

A Review on the Importance of Logo Design on Brand Identity in the Sports Industry: Examples of 10 Preferred Sports Brands Around the World

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Abstract

Due to changing technology and developing social standards, people have had the opportunity to produce more than they need and to make profit by selling what they produce. Increases in the income levels of societies that can produce and turn what they produce into a commercial gain have led to an increase in the welfare levels of societies and this has led to an increase in the free time of individuals. This multifaceted developmental structure has revealed the importance of the sports phenomenon, which has become the centre of attention of societies both at the recreational and professional level. In parallel with the relevant situations, societies now want to obtain comfort experience in terms of sportive products as in all areas of life, and all these factors have paved the way for the birth of the concept of sports marketing, which is a sub-discipline of marketing. In the phenomenon of sports marketing, which is based on the principle of positively influencing the consumer's tendency to prefer a product or service with a general definition and whose importance value is increasing day by day in today's industry, it has been observed that one of the elements that attract attention with its importance and necessity is the logo designs of brands producing sports products. In this study, the logos of 10 different sports product brands preferred worldwide, including Adidas, Asics, Hummel, Kappa, Lacoste, New Balance, Nike, Puma, U.S. POLO ASSN, Slazenger, were examined by comparing their similar and different aspects, and as a result, it can be said that logos aim to permanence in the human mind with associations that visually express a phenomenon, event or historical approach. In addition, it contributes to the literature as a source in the stage of determining the logos of sports brands to be established in the future. The aim of the study is to address the importance of logo design in creating brand identity in the sports sector and to be a guide for entrepreneurs who want to take their place in sports product marketing.

Key Words: Brand Identity, Logo Design, Sports Marketing

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Introduction

Due to the developing technology and changing social standards, people have had the opportunity to produce more than they need and to make profit by selling what they produce. Increases in the income levels of societies that can produce and turn what they produce into a commercial gain have led to an increase in the welfare levels of societies. The increase in the welfare levels of societies has brought along an increase in the free time of individuals. This multi-faceted developmental structure has revealed the importance of the sports phenomenon, which has become the centre of attention of societies both at the professional and recreational level, and societies have now become willing to experience comfort in terms of sporting products as in every aspect of life. All these factors have paved the way for the emergence of the phenomenon of sports marketing, which has an important share in today's industry.

It is useful to say that the development of sports marketing is intertwined with the development of the marketing concept. Because for the globalising world, regardless of the sector, the concept of marketing represents a dynamic process in all categories where a product or service flows from the producer to the consumer. In this context, many definitions have been made about the concept of marketing until today. Especially the American Marketing Association (AMA) has provided definitions to the literature that can be analysed at a systematic level.

The first definition made by the AMA in 1935 was "Marketing is the business activities that provide the flow of goods and services from the producer to the consumer" (AMA1935). In 1985, in its new definition, AMA emphasised that marketing is the process of planning and implementing the development, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services and ideas in order to realise changes that can achieve goals (AMA, 1985). In a 2007 definition, AMA states that marketing is the activities involving organisational arrangements and processes for creating, informing, delivering and changing value for customers, buyers, stakeholders and society in general (Çakırer, 2020). In another 2017 definition, it is emphasised that marketing is a broad process that includes activities such as creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging value for consumers, customers, partners and communities (AMA, 2021). Based on the definitions, it can be said that the concept of marketing is the art of creating value for society and positively influencing the consumer's tendency to prefer a service or product. Affecting the consumer's tendency to prefer a service or product in a positive way is a delicate task, especially in today's conditions. Because the competitive environment in the globalising world and the increase in the number of substitute products observed in parallel with this situation is a warning for many companies in the sports marketing sector to maintain their current share in the market. Therefore, every company that has created or endeavours to create value on society should ensure continuity in improvement activities in order to maintain its current image and share in the market and clearly reflect their unique styles and features that distinguish them from their competitors to their customers.

