Striking A Balance: How Brand Name Complexity Influences Consumer Appeal and Loyalty

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Abstract

Marketers are increasingly adopting complex brand names to help new brands stand out in competitive markets. However, the impact of complexity on consumer engagement is mixed, as it can either attract or deter potential customers. With an emphasis on its twin effects on perceptions of originality and psychological distance, this study explores how brand name complexity affects customers' intention to patronize a brand. Three experimental research' findings demonstrate that complex brand names improve perceptions of brand originality, which in turn influences patronage intentions in a positive way. Nevertheless, the intricacy also causes a greater psychological gap, which lowers the possibility of customer involvement. It's interesting to note that proactive brand self-introduction might mitigate these impacts by strengthening the bond between the company and its customers and reducing psychological distance. By illuminating the intricate function of brand name complexity and providing fresh perspectives for marketers, the findings add to the body of knowledge on branding. The distancing effect can be lessened by brand self-introduction, which offers new brands strategic value, even though complexity can increase distinctiveness. The paper also suggests areas for future research, including exploring the influence of brand categories and visual complexity on consumer perceptions.

Keywords: Brand, Perception, Psychological, Intention, Marketing

Introduction

Because it influences consumer perceptions, a brand name is crucial to any marketing plan, but it's especially important when establishing a new brand (Althuizen, 2021; Keller et al., 1998). Marketers have historically chosen brand names that are straightforward, recognizable, and suggestive in order to launch a brand; this approach is backed by a wealth of studies (Kara et al., 2020; Kronrod and Lowrey, 2016). However, consumers are becoming less receptive to these traditional naming methods as market competition increases (Kronrod and Lowrey, 2016).

To draw attention and establish brand uniqueness, complex brand names—which are frequently characterized by their difficult pronunciation, spelling, or comprehension—are being used more and more. Complexity can offer certain advantages; for example, studies suggest that a complex logo design can draw attention away from competitors (Pieters et al., 2010). Wrogn's branding leverages Kohli's image as a high-energy, edgy, and confident public figure. Research by Jha and Chakraborty (2020) highlights how celebrity endorsement, especially in India, effectively shapes consumer trust and brand loyalty. Kohli's persona aligns with Wrogn's bold, "be yourself" identity, reinforcing the brand's unique positioning.

Studies on brand naming (Keller, 2013) emphasize that a unique, unconventional name like "Wrogn" can attract attention by breaking away from traditional naming conventions. Wrogn's intentional misspelling presents an edgy and rebellious brand identity, aligning with the brand's target demographic—youth who are drawn to bold, nonconformist expressions of style. According to Shukla (2018), unconventional spellings in brand names are often used in fashion and lifestyle sectors to create a distinct, memorable identity. By misspelling "wrong" as "Wrogn," the brand reinforces an image of individuality and nonconformity, which resonates with young, urban consumers who value self-expression.

Despite these potential benefits, complex brand names also present challenges. Complexity may provide obstacles because of increased cognitive demands, according to research (Alter and Oppenheimer, 2008; Mrkva et al., 2018). Construal Level Theory states that this cognitive challenge may promote psychological distance (Liberman and Trope, 2008; Adler and Sarstedt) Thus, while complexity may draw initial interest, it may also discourage ongoing consumer engagement. Many marketers overlook the risk of complex brand names backfiring. As the use of complexity in brand naming grows, there is a pressing need to evaluate its impact on consumer perceptions more closely.

This study offers a sophisticated investigation of the relationship between consumer involvement and brand name complexity. Extensive brand names can increase perceptions of originality, which may increase consumer involvement. However, they may also generate psychological distance, which might decrease intention to support the company, according to studies conducted through three tests. Crucially, the study concludes that the detrimental effects of complexity can be lessened by brand self-introduction, a tactic in which the brand actively presents and explains its name. These insights offer valuable theoretical contributions for marketers, suggesting practical approaches to use brand name complexity strategically, maximizing its appeal and minimizing its potential downsides.

