

# Building Brand Equity through Visual Brand Identity in Mobile Apps: A Systematic Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

Mobile applications are increasingly integral to brand strategy, yet research has largely focused on usability and functionality, overlooking the impact of visual branding elements such as logo, typography, color scheme, and icon. While established brand equity models emphasize various brand-building factors, the role of visual brand identity in shaping user perceptions, engagement, and loyalty especially in mobile apps remains underexplored. This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) explores the role of visual brand identity in building brand equity within mobile applications. Drawing on established brand equity models, this study synthesizes existing literature to identify key visual branding elements that influence user perceptions, engagement, and loyalty. Findings highlight that a cohesive visual brand identity enhances brand awareness, trust, and emotional connection, ultimately strengthening brand equity. Additionally, integrating visual branding with user experience (UX) design fosters a seamless and immersive interaction that reinforces brand recognition. Despite growing interest in digital branding, research has yet to fully explore the impact of dynamic branding elements such as motion-based graphics and adaptive UI features on brand equity. This review highlights the need for empirical studies that examine how these evolving visual strategies shape consumer perceptions and engagement, offering insights for both academics and practitioners in mobile app branding.

**Keywords:** *Brand Equity, Mobile Apps, SLR, Visual Brand Identity*

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid excess of mobile applications has transformed how businesses engage with consumers, making mobile apps a crucial component of brand strategy (Wilson et al., 2024). As the digital marketplace becomes increasingly crowded, brands face the challenge of differentiating themselves and creating a lasting impression on users. Visual brand identity in mobile apps comprising of elements such as logo, typography, color scheme, and icon play a pivotal role to elevate brand values and establish a unique

brand presence (Rossi, 2024). However, while much attention has been given to user experience (UX) and functionality in mobile app development, the strategic integration of visual brand identity remains underexplored.

Despite the growing recognition of digital branding, there is a significant lack of research focusing on how visual brand elements specifically contribute to brand equity in mobile apps. Besides, most studies often prioritize aspects such as usability, performance, and technical features, with limited consideration of how visual elements influence user perceptions and emotional connections to the brand. This oversight is particularly challenging in the context of mobile apps, where visual identity is not merely an aesthetic choice but could be an important tool for fostering user engagement and loyalty. Consequently, there is a critical need to explore the integration of visual branding within mobile app design to enhance brand equity and support long-term business success.

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize existing studies on visual brand identity and brand equity in mobile apps. This review aims to identify key visual elements used in mobile apps branding, evaluate their impact on user perceptions and behaviors, thus uncover existing research gaps. In this sense, the following research questions guide this study: (1) What visual brand identity elements contribute to building brand equity in mobile apps? (2) How does the integration of visual branding elements with UX design influence brand perception and user engagement in mobile applications? (3) What are the current gaps in research for integrating visual brand identity in mobile apps? By addressing these questions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of visual brand identity in building brand equity within mobile apps.

This paper is organized into several sections. Section 2 presents a review of the existing literature, highlighting key theory and framework related to brand equity and visual brand identity, as well as their applications in digital contexts. Section 3 outlines the methodology used in this systematic literature review, including the criteria for selecting studies, data extraction methods, and analytical techniques employed. Section 4 discusses the results, synthesizing findings across studies to identify major themes, patterns, and research gaps. Section 5, which concludes the paper with a summary of key insights and recommendations for future research. This structured approach aims to advance both academic and practical understanding of how visual brand identity can be effectively leveraged to build brand equity in the competitive landscape of mobile apps (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Organization of the Paper**

Section	Title	Description
Section 2	Literature Review	Reviews existing literature on brand equity and visual brand identity, focusing on theory, framework, and application in digital contexts.
Section 3	Methodology	Describes the systematic literature review process, including study selection criteria, data extraction, and analysis methods.
Section 4	Analysis & Results	Synthesizes findings from the reviewed studies, identifying major themes, patterns, and gaps in the research.
Section 5	Conclusion	Summarizes key insights and provides recommendations for future studies on visual brand identity and brand equity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundations of Brand Equity

Brand equity is a cornerstone of marketing theory, representing the intangible value a brand contributes to a product or service beyond its functional attributes (Quadri et al., 2024). This concept is particularly critical for organizations seeking to differentiate themselves in competitive markets, where strong brand equity can enhance customer preference, trust, and long-term loyalty. One of the most widely recognized frameworks in brand equity research is Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1991), which identifies four key dimensions: brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. These dimensions collectively influence how consumers recognize, evaluate, and connect with a brand, shaping their purchasing behaviors and overall brand experience.