The unique styles that companies reflect and the characteristics that distinguish them from their competitors are undoubtedly closely related to the phenomenon of creating a brand identity, and are even intertwined concepts that cannot be considered separately from each other. Cemalcılar's (1988) definition of "A brand is a name, symbol, shape or a combination of these that identifies the identity of the goods of producers or sellers and distinguishes their goods from their competitors" supports the related discourse and Tokol's (1994) definition of "A brand is a name or symbol that aims to introduce goods or services to consumers" also has common elements with Cemalcılar's (1988) definition in terms of similar concepts such as name, symbol, symbol. The first step in the expression of the unique styles of brands, regardless of name, symbol or symbol, is the concepts of logo and emblem.

According to Zintzmeyer (2007), "Logo is a specially designed symbol or forms that represent the visual elements of companies with unique typefaces, while emblems are specially designed symbols or forms that represent companies and are loaded with meanings that reflect the company's characteristics. Therefore, an examination of the logos and/or emblems of sporting product brands preferred worldwide in the sports sector will be useful in terms of understanding the importance of logo and emblem design in creating brand identity in the sports sector and will be a guide for entrepreneurs who want to take their place in sporting product marketing.

In this study, the logos of 10 sportive product brands preferred worldwide, namely Adidas, Asics, Hummel, Kappa, Lacoste, New Balance, Nike, Puma, U.S. POLO ASSN., Slazenger, were examined. In this context, the aim of this study is to understand the importance of logo design on brand identity in the sports sector through some sports brand logos and to provide inspiration and information on logo design for new brands that want to operate in sports products and services.

Findings

1. Adidas Example



Figure 1: 1990 Adidas Logo Design.

Adidas is one of the few brands that have managed to maintain its existence in the sporting goods industry for many years. Before addressing the mission and logos of Adidas adopted in the historical process, it is useful to take an etymological approach to the name of the brand.

Adidas was inspired by the name of its founder Adolf Dassler. The name Adidas is still used today by combining the first three letters of the name Adi and the first three letters of the surname Dassler, "Das" (Çubukçu & Kaymak, 2020). Adolf Dassler's brother Rudolph Dassler is the founder of another popular brand Puma. It is possible to say that the story of these two brothers, who made a name for themselves with different names in the same sector, is quite interesting for those who do not know. Two brothers who opened a workshop to make and sell shoes in the town of Herzogenaurach in Germany just before the Second World War, fell into some disagreements with the start of the Second World War, and after the war, they opened two separate workshops on both sides of the river dividing the town of Herzogenaurach into two. It is also rumoured that although Adi and Rudolph brothers gifted these two big brands to the world, they said goodbye to each other as sulks (Yalçın, 2012). When we return to our subject and look at the logos of the Adidas brand, it would be right to start with the famous three lines.

The emergence of the use of three stripes and their appearance on a shoe dates back to 1949, and it is said that Emil Zapotek was the first athlete to wear three-stripped running shoes in his career, in which he broke 18 world records in 15 years. After the 1960s, it is known that Adidas often included three stripes in its productions (Yalçın, 2012).

It is known that Adidas' logo consisting of a 3-leaf clover, designed after the logo consisting of 3 stripes, was introduced at the Olympics in Munich in 1971. Because "Adidas became the official sponsor of the Olympics in Munich in 1971 for the first time, and at the Olympic Games that started on 26 August, the launch of Adidas' three-stripped clover-leaf logo was also held here. " (Çubukçu and Kaymak, 2022). It is believed that the clover leaf symbol in the design of this three leaf logo, which is used in the production of sportswear and sports bags, represents luck for the Adidas brand. The clover leaf logo, which is thought to shape street culture and lifestyle, has also become an important symbol of the Adidas Originals collection, which is still in use today (Çubukçu and Kaymak, 2022).

Another current logo of Adidas is the three-digit logo created in 1990. This symbol consisting of three steps represents a mountain and/or the summit of a mountain. It is emphasised that the mountain figure used in the logo draws attention to the difficulties to be overcome and the goals to be achieved. Created in 1990, the main inspiration for this logo design is thought to be the shoes produced by Adidas. Because the main reason why the logo is inclined to the left and creates an appearance that progresses right upwards is that the shoes have the same appearance when viewed from the side. To summarise, the silhouette of Adidas shoes can be considered to have a share in the design of this logo (Çubukçu & Kaymak, 2022).

