence are more easily accessible. In the context of advertising, studies show a positive bias of mental imagery elicited in radio ads (Bolls and Muehling, 2007) and websites (Lee and Gretzel, 2012) because consumers focused on the positive aspects of their imagination (Maier and Dost, 2018). Additionally, Kisielius and Sternthal's point of view (1986) assumes that the availability of memorable information may enhance, undermine or have no effect on imagery processing depending on the favourableness of the information. Therefore, we would expect that the favourable predisposition of individuals towards the brand would facilitate imagery processing and the creation of visual mental imagery.

Based on this, consumers who are more familiar with a specific brand, when faced with visual ads, may be more likely to evoke mental imagery since brand familiarity facilitates imagery processing of the ad. The availability of sensory, affective, cognitive, physical or social content stored in memory encourages the creation of visual mental images. If these consumers also experience brand favourability, mental imagery elicited by the visual ad is enhanced. Therefore, mental imagery stems from sensory information and increases in consonance with the availability of favourable information provided in the message. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: A familiar (vs. unfamiliar) brand will be more likely to evoke visual mental imagery for those consumers with high (vs. low) favourability toward the brand.

PLACE FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

To test this hypothesis, we conducted an experiment and we provide evidence of the interaction between brand familiarity and brand favourability in predicting visual mental imagery.

### **3. Experimental Design: Moderation Effect**

In this study, we provide evidence of the interaction between brand familiarity and brand favourability in predicting mental imagery. We anticipate that a brand that is highly (vs. not) familiar will evoke high levels of mental imagery. Additionally, if the consumer shows high (vs. low) favourability toward the brand, the mental imagery evoked by the brand will be enhanced. Thus, a more (vs. less) familiar brand may have different impacts on the mental imagery evoked for a favourable (vs. unfavourable) brand.

### ***3.1. Stimuli and Pre-Test***

Advertising is a target communication and, therefore, to enhance the likelihood that the sample would process the target ad, we administered a brief questionnaire to a sample of 34 undergraduate students (females = 55.9%, median age = 21, S.D. = 2.4, Journalism degree) in which we asked them about their interest in various product categories.

Participants rated their level of interest in, and their degree of familiarity with, fashion and accessories, cosmetics, food and beverages and mobile devices on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = lowest and 7 = highest). Clothes were rated highly in both dimensions (MFashion = 5.4, SD = 1.44 for interest; MFashion = 6.1, SD = .85 for familiarity).

Next, we conducted three pre-tests to ensure a satisfactory stimulus. The goal of the first pre-test was to select a brand capable of eliciting a wide range of responses in terms of familiarity and favourability. We conducted a Delphi method with five vloggers who were experts on youth fashion. The experts agreed on the suitability of the Mango brand ([www.mango.com](http://www.mango.com)) because it was a familiar brand that exerted a wide range of emotions among the youth.

The second pre-test consisted of the creation of a picture congruent with the personality of the brand Mango. To do so, we conducted qualitative research with two focus groups in order to select the main features to be included in the pictures used in the pre-test. Creative advertising consultant preselected a set of five pictures for a clothing advertisement targeted at twenty-year-old urban youth. Then, a sample of 25 subjects from this target (females = 60%, median age = 21.2, S.D. = 2.8) was asked to rank the five pictures according to the degree of congruence with the Mango brand based on the following instruction: *It's predictable that this picture comes from a Mango ad.* The selected picture was the most congruent for 68% of the sample (See Appendix A).

Finally, we conducted a third pre-test (N = 10, females = 50%, median age = 20.8, S.D.= 1) to evaluate the wording and understandability of the scales used in the study.

### **3.2. Main Study**

The participants (N = 160, females = 59.4%, median age = 21, S.D. = 2.6) in the experiment were undergraduate students from a Marketing course of a large Spanish university. The students were rewarded with extra credit for their participation. The study was conducted in a dedicated computer room at the university. Participants were informed upon their arrival at the site that the study involved research on advertising and shopping behaviour. They then gave their consent and received a password to enter the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was completed in three stages. First, they answered some questions about their familiarity and favourability with four brands: Mango and other real filler brands (H&M, Zara and Bershka). Immediately after this, participants read a brief description of the context: they were browsing a shopping webpage where they came across the advertisement of Mango that opened on the screen as a pop-up window for five seconds. Finally, participants answered the questions referring to mental imagery ability (MIA), mental imagery and some filler questions about shopping behaviour. The participants were then fully debriefed and thanked for their collaboration. The experiment lasted between five and ten minutes.

### **3.3. Measurement Scales**

In this study, the independent variable was brand familiarity, the moderator variable was brand favourability and the dependent variable was mental imagery. Also, MIA was measured as a covariate in the studied model.

*Brand Familiarity:* A 3-item brand familiarity scale adapted from Kent and Allen (1994) was used. Responses to the prompt, “Regarding the brand are you:

unfamiliar/familiar; inexperienced/experienced; not knowledgeable/ knowledgeable” were rated on a 7-point semantic differential scale (ranging from 1 = strongly low to 7 = strongly high).