Aaker's model serves as a strategic tool for brands, enabling them to assess their brand positioning, analyze competitive advantages, and identify areas for improvement to maintain relevance in a rapidly evolving marketplace. Brand awareness ensures that consumers recognize and recall a brand, while brand loyalty reflects a consumer's commitment and repeated engagement with a brand over time. Perceived quality directly influences consumer trust and satisfaction, positioning the brand as a preferred choice in its category. Lastly, brand associations are formed through experiences, advertising, and visual identity is shape how consumers emotionally and cognitively connect with a brand. Despite its significance, Aaker's model was originally designed for traditional marketing channels and requires adaptation to digital-first environments, particularly in mobile apps, where visual brand identity and user experience (UX) play an increasingly important role in strengthening brand equity.

Building on Aaker's work, Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model offers a consumer-centric perspective on brand equity. Keller's model emphasizes the significance of customer perceptions, focusing on how brand value is created through meaningful relationships and emotional connections. The CBBE model is structured hierarchically, beginning with brand salience, which reflects the awareness and recognition of the brand. It progresses through performance and imagery, addressing functional and symbolic attributes, followed by judgments and feelings, which capture consumer evaluations and emotional responses. This process ultimately leads to brand resonance, the highest level of equity, characterized by consumer loyalty, attachment, and advocacy.

Both Aaker's and Keller's models underscore the multifaceted nature of brand equity, with an emphasis on consumer behavior and perception. While Aaker's model provides a broad framework for understanding brand equity's key dimensions, Keller's CBBE model delves deeper into the psychological and emotional aspects that drive consumer loyalty. These frameworks highlight the dynamic interplay between rational evaluations and emotional connections in shaping brand equity, making them highly relevant for contemporary marketing strategies. They also emphasize that brand equity is not a static concept but evolves as consumers' perceptions, preferences, and emotional responses shift over time (Quadri et al., 2024).

### Brand Equity in the Digital Era

Traditional brand equity models, such as Aaker's and Keller's frameworks, continue to offer valuable insights; however, the rise of digital platforms has necessitated their adaptation to accommodate new brand-consumer interactions. In the digital age, brand equity extends beyond traditional attributes like awareness and loyalty to include online touchpoints, such as websites, social media platforms, and mobile apps. These digital interfaces play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions of a brand,

as it would often serve as primary points of interaction. With consumers spending an increasing amount of time engaging with brands online, elements like digital brand experience, online reviews, and user feedback are emerging as critical drivers of brand equity (Rahmadini & Mardhotillah, 2023).

Social media platforms have significantly transformed how consumers engage with brands, allowing for two-way communication and the co-creation of brand narratives. Through features like comments, shares, and user-generated content, social media fosters a sense of connection and community among consumers, which enhances brand credibility and relevance (Garg, 2024). Likewise, mobile apps have emerged as powerful tools for building brand equity, offering seamless and personalized experiences that enable businesses to engage customers more effectively. Features such as in-app promotions, tailored notifications, and user-friendly interfaces not only enhance customer satisfaction but also strengthen emotional ties to the brand. These platforms would allow brands to build equity by blending functional convenience with emotional appeal, creating a holistic digital experience.

The shift toward mobile applications as integral components of digital branding highlights the need for a more dynamic approach to measuring and managing brand equity. Traditional metrics like brand awareness and perceived quality should now be evaluated alongside new factors, such as app usability, design aesthetics, and digital engagement (Ayada, 2023). Mobile apps provide brands with opportunities to create immersive visual and interactive experiences that reinforce their identity and values. As these digital touchpoints become central to consumer decision-making, businesses must adapt their strategies to ensure that brand equity is consistently nurtured across both traditional and digital channels (Rahmadini & Mardhotillah, 2023).