2.Asics Example



Figure 2: Current Logo of Asics Brand.

The story of the Japan-based Asics brand, whose product range consists of sporty products designed to draw attention to health, body and soul, dates back to 1949, when Kihachiro Onitsuka founded the Onitsuka Company (Uplifers, 2015). Kihachiro Sakaguchi, the founder of the company, was serving in the Japanese army during World War II, and Kihachiro Sakaguchi was adopted by the Onitsuka family after the end of the war. Taking the name Onitsuka, the young man moved to the city of Kobe, where after working in various jobs, he decided to start his own business and started to produce sports shoes on the advice of a friend. After years of ups and downs full of perseverance and struggle, Onitsuka, who

marketed the sports shoes he produced by travelling from city to city in Japan in the first place, started to make a name for himself outside the country as the Japanese women's volleyball national team, which became champion in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, used Onitsuka Tiger sports shoes. However, in the 1970s, the two major competitors Adidas and Puma started to increase their dominance in the production of sports textiles and other sports equipment as well as sports shoes. In order not to be left behind in this rapidly growing competition, Onitsuka Tiger made a strategic move based on the idea of establishing a regional sales office in 1972. With this move, which was completed in 1977 with GTO, a sportswear and hoop net manufacturer, and Jelenk, a knitting manufacturer, a new company was established and the name of the new company was Asics (Sneaker Tutkusu, 2015). Asics, which draws attention with its name based directly on the Latin language, is the abbreviation of the famous saying "Anima sana in corpore sano", which means "A sound mind in a healthy body" (Fashed Team, 2024.)

The company, which adopted the innovations made with the search for perfection even in its early years and struggled for years to represent these searches from a holistic perspective with the motto "a sound mind in a healthy body", continues to maintain its current share in the market in today's sports industry (Sneakers Passion, 2015).

3.Hummel Example

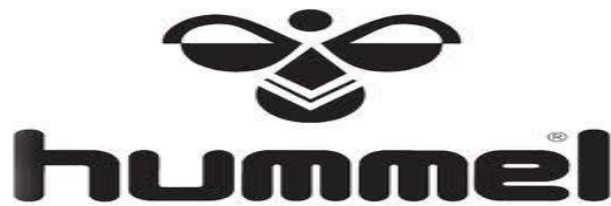


Figure 3: Current Logo of Hummel Brand.

Hummel, which means bumblebee in German, is a sportswear brand based in Denmark and was founded in Germany in 1923. When the upper part of the logo is examined, the WG crown appears. This crown shows Germany's loyalty to the imperial family. The WG crown is known to represent William Goebel, one of the founders of the company. In the logo of the Hummel brand, the bee figure was also used in previous years. In the latest version of the logo, both the crown, the bee's eye and the initials of the name William are at the bottom (Huzuristan, n.d.).

Changes in the logo over the years are given in Figure 4



Figure 4: Changes in the Logo of Hummel Brand over the years.

4.Kappa Example



Figure 5: Kappa Logo.

Entering the sector as a sock manufacturer, the brand was not yet known as Kappa - unaware that a mistake made during the production of socks would turn it into an iconic brand in the future. In 1956, after a customer returned a defective product, the brand recalled all its socks on the market and created the Kappa brand using the K-Kontrol logo to reflect the confidence that new products are always checked and released to the market.

The Kappa logo was created after a complete coincidence. During a photo shoot, a photo frame of a couple standing back to back was inadvertently captured and this frame was transformed into Kappa's iconic brand logo Omini in 1969, which depicts the solidarity, equality and inclusiveness of women and men. Thus, the Robbe di Kappa brand, which includes new products, was born using the Omini logo.

10 years later, responding to the needs of the youth of the period, the brand steps into the world of sportswear, fully aware of the importance of sports for the masses. Opening the doors of the sports world, Kappa unveils the Authentic logo for the first time on the USA Athletics team during the World Championships in Rome and Kappa becomes the sponsor of the USA National Team at the 1984 Olympic Games. The 222 Banda series, which meets the world for the first time on the US National Team in the same Olympic Games, becomes a Kappa image that has been valid for years while taking the world by storm.