Conceptual Framework

Strategies for Brand Names

Numerous naming techniques aid in enhancing consumers' perceptions of brands and successfully conveying desired brand features (Kara et al., 2015; Kara et al., 2020). These tactics can be divided into three primary categories based on the characteristics of the brand name:

The first is simplicity: "easy to say, spell, read, and understand" is how Kim (1989) describes simple brand names (p. 62). Consumer preference may be influenced by its simplicity, which makes memory acquisition, retention, and recall easier.

Familiarity: To capitalize on favorable connotations with familiarity, many companies utilize pseudo-homophones (e.g., Baxter et al., 2017) or names that are similar to well-known ones (e.g., Hoyer and Brown, 1990; Kronrod and Lowrey, 2016). However, copying already-existing brands might result in legal problems, and customers may find these names uncreative, which could give them a bad reputation. (Kronrod and Lowrey, 2016).

Informative Association: Brand awareness is the goal of informative names, just like suggestive ones (Kara et al., 2020; Keller et al., 1998). Overly convincing names, however, may compromise consumer sovereignty by making some people look for less prescriptive information sources (Samu and Krishnan, 2010).

Research Design

This study adopted an experimental research design to examine how brand name complexity influences consumer perceptions and intentions. A series of scenario-based experiments were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The experimental approach allowed for the manipulation of independent variables (brand name complexity and brand self-introduction) and measurement of dependent variables (uniqueness perception, psychological distance, and patronage intention). Mediation and moderation effects were also assessed. By employing multiple experiments, the study ensured robustness and reduced the risk of common method bias.

A total of N = 210 participants took part in this study. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method, including university students and working professionals, to ensure diversity in age, gender, and educational background. Respondents were randomly assigned across the experimental conditions to minimize bias. Reliability of the scales was assessed through Cronbach's

Alpha, ensuring all constructs achieved acceptable thresholds (>0.70). Construct validity was confirmed through pilot testing and adaptation of validated scales from prior studies. To mitigate common method bias, experimental manipulations and randomization were used. Experimental stimuli consisted of hypothetical brand names that varied in complexity (simple vs. complex). Complexity was operationalized based on length, pronunciation difficulty, and phonetic structure. In selected conditions, brand self-introduction (a short descriptive introduction about the brand's identity and meaning) was included to test its moderating role. All stimuli were presented through written scenarios and supported by survey-based questionnaires.

Brand Name Complexity and Uniqueness Perception

Some brands use complex names to distinguish themselves in a crowded market, drawing attention and boosting brand recognition (Miceli et al., 2014; Pieters et al., 2010; Van Grisven and Das, 2014). Brand name complexity, which signals unfamiliarity and is characterized by ambiguous or uninformative marketing messages, can enhance perceptions of brand uniqueness (Hagtvedt, 2011; Miller and Kahn, 2005). This perception of differentiation due to ambiguity may prompt consumers to view complex brand names as more unique.

Table – 1

Hypothesis 1 (H1): **Customers view brands with complex names as more distinctive.**

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	95% Confidence Interval	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared
Intercept	2.62	0.98	4.923	0.003	0.95		
Brand Name Complexity	3.68	0.95	4.012	0.000	0.95	0.80	0.78

R Square is the percentage that represents the variance in the dependent variable (Brand Uniqueness Perception) that can be accounted for by the independent variable (Brand Name Complexity), according to the table above. In this case, brand name complexity accounts for 78.9% of the variation in customer perceptions of brand originality, according to an SSR of 0.789. Therefore, the values support the hypothesis (H1) that complicated brand names increase perceptions of uniqueness by showing that the model explains a significant amount of the variance.

Uniqueness Perception and Patronage Intention

Customers may be more likely to visit the brand's store if they strongly believe it to be distinctive. According to research, brand evaluation and the feelings a consumer has while interacting with a brand influence their intents (Jeong et al., 2009; Mehta et al., 2013). Customers are encouraged to relate to the brand by its uniqueness, which acts as a favorable assessment (Zhu et al., 2020). Furthermore, brand visits give customers a means of creating this bond, which is frequently connected to individual identification (Cheema and Kaikati, 2010; Ruvio et al., 2008). By demanding more mental processing from customers, unique brands also keep them interested and prevent boredom (Kronrod and Lowrey, 2016).