### **Visual Brand Identity in Mobile Apps**

Visual brand identity encompasses design elements such as logo, typography, and color, which serve as visual cues for brand recognition (Yu et al., 2024). These elements play a crucial role in communicating brand values and creating lasting impressions. For example, color psychology is widely used in branding to evoke specific consumer emotions and associations, ultimately enhancing brand recall and preference (Masniati & Holle, 2023). In the context of mobile applications, visual branding is particularly significant. Mobile interfaces often serve as the first point of interaction between consumers and brands, making a cohesive and distinctive visual identity essential for brand recognition and user retention (Abdul Kholik et al., 2023).

A consistent visual identity across multiple digital platforms strengthens consumer trust and reinforces brand equity (Yang et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024). In addition, visual brand identity not only enhances aesthetics but also contributes to functionality and usability. Studies indicate that users are more likely to engage with digital platforms that are both visually appealing and easy to navigate (Umar et al., 2024). In this sense, intuitive mobile apps interfaces that incorporate recognizable brand elements improve user experience by facilitating seamless interactions.

However, maintaining visual consistency across diverse digital touchpoints present challenges. Brands must ensure that their visual identity remains cohesive across different platforms while adapting to each medium's unique constraints, such as varying screen sizes and interface limitations (Chen et al., 2023). Failure to achieve this balance could lead to inconsistencies, potentially weakening brand equity and consumer trust.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to provide a comprehensive analysis of existing research on the role of visual brand identity in building brand equity within mobile apps. The SLR approach is chosen for its ability to systematically collect, evaluate, and synthesize research findings, thereby offering a transparent and replicable method for identifying gaps in the literature and guiding future research. The review process follows a structured protocol, comprising several key stages: defining research questions, developing a search strategy, selecting studies based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and extracting and analyzing data (Sauer & Seuring, 2023).

The search strategy involved identifying relevant studies from major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, and Google Scholar. The keywords and search terms used were “visual brand identity,” “brand equity,” and “mobile applications. These terms were combined using Boolean operators to refine the search and ensure a comprehensive coverage of the topic. The initial search yielded a total of 17,543 articles, which were then screened based on their titles and abstracts. Studies were included if they were published in peer-reviewed journals or conferences, focused on mobile app branding, and were written in English between 2020 and 2025. Studies that did not address the relationship between visual brand identity and brand equity or those focusing solely on technical aspects of app development without reference to branding were excluded.

Following the initial screening, 60 articles were selected for full-text review. During this phase, a data extraction form was used to systematically record information from each study, including the authors, publication year, research objectives, methodologies, key findings, and limitations. The extracted data were then analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and gaps in the existing literature. The quality of the selected studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist, which evaluates the methodological rigor and relevance of research studies.

Besides, the selected studies were rated on criteria such as research design, data collection methods, and the validity of conclusions drawn. This thorough quality assessment ensured that only high-quality studies contributed to the final synthesis. The results of the thematic analysis are presented in Section 4, where key themes and research gaps are discussed in detail. By employing a systematic and transparent review process, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on visual brand identity and brand equity in mobile apps and identifies critical areas for future investigation.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The systematic literature review yielded a comprehensive set of studies that highlight the critical role of visual brand identity in building brand equity within mobile applications. As mentioned earlier, a total of 60 articles were initially selected for full-text review based on the inclusion criteria. After a detailed screening process, 30 studies were identified as directly and partially relevant to the research questions, providing insights into various aspects of visual branding, app design, and brand equity. The selected studies were categorized into three main themes: (1) key visual brand identity elements for brand equity in mobile applications, (2) the influence of visual branding and UX design on brand perception and engagement, and (3) gaps and future research directions in visual brand identity for mobile applications.