Kappa, which started its first sponsorship agreements in 1979 with the shirt sponsorship of the Juventus Football Team, continues to stand by athletes by combining sports with technology, from athletics to skiing, from rugby to motor sports, from rowing to every field of performance (Kappa, 2024).

5.Lacoste Example



Figure 6: Logos Used by Lacoste Brand.

The Lacoste brand was founded in 1933 by Rene Lacoste, the first non-American tennis player to win the David Cup tennis tournament. The French clothing brand, which has become a classic of tennis and golf players in a short time, has become preferred in many parts of the world with its green crocodile logo from those years to the present day. The green crocodile figure used in the logo of the brand is related to the nickname "crocodile" given to Lacoste, the French tennis player who gave his surname to the brand, by American sports commentators. The fact that people in countries such as Algeria use the word lacoste instead of crocodile in their daily conversations reveals that the brand and the figure are strongly identified (Uzmanpara, 2018). It is also known that the world-famous Lacoste company supports the project with the slogan "save our species", that is, "let's protect our species", and there is an expectation to raise social awareness about 10 endangered animal species. We can say that the company adapted its logo to endangered animals by changing its green crocodile logo, albeit temporarily, and played a pioneering role in terms of social responsibility (Orman, n.d.).

6.New Balance Example



Figure 7: New Balance Brand Shoes Logo

The interesting and inspiring story of New Balance begins in Boston in 1906. New Balance, named after its founder William J. Riley, means "New Balance". Riley's inspiration is chickens. Observing the movements of chickens, J.Riley finds the balance of chickens with three-toed feet perfect. Riley works on how this balance can be created in a shoe design that will appeal to the comfort of professional groups such as doctors, police and firefighters who work standing for a long time. Inspired by the foot structure of chickens and after long studies, Riley produces insoles that support the foot from three points and places these insoles in the shoes. In order to emphasise this magnificent balance, he names the shoe soles "New Balance". Here is the key to the success of the brand in a very short time. Riley started shoe design from the sole, not from the top, because the priority for him is comfort. The fact that the brand's adverts feature the elderly rather than young people or athletes reflects the fact that New Balance adopts a comfort approach that appeals to all segments of society (Sportmen, 2022).

7.Nike Example



Figure 8: Nike Logo Anonymous Use 1995

When the word Nike in Greek mythology is analysed within the framework of semantics, the word carries the meaning of victory with the pronunciation of "Nee-Key". According to Roman mythology, another name of the word "Nike" is "Victoria" and Victoria, in other words, "Nike" is a goddess of victory. The tick symbol in the logo of today's Nike brand, which is used to indicate the accuracy of a situation or thing, was inspired by the statue of the goddess of victory representing victory (Çubukçu & Kaymak, 2020).



Figure 9: Nike, Goddess of Victory in Greek Mythology.

It is possible to say that the adventure of Phill Knight, the founder of Nike, is quite impressive. Born on 24 February 1938, Knight started his career like ordinary university graduates. Knight had no money and no clear goal. After completing his bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Oregon, Knight fulfilled his military service. After 1 year of military service, he returned to Stanford University for his master's degree in business administration. Phil Knight, who was an "average middle distance runner" in his own words at Stanford, and his coach Bill Bowerman observed the effect of athletes' running shoes on their performance for a while and decided to produce running shoes with a common decision (Venture Warrior, n.d.).