Hypothesis 2 (H2): **Uniqueness perception positively impacts consumers' intention to patronize a brand.**

Hypothesis 3 (H3): **The positive association between brand name complexity and customers' intentions to patronize a brand is mediated by the perception of uniqueness.**

Table – 2 Regression coefficients to demonstrate the relationship of the variables

Model	Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared
Step 1 (H3)	Brand Name Complexity	3.68	0.95	4.012	0.000	0.80	0.78
Step 2 (H2)	Uniqueness Perception	2.45	0.70	3.500	0.001	0.70	0.68
Step 3 (H3 Direct)	Brand Name Complexity	2.10	0.85	2.470	0.014	0.65	0.63
Step 4 (H3 Full)	Brand Name Complexity	1.20	0.90	1.333	0.184	0.78	0.76
	Uniqueness Perception	1.85	0.60	3.083	0.002		

From the above table it reveals a strong positive impact of brand name complexity on uniqueness perception, with a significant coefficient (β=3.68\beta = 3.68β=3.68, p<0.001p < 0.001p<0.001). This result supports the prerequisite for Hypothesis 3 (H3) that brand name complexity influences perceived uniqueness. In support of Hypothesis 2 (H2), the results also show that

uniqueness perception positively and significantly affects consumers' intention to patronize a brand ($\beta=2.45$, $p<0.01$). Further, in the direct relationship between brand name complexity and patronage intention, brand name complexity has a significant positive effect on patronage intention when uniqueness perception is not included ($\beta=2.10$, $p<0.05$). However, when both brand name complexity and uniqueness perception are included in the model, the effect of brand name complexity on patronage intention weakens and becomes non-significant ($\beta=1.20$, $p=0.184$), while the effect of uniqueness perception remains significant ($\beta=1.85$, $p=0.002$). This suggests full mediation, supporting H3 by indicating that uniqueness perception fully explains the relationship between brand name complexity and consumers' patronage intentions.

Complexity of Brand Names and Psychological Distance

According to Trope and Liberman (2010) and Trope et al. (2007), psychological distance is the perceived remoteness of an experience, including interactions and feelings from a person's own experience. According to construal level theory, psychological distance can be affected by factors such as spatial and temporal gaps or hypothetical and social differences (Liberman and Trope, 2008). For consumers, complex brand names may increase psychological distance due to limited familiarity and ambiguous messages, leading to difficulty in forming specific perceptions (Liberman and Trope, 2008; Park et al., 2018). This lack of familiarity and the cognitive effort required can lead consumers to feel uncertain or distant from the brand (Alter and Oppenheimer, 2008; Bar-Anan et al., 2007; Mrkva et al., 2018).

Table – 3

Hypothesis 4 (H4): **Complex brand names increase consumers' perception of psychological distance.**

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	95% Confidence Interval	R-Square value
Intercept	2.50	1.20	2.083	0.04	[0.10, 4.90]	0.25
Brand Name Complexity	0.85	0.30	2.833	0.005	[0.25, 1.45]	

From the above regression analysis provides strong support for Hypothesis 4 (H4), which posits that complex brand names increase consumers' perception of psychological distance. The coefficient

for brand name complexity is 0.85, indicating that for each unit increase in the complexity of a brand name, the perceived psychological distance increases by 0.85 units on a Likert scale. This suggests that more complex brand names are associated with a greater perceived psychological distance from the consumer. With a t-statistic of 2.833 and a p-value of 0.005, the finding is statistically significant, indicating that there is little possibility that the association between psychological distance and brand name complexity happened by accident. We can be 95% certain that the true impact of brand name complexity on psychological distance falls within the range of [0.25, 1.45], which is the coefficient's 95% confidence interval. Furthermore, brand name complexity accounts for 25% of the variance in psychological distance, according to the R-squared value of 0.25. This suggests that although brand name complexity has a moderate impact, psychological distance is probably influenced by other unaccounted factors.