## **Key Visual Brand Identity Elements for Brand Equity in Mobile Apps**

The concept of brand equity, traditionally rooted in marketing literature, refers to the value that a brand adds to a product or service beyond its functional attributes. It encompasses dimensions such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand associations, which collectively shape consumer perceptions and influence purchasing decisions (Aaker, 1991). In the digital age, mobile applications have emerged as critical brand touchpoints, requiring a reassessment of traditional brand equity models to integrate digital-specific elements such as visual brand identity and user experience (UX) (Tran et al., 2024). Unlike conventional marketing channels, mobile apps involve frequent but brief consumer interactions, making visual branding a fundamental driver of brand engagement and equity.

Studies emphasize that visual brand identity plays a crucial role in establishing and reinforcing brand equity, particularly in digital environments where logo, color scheme, typography, and icon serve as the primary means of brand communication (Fekete, 2022). A well-crafted visual identity enhances brand recognition, recall, and emotional connections, strengthening overall brand equity. In mobile applications, where users form instant judgments based on visual cues, a cohesive and visually appealing brand identity is essential for capturing attention and fostering user engagement (Argyris et al., 2020). Despite its significance, research on how specific visual identity elements influence brand equity in mobile apps remains fragmented, necessitating a deeper theoretical exploration.

To understand the interplay between visual brand identity and brand equity, several theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights. Aaker's (1991) Brand Equity Model and Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model are widely cited, emphasizing brand awareness, perceived quality, and consumer-brand relationships. However, these models were developed for traditional marketing channels and do not fully account for the complexities of digital branding, where visual aesthetics, UI design, and interactive brand elements play a central role (Zheng, 2023). Recent adaptations have attempted to incorporate digital-first branding elements, but a comprehensive framework that explicitly integrates visual brand identity into mobile brand equity models remains absent.

Meanwhile, the Brand Experience Framework provides a more holistic approach by considering brand experience as a multidimensional construct encompassing sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, and relational dimensions (Plotkina & Rabeson, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to mobile applications, where sensory and affective brand experiences significantly influence user perceptions and interactions. By integrating Brand Experience Theory with digital branding strategies, researchers can better understand how visual brand identity elements such as motion graphics, UI animations, and personalized design choices contribute to brand equity in mobile apps.

Additionally, Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) offers a dynamic perspective on brand equity, emphasizing the co-creation of value between brands and consumers through interactive experiences. In mobile apps, brand equity is not merely embedded in visual identity elements but is co-created through user interactions with app interfaces, adaptive branding, and dynamic UI features (Tran et al., 2021). This aligns with the interactive and user-driven nature of mobile branding, where consumers actively engage with customizable themes, branding micro interactions, and digital-first identity markers (Stocchi et al., 2020). Integrating SDL with traditional brand equity models could provide deeper insights into how visual identity and UX collectively shape consumer perceptions, brand trust, and loyalty in mobile applications.

## **The Influence of Visual Branding and UX Design on Brand Perception and Engagement**

The results also emphasized the need for a holistic approach that integrates visual brand identity with user experience (UX) design, as their intersection plays a crucial role in shaping brand perception and user engagement in mobile applications. Studies have shown that visually cohesive and aesthetically pleasing app interfaces contribute to stronger brand attachment and loyalty (Tran et al., 2021). Visual elements such as logo, typography, color scheme, and icon not only enhance usability but also reinforce brand recognition and emotional connections with users. These elements create a distinct brand presence that helps consumers associate the app with positive experiences, strengthening brand equity in the competitive digital marketplace.

For instance, harmonized UI design, where visual branding elements seamlessly align with functional UX components, has been found to increase consumer trust and satisfaction, leading to positive brand equity outcomes (Chowdhury & Swaminathan, 2023). Consistency in branding across mobile UI elements, including app layouts, buttons, and navigation structures, enhances brand coherence and recognition while contributing to higher user engagement and a more immersive brand experience (Tian et al., 2021). When users interact with a visually unified and well-structured app, they are more likely to develop familiarity, trust, and long-term loyalty, reinforcing the importance of integrating visual brand identity with UX design in mobile branding strategies.