Originally called Blue Ribbon Sports, the company convinced a group of Japanese businessmen to export and sell the popular Tiger trainers to the United States. Phill Knight started selling Tiger trainers from the boot of his car and observed the demand. Knight, who started to export more and more sneakers every day and started to grow his business, complained that orders from Japan did not arrive on time after a while and often encountered financing problems. At this point, he sought help from banks, but banks were reluctant to provide the needed credit. At the same time, Knight had problems with the Japanese company because of the exclusivity agreement and Knight had to leave the factory.45 employees and Knight had to create a new name to produce shoes at that time and Nike was born. In 1971, when the company created its own design in the rubber-cracked sole, which later became the brand's signature, it was able to produce shoes for the Asian market at a much cheaper price than even Adidas, one of the strongest competitors in the industry and exporting in Germany. Nike, which did not compromise on product quality, became the choice of professional athletes and, after a while, of the whole world. In his book "Shoe Dog" for entrepreneurs, Knight says, "Be prepared for many challenges and unexpected setbacks." and continues as follows: "Leadership is always about inspiring others, without inspiration there are no followers and without followers there is no leadership, but great leaders go beyond that and encourage others to become leaders themselves. I would like to share the experience, the ups and downs, so that somewhere some young man or woman going through similar trials can be inspired" (Venture Warrior, n.d.).

8. U.S. POLO ASSN Example



Figure 10: Logo of the U.S. POLO ASSN.

U.S. POLO ASSN. brand, which has its origins in the American polo sport and was founded in New York in 1890, is one of the sports brands that has managed to maintain its share in the market until today. The fact that polo sport, which is an aristocratic sport as well as an activity representing elegance and elegance, became popular in America at the end of the 19th century and was recognised as a sport especially loved by the elite, provided the brand with the opportunity to make a name for itself with its designs for polo sport, athletes and fans of the sport. It is possible to say that U.S. POLO ASSN. has a wide range of clothing, accessories and other product categories as well as shoes and continues to maintain its share in the sector with the feature of being a brand that appeals to every audience today (Ađlar, 2023).

9.Puma Sample



Figure 11: Puma Logo.

As we mentioned in the section of our article called Adidas example, Rudolph Dassler, the founder of Puma, is the brother of Adolf Dassler, the founder of Adidas, and this plays an important role in the story of the emergence of the Puma brand. The initial idea of Rudolph and Adolf brothers to do business together came to an end due to the outbreak of World War II and the political problems between the two brothers after the war, and the two brothers turned into two rival companies in the other half of the town.

The logo of the brand is inspired by the puma animal. Puma is a predatory, big cat and is very skilful in jumping. This logo, which represents concepts such as movement, speed and power, is attributed to the customers of the Puma brand. Because the brand believes that any sports fan wants to feel the way a puma feels. The idea of the logo belongs to the founder of the company, Rudolf Dassler, and this iconic logo represents the essence of the company. The logo was designed by Luts Backes, a friend of the founder's son. At first, Backes stated that a panther was more elegant than a puma and that the depiction of a panther would be more appropriate for the logo, but Dassler refused, saying, "I know, but they call me a puma, not a panther" (Maybach, 2021).

10.Slazenger Example



Figure 12: Slazenger Logo

Founded in 1881 by brothers Ralph and Albert Slazenger, Slazenger, a UK-based sports equipment manufacturer, produces materials specific to golf, hockey, cricket and tennis (Wikipedia, 2024). In addition to these, Slazenger, which is in the sports and daily wear sector, has a wide range of products from amateur level designs to professional level designs. The brand offers its customers products in many categories such as raincoats, sweatshirts, t-shirts, tracksuits, shorts, especially sports shoes models. The brand, which continues to be in the sector today, attracts attention with its quality known worldwide as the brand has been appointed as the official tennis ball supplier for Wimbledon, which is known for its longest sports sponsorship in history (Slazenger, 2021). The logo of the brand, whose popularity is increasing day by day, features a deer figure. Deer symbolises power, speed and elegance. The deer figure, which we often encounter in mythology: "While it is considered unattainable because it is a difficult animal to hunt, it is also considered immortal because it is difficult to kill. For the pre-Islamic Turkic peoples, it is said that the deer is the animal of God. The deer motif appears in Turkish legends in different ways as the sanctity and inviolability of the deer" (Ayan, 2021: 301). The deer also represents characteristics such as respect for nature, loyalty and endurance.

Conclusion And Discussion

It is possible to say that logo design has a serious importance in reflecting the brand identity of institutions, regardless of the sector. Because logos are an output of abstract associations that occur in the minds of consumers, as well as being a concrete expression for organisations.