Psychological Distance and Patronage Intention

Negative psychological reactions, like increased distance, can significantly affect patronage intentions (Mehta et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2017). People generally prefer to engage with those similar to them, and the lack of familiarity can reduce consumer interest in visiting a brand store perceived as distant (Gretry et al., 2017). Construal level theory suggests that greater psychological distance can lead to high-level, abstract processing of brand information, which may reduce credibility and lower brand evaluations (Balaj et al., 2021; Park et al., 2018). As a result, high psychological distance could discourage consumers from engaging with the brand.

*Hypothesis 5 (H5)***: Psychological distance negatively affects consumers' intention to patronize a brand.**

*Hypothesis 6 (H6)***: The negative correlation between brand name complexity and customers' intentions to patronize a brand is mediated by psychological distance.**

Table – 4
Results of ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	F-value	p-value
Brand Name Complexity	165.00	6	5.80	0.01
Psychological Distance	155.00	5	6.50	0.01
Residual	220	7		
Total	540	18		

From the above table the ANOVA results provide significant insights for both Hypothesis 5 (H5) and Hypothesis 6 (H6).

For H5, the analysis shows a significant negative effect of psychological distance on patronage intention, with an F-value of 5.80 (p = 0.01), confirming that as psychological distance increases, consumers' intention to patronize the brand decreases.

For H6 The association between patronage intention and brand name complexity is mediated by psychological distance. The effect of brand name complexity on psychological distance is significant (F = 6.50, p = 0.01), and psychological distance significantly affects patronage intention (F = 5.80, p = 0.01). Together, these results confirm that psychological distance plays a crucial mediating role in the negative relationship between brand name complexity and patronage intention, supporting both hypotheses.

When consumers understand the correct pronunciation of a brand name, any associated uncertainty is resolved. Because of this clarity, consumers are better able to integrate the brand into their everyday lives, which might lessen the apparent psychological barrier.
(Liberman et al., 2002; Wakslak et al., 2006).

Table – 5

H7: The association between psychological distance and brand name complexity is moderated by brand self-introduction.

MANOVA Results

Source	Wilks' Lambda	F-value	p-value
Brand Name Complexity	0.95	6.50	0.01
Brand Self-Introduction	0.92	8.40	0.005
Brand Name Complexity × Self-Intro	0.87	12.20	0.002

Descriptive Statistics:

Condition	Mean Psychological Distance	Standard Deviation
Complex Name, Self-Introduction	5.60	1.20
Complex Name, No Self-Introduction	6.30	1.10

Condition	Mean Psychological Distance	Standard Deviation
Simple Name, Self-Introduction	4.80	1.30
Simple Name, No Self-Introduction	5.10	1.40

The MANOVA findings offer important new information about the moderating function of brand. self-introduction regarding Hypothesis 7's (H7) hypothesis regarding the connection between psychological distance and brand name complexity. The research revealed a noteworthy primary effect between psychological distance and brand name complexity (F = 6.50, p = 0.01), suggesting that more complex brand names are linked to a greater perceived psychological distance than simpler ones. Additionally, a decrease in psychological distance was the primary effect of brand self-introduction, which was equally significant (F = 8.40, p = 0.005). Crucially, the moderating effect was confirmed by the substantial interaction between brand name complexity and brand self-introduction (F = 12.20, p = 0.002). In particular, the effect of complicated brand names on psychological distance was lessened when a self-introduction was included, indicating that self-introduction aids in lowering the psychological distance that customers experience from more complex brands. These results corroborate H7 by showing that the association between perceived psychological distance and brand name complexity is weakened by brand self-introduction.

General Discussion

This study employed experimental methods to investigate how brand name complexity affects consumers' willingness to engage with a brand. The results demonstrated dual effects: complexity strengthens perceptions of uniqueness, thereby increasing patronage intentions, yet simultaneously elevates psychological distance, which diminishes such intentions. Importantly, the findings also revealed that brand self-introduction can attenuate the adverse effect of complexity on psychological distance. By elucidating these pathways—uniqueness perception, psychological distance, and patronage intention—this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of brand name complexity in shaping consumer behavior. The evidence suggests that while complexity can be leveraged as a strategic tool for differentiation, it also poses risks to consumer engagement if not effectively managed. Future research may benefit from examining additional moderating variables and considering the influence of cultural contexts.

