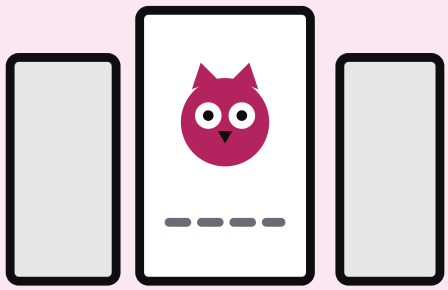
Concept

Distinctive brand assets

Elements other than the name (colors, shapes, characters, sounds, taglines) that people link to a brand and that bring it to mind even when the name does not appear.



In Spanish

Activos distintivos de marca

Origin

Romaniuk (2018), at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute

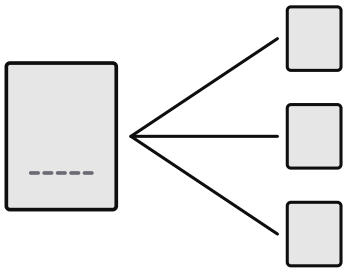
What problem it addresses

It helps decide which elements of an identity to keep, protect and use more, based on what people actually recognize rather than on what the team believes.

An example

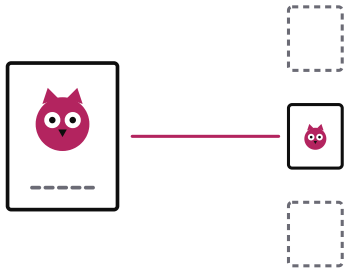
An illustrative example: a tea brand shows its box to tea buyers, but without the name, and asks them which brand it is.

A common color



The green box makes people think of three different brands. **Shared.**

A character of its own



The owl drawn on the box leads almost everyone to the same brand. **Owned.**

An element is a good asset if many people recognize it (fame) and if it points only to your brand (uniqueness).

Why it happens

1 

Seeing the element brings to mind the brand it is linked to.

2 

If it is linked to only one brand, it doesn't make people think of the competition.

3 

So the brand is recognized at a glance, in a store, in an ad or on a screen.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Before a redesign, measure which elements people recognize without the name and keep the ones that work.

Avoid

Changing or dropping an asset just because the team got tired of seeing it.

Don't fall for it

If an element reminds people of several brands, it doesn't belong to any of them yet: always pair it with the name.

1,281 elements

What the research says

Real elements from 13 consumer goods categories in 19 countries: characters, symbols and logotypes were the easiest to own; color was the most shared (Ward et al., 2020).

● ○ ○ **Single study.** Elements of the same type varied widely, so how each one is designed matters as much as its type. Almost all the evidence comes from the same institute.

Connections

Used in

- Packaging design
- Brand identity design
- Sonic branding

Related to

- Mere-exposure effect
- Customer-based brand equity

Authors and works

2018	**Jenni Romaniuk**	Proposed measuring each asset by two traits: its fame (how many category buyers name the brand when they see it without the name) and its uniqueness (how much they also attribute it to other brands).
2020	**Ella Ward et al.**	Compared eight types of identity elements for the first time to see which ones are easiest to own.

Sources

Original sources

- Romaniuk, J. (2018). Building distinctive brand assets. Oxford University Press.
- Ward, E., Yang, S., Romaniuk, J., & Beal, V. (2020). Building a unique brand identity: Measuring the relative ownership potential of brand identity element types. Journal of Brand Management, 27(4), 393–407. View source (https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-020-00187-6)

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