In this context, although there are many studies on logos in various sectors in the literature, research on the logo designs of brands in the sports sector is limited. Studies on the comparison of similar and different aspects of logo designs in the sports sector are almost non-existent in the literature. It is possible to summarise the findings obtained within the scope of our study, which we have limited to 10 sports brands that we have determined with the simple random method preferred worldwide, as follows:

Although the designs of three lines, a clover with three leaves and a rising mountain figure consisting of three levels used by Adidas seem to be independent symbols, it can be considered that the three-leaf clover and a rising mountain figure are similar elements reminiscent of nature.

It can be said that the abbreviation of the saying "Anima sana in corpore sano", which is directly based on the Latin language and translated into our language as "a sound head in a healthy body", directs the logo design of the Asics brand. It can be said that this logo design differs from other logo designs due to the use of the harmony of letters as a symbolic figure.

In the design of the Hummel brand, which includes a bee in its logo and the crown of William Goebel, one of the founders of the brand, it can be said that both an animal figure and the representation of the imperial tradition of German culture are utilised.

The Kappa brand differs from other logo designs in terms of symbol and content with its logo design, which is about a couple standing back to back during a photo shoot.

The fact that the French tennis player Lacoste, who gave his own surname to the brand with the green crocodile figure, is referred to by American sports commentators with the nickname "crocodile" reveals that the nicknames attributed to the founder can also be effective in logo design.

J.Riley, who observes the movements of chickens and finds the balanced posture of chickens with their three-toed feet perfect, produces insoles that support the foot from three points and placing these insoles in the shoes is the result of an observation of the movement abilities of living things in nature, and the fact that he named his shoes "New Balance" to emphasise this magnificent balance distinguishes J.Riley from other logo designs.

The fact that the tick symbol, which is found in the logo of the Nike brand used today and used to indicate the accuracy of a situation or thing, was inspired by the statue of the goddess representing victory in Roman mythology suggests that mythological elements can also be effective in logo designs.

In the late 19th century, it can be said that polo sport, which became a popular activity in America, was effective in increasing the recognition of the U.S. POLO ASSN. brand. This brand, which includes the polo sport symbol in its logo, reveals that sometimes a sports branch can be a source of inspiration in logo design.

When we analyse the logos of Puma and Slazenger brands, it is seen that animal figures (puma and deer) are used in the logo design of both brands.

In summary; many different variables such as symbols identified with nature, abbreviations created with the harmony of letters, nicknames attributed to the founders of the brands, mythological elements and designs based on the observation of living creatures in nature have been effective in the logo design of 10 sports brands preferred worldwide.

When the similarities in the logos of the brands are evaluated on the basis of figures; the use of animal figures in the logo designs of Hummel, Lacoste, Puma and Slazenger brands is an example for us. Again, the fact that the deer motif used in the logo design of the Slazenger brand is stated as the animal of God for the pre-Islamic Turkish peoples and that the tick sign in the logo of the Nike brand is inspired by the wing of the goddess of victory in Greek culture is an example that mythological elements can also be effective in logo design.

Logos used in the sports sector are the first imaginary impressions that come to our minds when the name of a brand is mentioned, as in other sectors. They are also representative symbols of product quality that respond to the satisfaction of consumers. In the globalising world, it is not possible to say that every product in the market and used by consumers has a logo. However, it is possible to say that every brand whose logo comes to mind when its name is mentioned has a share in the market. Therefore, regarding the relevant subject;

While the mountain symbol in the Adidas logo indicates the difficulties to be overcome, the animal figure in Puma is associated with power and agility, and the crocodile logo is used since the founder of the Lacoste brand is a French tennis player and is known with the crocodile logo. As a result, it can be said that the logos analysed in the research aim to permanence in the human mind with associations that visually express a phenomenon, event or historical approach. In this sense, our study contributes to the literature as a source in the stage of determining logos for brand entrepreneurs who are already involved in the sports sector, who are in the establishment phase or who will be established years later.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have committed that there is no conflict of interest in the data collection, interpretation of the results, and interpretation of the article of this study.

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