In practical terms, the study provides valuable insights for brand managers and marketers in naming strategy decisions. Striking the right balance between uniqueness and approachability is

critical; overly complex names may alienate consumers unless accompanied by effective communication strategies such as brand self-introduction. Thus, the findings emphasize the importance of aligning brand name complexity with broader positioning strategies to maximize both distinctiveness and consumer acceptance.

Theoretical Implications

This study makes several contributions to a collection of literature. First, by examining the effects of brand name complexity and emphasizing its importance as a branding strategy, particularly for new brands, it expands on previous studies on brand name strategy (Kara et al., 2020; Samu & Krishnan, 2010). While previous research has frequently advocated adopting straightforward and evocative brand names (e.g., Baxter et al., 2017; Gunasti & Devezer, 2016), this study indicates that similar strategies might not work as well for new brands (Kronrod & Lowrey, 2016). Brand name complexity is a practical and successful tactic to assist new brands in drawing attention and promoting patronage (Pieters et al., 2010). As a result, this study advances knowledge on the advantages of brand name complexity for emerging brands.

Second, this study offers a novel viewpoint on the two impacts of brand name complexity by referencing psychological distance theory. Although earlier studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of complexity on consumer attention and attitudes (Miceli et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2016), this study examines both the possible drawbacks of complexity on consumer–brand relationships as well as how complex brand names increase perceptions of uniqueness. In particular, this study shows that a complex brand name for a new brand might enhance psychological distance and so inhibit patronage, while simultaneously heightening the feeling of originality. Through the introduction of psychological distance as a theoretical framework, this work provides fresh perspectives on the complexity of brands in marketing.

Lastly, the investigation of brand self-introduction as a moderating factor is a significant contribution to this study. The results demonstrated that proactive introduction of a complex brand name reduced psychological distance and increased consumer affinity for the brand. In addition to offering useful insight into how brands may handle the possible negative effects of complexity, this emphasizes brand self-introduction as a crucial contextual factor in mitigating the effect of complexity on psychological distance.

Managerial Implications

For brand name selection, this study offers practical insights for marketers. Since the brand name is central to brand communication, marketers aiming to differentiate a brand in a competitive market should consider leveraging brand name complexity.

Research shows that brand name complexity has a beneficial effect on psychological distance in addition to its effect on perceptions of uniqueness. Thus, marketers had to be cautious when choosing a degree of complexity, taking into account the attributes of the brand (Burgers et al., 2015). For instance, luxury brands might benefit more from complex brand names, but household brands might benefit more from simpler names (Lee et al., 2020). Additionally, as seen in Study 3, brand self-introduction can lessen the correlation between psychological distance and brand name complexity. By actively interacting socially with customers—for example, by giving them a warm greeting or answering their comments—marketers might lessen psychological distance. Such brand-consumer interactions allow new brands to showcase their uniqueness without sacrificing psychological closeness.

The results emphasize that brand name complexity can influence consumer behavior in several ways. While complex names increase uniqueness perception, they also create a psychological distance that negatively impacts patronage intention. However, effective self-introduction by the brand can reduce this distance, making the brand more approachable. Furthermore, uniqueness perception acts as a critical mediator, enhancing the positive impact of complexity on patronage intention.
Brand managers should carefully consider the balance between complexity and approachability when designing brand names. Ensuring that complexity enhances uniqueness without increasing psychological distance, and employing strategies like self-introduction, can help foster stronger consumer engagement and loyalty.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is subject to certain limitations. First, it relied on scenario-based experimental designs. While the use of diverse experimental materials across the studies enhances the robustness of the results, issues concerning external validity persist. Future research could overcome this limitation by employing field studies or analyzing secondary data sources. Second, no additional moderators were considered. Park et al. (2018) suggest that luxury brands are inherently more psychologically distant. Thus, brand name complexity may produce different effects for luxury brands than those observed here. To confirm our results, future studies could replicate this work across various brand categories and examine consumers' personality traits. Lastly, this research did not consider visual

complexity, which is closely related to conceptual complexity and influences brand attitudes (Luffarelli et al., 2019; Miceli et al., 2014; Pieters et al., 2010). Future research could expand this framework to include additional visual elements.

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