



Exploring T-shirt Slogans by Content Analysis

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Introduction and Research Background

Brand slogans consist of short phrases or short sentences that are primarily used to cue brand recall or recognition (Miller & Toman, 2015). They play a supplemental but oftentimes significant role to brand names and logos within the task of communicating brand identity. Slogans are generally believed to facilitate learning about some aspect of a brand or company. They are employed for a variety of reasons such as helping to differentiate the company/brand, providing customers with a reason to buy, or stating a distinctive competency (Dowling & Kabanoff, 1996). Literature has indicated that effective slogans must be likeable, creative, stylistic, meaningful, motivating, and memorable (Miller & Toman, 2015; Briggs & Janakiraman, 2017).

Slogan is a way for fashion brands/products to communicate who they are and differentiate from competitors. They can evoke consumers' positive emotions and feelings associated with the products/brands, and increase the products/brands' desirability. Effective fashion slogans can grab consumers' attention quickly and lure consumers into consumption. In the diverse fashion apparel markets, the T-shirt, the most basic and comfort clothing, can take on social, political and cultural meanings simply by the graphic design applied (Kinley, 2015). A simple T-shirt could be very stylish just because of a unique slogan on it. Young American consumers especially love T-shirts with attractive slogans, and T-shirts with unique and eye-catching slogans have been a predominate fashion staple in many young American consumers' wardrobe. Despite the popularity of the usage of slogans on T-shirts, there is very limited research on T-shirt slogans. There is no study that investigates consumers' perceptions and evaluations of T-shirt slogans. This paper was designed and conducted to fill this gap. Specifically, the study has two primary purposes. First, this study aims to investigate young American consumers' general attitude towards slogans on T-shirts. Second, this study aims to identify the factors affecting the likability of T-shirt slogans. The results from this preliminary study serve as a foundation for future research in T-shirt slogans.

Methodology

Previous studies suggest that young people are more aware of slogans than older people and young consumers are more likely to wear clothing with slogans. A set of familiar T-shirt slogans was generated from a self-report survey administered to undergraduate and graduate students at two universities in the US. Participants were asked to collect T-shirt slogans from popular fashion brands and they were also asked to indicate whether they liked or disliked each of these slogans and the reasons why. The majority of the 90 respondents were female and under 25 years old. The participants received extra credit for participating in this study.

Data Analysis and Results

Since content analysis is considered an effective and quantitative textual method that is used for analyzing slogans ((Bayrak & Kozak, 2013), it was used to count the number of T-shirt slogans

and identify themes and reasons in this study. We have collected in total more than 500 unique slogans from 180 clothing brands (both men's and women's T-shirt brands). Summarized below are the key findings from this preliminary study:

- The top ten T-shirt slogans based on the frequency mentioned by respondents are: Just do it (*Nike*), Guccify Yourself (*Gucci*), Equality (*Nike*), The force is female (*Nike*), Working hard at hardly working (*Wildfox*), Impossible is nothing (*Adidas*), Team USA (*Ralph Lauren*), Made in the nineties (*Forever 21*), Tacos are always a good idea (*Show Me Your Mumu*), and Waiting for Friday (*Zara*).
- American young consumers generally have favorable attitudes toward T-shirt slogans. Respondents in this study indicated that they like over 68% of the slogans collected in this study.
- Popular slogans are likely to be used by multiple brands. For example, the slogan "Amour" appeared on T-shirts from at least three brands identified in this study: *Forever 21*, *J.Crew* and *Maison Labiche*.
- Sportswear brands (e.g. *Nike* and *Adidas*) and fast fashion brands (e.g. *H&M* and *Forever 21*) are more likely to offer T-shirts with slogans. Over 30% of the brands identified by respondents are either sportswear brands or fast fashion brands.
- The study has identified the characteristics of likable T-shirt slogans that are summarized in Table 1. The slogans respondents dislike normally have exactly opposite characteristics. Some respondents also stated that they don't like a slogan because it is in a foreign language, so they don't know what it means (e.g. "Paix sur la terre" from *J.Crew*). In addition, the way the slogan is designed also affects its likeability. For example, one respondent stated "I think choose love is a nice slogan but I don't like the way it is printed and laid out on the shirt".
- The findings suggest that T-shirt slogans for strong brands are generally better liked than slogans for weak brands. It confirms that brand strength has some effect on the attitude towards slogans (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2005).

Table 1. Characteristics of likable T-shirt slogans

Characteristics	Examples
Simple and clear message	Just do it (<i>Nike</i>), Live simply (<i>Patagonia</i>), Equality (<i>Nike</i>)
Creative or unique message	Maybe baby (<i>Topshop</i>), No Thank you (<i>Junk Food</i>), Shut up and run (<i>Nike</i>), I had nothing to wear, so I put on this Moschino T-shirt (<i>Moschino</i>)
Positive or inspiring message	Work it (<i>Kate Spade</i>), You can never dream big (<i>H&M</i>), Impossible is nothing (<i>Adidas</i>), Stay humble (<i>Forever 21</i>)
Relatable message	Beachin (<i>O'Neill</i>), Tacos are always a good idea (<i>Show Me Your Mumu</i>), I love my dog (<i>Wildfox</i>), Made in the nineties (<i>Forever 21</i>), Shoes & Spaghetti (<i>H&M</i>)
Meaningful or strong message	Protect this house (<i>Under Armour</i>), Team USA (<i>Ralph Lauren</i>), The force is female (<i>Nike</i>), Brothers through everything (<i>Adidas</i>)
Slogan with brand name	Guccify Yourself (<i>Gucci</i>), Juicy (<i>Juicy Couture</i>), Love Pink (<i>Victoria's Secret</i>), Classic like a pair of Reebok (<i>Reebok</i>)
Slogan reflecting brand identity	Off the wall (<i>Vans</i>), East Hampton (<i>Ralph Lauren</i>), Never Stop Exploring (<i>The North Face</i>)
Jingles and rhyming slogans	Uh Huh Honey (<i>Forever 21</i> & <i>Topshop</i>), Working hard at hardly working (<i>Wildfox</i>)
Ideal slogan design	Right color, font, and layout

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