*Brand Favourability:* A 3-item scale (extremely dislike/extremely like; bad/good; unpleasant/pleasant) was adopted from Cox and Cox (1988), due to its high internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .94). Items were rated on a 7-point semantic differential scale (ranging from 1 = strongly low to 7 = strongly high).

*Mental Imagery:* To capture and measure all aspects of mental imagery, we adapted the scale developed by Babin and Burns (1998) consisting of three dimensions: vividness, quantity and elaboration. All the items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Vividness refers to the clarity with which the individual experiences an image and taps into the quality aspects of the evoked visual mental imagery (Babin and Burns, 1998; Marks, 1972). Vividness was measured using 5 items following the prompt, “After seeing the ad” and included: I can clearly imagine what this ad communicates; I can imagine in detail ...; I can imagine a well-define image of.; I have a hard time imagining what this ad is trying to communicate (reverse code); and When I look at this ad, images very sharp and vivid come to my mind. Quantity of imagery refers to the number of images that come to mind while processing the information (McGill and Anand, 1989). This was measured using 3 items: Seeing this ad, I am imaging a lot of things; This ad does not suggest me to imagine anything (reverse code); and This ad activates my imagination. Elaboration refers to the activation of information, beyond that provided by the stimulus, in the generation of mental imagery (Babin and Burns, 1998). Elaboration was measured using 3 items: I can imagine what it would be like to wear the clothes of the ad; I can imagine how I’d feel if I wore the clothes from the ad; and I fantasised about the clothes in the ad.

*Mental Imagery Ability (MIA)*: The differentiation of the influence of consumer's cognitive style when processing brand stimuli from the effect of familiarity and favourability of such brand stimuli is of particular interest in this article. For this reason, we propose to control the individual's ability to use imagery when processing information. This was measured by the Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire (Marks, 1972). This scale distinguishes between low and high visualisers and has been used in advertising research to control potential individual differences in the use of mental imagery during information processing (Fennis et al., 2012). The scale consists of 16 items rated on a 1–5 unipolar scale ranging from 1 = no image at all to 5 = a very clear mental image. In this study, the scores of the 16 items had very high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81). A factor analysis yielded one major factor suggesting that MIA is a unidimensional construct and a genuine individual-differentiating internal disposition. We averaged a participant's item scores to arrive at the individual's MIA score, which could range from 1.0 to 5.0 (Fennis et al., 2012).

#### **4. Results**

In order to get an index of mental imagery according to their dimensions, the 11 items of the mental imagery scale were subjected to a principal component analysis (PCA). The KMO value was .796 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p < .000$ ). The number of extracted factors with eigenvalues equal to or greater than one was three, referring to the three dimensions of mental imagery. All of the items were assessed on their appropriate factors with factor loadings higher than .6. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha and was found to be .878 (Nunnally, 1978). The scale was summed and averaged (M\_IMAGERY) to form an index of mental imagery available to be used in further analysis (Bolls and Muehling, 2007; Gavilan et al., 2014).

Next, we used PROCESS macro Model 1 provided by Hayes (2017) to measure the interaction effect. Table 1 summarises the moderation analysis of brand favourability on the

relationship between brand familiarity and mental imagery while controlling MIA as an individual disposition variable.

Low levels of brand familiarity and favourability predicted low levels of mental imagery, with MIA as a significant covariate.

Consistent with H1, the interaction of brand familiarity and brand favourability was significant, which meant that the impact of brand familiarity on the generation of mental images depended on the level of brand favourability. Therefore, high brand favourability boosts the mental imagery of familiar brands.

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The Johnson-Neyman technique was used to evaluate the region of significance defined by the interaction. The impact of brand familiarity on mental imagery was found to be statistically significant across the entire range of brand favourability. Furthermore, brand favourability at all levels of brand familiarity increased the amount of evoked mental imagery, when controlling for MIA (Figure 2).

PLACE FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

These results give support to H1 and confirm the effect of brand-evoked mental imagery and go one step further to suggest the importance of both factors (familiarity and favourability). In other words, the process of evoking mental images is a complex process related to external stimuli and the prior experiences of the subject.

## 5. Discussion

The goal of this research was to explore the moderating role of brand familiarity and favourability on mental imagery, i.e., so-called brand-evoked mental imagery. Findings show that a brand can exert a significant influence on mental imagery when processing advertising. It should be noted that this research does not address the recognition of the brand by the individual, but rather addresses the mental images that are shaped by the consumer from a visual stimulus of a given brand. What is interesting is not that a consumer is familiar with the brand, but that because they are familiar with the brand, more mental images are formed. Thus, we provided support to the brand-evoked mental imagery effect when processing advertising. Carried out under quasi-natural conditions, this study showed the significant interaction between brand familiarity, brand favourability and mental imagery. It was found that when customers are familiar with the brand and are at least favourably predisposed toward it, then mental imagery significantly increases. Therefore, brand-evoked mental imagery should be considered a consequence of branding and one that arises from the need to respond to the demands of the external world and, subsequently, facilitates information processing. This is because consumers proactively use imagery as part of their approach when making purchase decisions.