Beyond static visual identity elements, interactive design components such as micro animations, transitions, and adaptive color themes further enhance the emotional and sensory appeal of mobile branding (Tran et al., 2021). UX aesthetics that prioritize fluid interactions and intuitive navigation create positive brand experiences, which, in turn, increase brand credibility and consumer loyalty (Stocchi et.al.,2020). As mobile apps continue to serve as primary brand touchpoints, the ability to strategically integrate visual brand identity with UX design would remain essential in fostering long-term consumer relationships and brand differentiation in competitive markets.

## **Gaps and Future Research Directions in Visual Brand Identity for Mobile Applications**

Despite growing research on brand equity in mobile applications, there is a noticeable lack of discussion on visual brand identity as a fundamental component of brand equity in both theory and practice. Most studies prioritize service quality, user engagement, and app functionality as key drivers of brand equity (Chowdhury & Swaminathan, 2023; Al-zyoud, 2020), while visual branding elements such as logo, typography, color scheme and icon remain underexplored. For instance, while studies confirm that logos play a crucial role in brand recognition and recall (Erjansola et.al., 2021), there is limited research on how logo interact with mobile UI elements to reinforce brand equity in a digital-first environment. Similarly, color psychology and typography are widely recognized as branding tools in traditional marketing (Kaur et al., 2023), yet there is little empirical evidence on how these elements contribute to user trust, brand attachment, and perceived quality in mobile applications. Without a clear theoretical framework that incorporates visual brand identity into mobile app brand equity models, brands may struggle to leverage these elements effectively in digital branding strategies.

Another significant gap is the lack of research on interactive and adaptive visual branding elements in mobile apps. Traditional branding theories focus on static brand identity, but mobile apps introduce motion-based branding components, such as micro interactions, dynamic logos, and UI animations, which could enhance brand experience and engagement (Tran et al., 2021). However, existing brand equity frameworks do not fully integrate these dynamic branding elements, limiting our understanding of their role in shaping consumer perceptions. Additionally, while some studies highlight the impact of personalized branding and user-generated visual identity (Stocchi et al., 2020), there is little research on

how customizable UI elements, such as personalized app themes, color modes, or interactive branding features, influence brand loyalty and advocacy. Addressing these gaps could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visual brand identity—both static and dynamic—enhances brand equity in mobile ecosystems, offering practical insights for mobile app designers and marketers.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this systematic literature review highlight the significant impact of visual brand identity on building brand equity within mobile applications. The synthesis of research suggests that key visual brand identity elements—such as logo, color scheme, typography, and icon—play a critical role in shaping user perceptions and fostering emotional connections with the brand. These visual elements would serve as immediate signals that communicate the brand's values and identity, helping to differentiate the app in a crowded marketplace. This is particularly important given the fleeting nature of user interactions in mobile contexts, where first impressions significantly influence user engagement and retention (Lindegren et al., 2021). Thus, a cohesive and appealing visual brand identity is essential for enhancing brand equity and ensuring long-term success in the competitive mobile app environment.

One of the key themes emerging from the review is the need for a holistic approach that integrates visual brand identity with user experience (UX) design. Studies consistently show that while strong visual brand identity can attract users initially, its effectiveness is amplified when combined with intuitive and user-friendly interfaces (Harahap et al., 2024). This integration not only enhances usability but would reinforce brand recognition and loyalty by providing a seamless and engaging user experience. The findings suggest that visual brand identity and UX design should not be treated as separate domains; instead, they should be strategically aligned to create cohesive and compelling digital experiences that resonate with users. Indeed, this approach is crucial for app developers and designers seeking to build strong brand equity through mobile applications.

In conclusion, this systematic literature review provides a nuanced understanding of the role of visual brand identity in building brand equity within mobile apps. It highlights the importance of a cohesive and well-integrated visual brand identity in influencing user perceptions and fostering brand loyalty. While the findings offer valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners, there is a clear need for further empirical studies that explore the long-term effects of visual brand identity on user behavior and brand equity. Future research should also investigate the potential of emerging technologies, such as AR (Augmented Reality) and AI (Artificial Intelligence), to revolutionize visual brand identity strategies in mobile app development. By addressing these research gaps, scholars and practitioners can develop more effective strategies for leveraging visual brand identity to build strong, enduring brands in the digital age.

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