

Cashing in on Distinctive Assets: A Descriptive Investigation into the use of Credit Cards to Build Brand Identity in the Banking Sector

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Abstract

When effectively linked to the brand, visual elements such as logos, images and colours, act as powerful mnemonic devices to build brand identity, improving brand recognition, recall, and equity. Despite this, little empirical research investigates the application of visual brand identity strategies in the context of financial services. This research investigates the use of credit cards as a vehicle to reinforce key identity elements for banking brands. 227 credit cards are examined across 16 banks in the UK, USA and China. We find banks are forgoing a critical opportunity to strengthen brand identity, with numerous cards omitting cornerstone visual identifiers such as the brand name and logo. Design homogeneity between brands for functionally similar cards suggests colour is being used as a design tool to visually differentiate product offerings, rather than unify them under a common brand identity. This has implications for how to build a strong visual identity in a service industry.

Keywords: *Brand Identity; Product Portfolio Branding; Financial Services Branding*

Track: Product and Brand Management