For years, marketers have encouraged consumers to “use their imagination” since it has been proven that visualisation contributes to increasing purchase intention (Babin and Burns, 1998). From the naïve slogans calling consumers to “imagine this or imagine that” to the visual depiction of products (Elder and Krishna, 2011), there is sufficient evidence that supports the idea that any strategies that facilitate imagery are interesting to academics and practitioners. This research shows that managing brand experience is indeed an effective strategy for facilitating subsequent mental imagery. The so-called brand-evoked mental

imagery effect emphasises that imagery is an outcome of the marketing of a product or a service based on its brand, and is not a result of the product or service in and of itself.

Theoretically, our work contributes directly to the communications and persuasion literature stream on mental imagery, thus, increasing the knowledge about the antecedents of mental imagery. More generally, it adds to branding literature since the brand-evoked mental imagery effect is the result of the branding process. This study differs from previous research on mental imagery processing in the field of marketing and advertising as previous research has shown that mental imagery elicited by advertising exerts a positive influence on building brand attitude (Chang, 2013; Mikhailitchenko et al., 2009). However, those studies were developed using fictitious brands. Our results do not contradict prior studies, but rather analyse a situation that actually exists. When consumers encounter advertising, the brand is often known and sometimes consumers even have previous experience with it. Therefore, brand familiarity and brand favourability facilitate the creation of mental imagery. These results, together with the above, indicate a reciprocal relationship between brand attitude and mental imagery.

Both in our conceptual development and in our experimental design, we have tried to keep our context as simple as possible, deliberately avoiding studying any cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural responses to mental imagery. We accept as valid the previous results that probed the positive persuasive properties of mental imagery in advertising processing (Gavilan et al., 2014; Argyriou, 2012). Nevertheless, recent research suggests there are certain conditions under which the effect of mental imagery is not positive, but rather negative (Lakshmanan, Forcum and Krishnan, 2013). In fact, a vivid message would make it more difficult for the individual to process and remember the arguments of the message, since the availability of vivid information in the memory could be tangential, or even irrelevant, to the message itself. Also, visually associating the product with one's self

invites for greater scrutiny as well intensifying affective responses (Gawronski et al., 2007). Stimuli that elicit self-consciousness can intensify affective responses that, in the case of their being negative, could be transferred to the brand. Thus, further research could address specific conditions under which brand-evoked mental imagery elicits positive or negative outcomes.

It would be interesting to take into consideration the customers' goals when encountering advertising. In this sense, future studies could also explore the moderating role of the goals that consumers have when they process advertising (Jiang et al., 2014). For example, we did not explore the differences between brand-evoked mental imagery that takes place when consumers are looking for information about the brand or its product, as compared to re-creating their experiences as a consumer.

There are also psychological features that could moderate brand-evoked mental imagery. For example, to better understand the influence of situational factors, such as mood state, as well as individual differences, such as visual cognitive style, such psychological features could be of interest. In this sense, Myers and Sar (2015) have shown that mood state facilitates mental imagery processing and, at the same time, distracts detail-oriented analytical processing.

Regarding individual differences, visual cognitive style refers to the preference, or visual imagery tendency, of an individual when processing visual information. Some individuals predominantly represent information verbally, whereas others represent information more visually. It would be of interest to investigate if the brand-evoked mental imagery effect is higher among high visualisers since they experience greater imagery through visual inputs (Ostinelli and Böckenholt, 2017; Yoo and Kim, 2014).

This research has numerous direct implications for the implementation of management. We have shown that branding can affect a consumer's advertising processing in

all branding dimensions: awareness, positive experiences with the brand, and congruency between the brand and its communications, all of which shape mental imagery. The brand, through its logo, is sufficient to facilitate visual imagery if there are strong links to the brand in the minds of the consumers. An example can be seen in the tourism sector which is highly concerned with customer experience either prior or after purchasing. Hotel brands prompt tourists to visualise their lodging experiences (Bogicevic et al., 2019). Brand evoked mental imagery highlights the relevance of the brand presence in any marketing activity, including advertising, promotion, on the product packaging at the point of sales and even on the employees' uniforms. Thus, the mere presence of the brand triggers a wealth of thoughts and emotions.

In today's digital environment, smartphones have become the main means to get and stay in contact with consumers. The small size of the screen and the large amount of information received on the mobile device mean that brands compete for the user's attention and create a new context for creativity in which a simple layout of a brand name or logo alongside an image can be more effective than more complex layouts. Even in the more competitive context of rich push notifications, a glance at the brand could be key to the effectiveness of the message if, in that glance, the consumer creates a vivid image of the brand.

Brand evoked mental imagery is, among other things, a branding effect. As such, Keller's words in his seminal paper (1993) are still valid: "Marketers need a more thorough understanding of consumer behaviour as a basis for making better strategic decisions [...] Perhaps a firm's most valuable asset [...] is the knowledge that has been created about the brand in consumers' minds." A common case study used in business schools is of the brand Zara; an apparel empire that does not invest in advertising but that, from a customer perspective, has a highly familiar and favourable logo. We are sure, however, that the mere

presence of the brand triggers a wealth of thoughts and emotions. After all, they say that a picture paints a thousand words; perhaps certain words also paint a thousand pictures.

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