

Exploring T-shirt slogans by content and thematic analysis

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Abstract:

Despite the popularity of t-shirts and slogans' usage on t-shirts, there is virtually no empirical research on t-shirt slogans. This study aims to answer three research questions namely: (1) What are the popular t-shirt slogans? (2) Who are the companies' selling t-shirts with slogans? (3) What are the characteristics of the slogans that are liked by young consumers? Content and thematic analysis were used to analyze the responses. We believe the findings of this research can serve as a foundation for future research on t-shirt slogans and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on slogans.

Keywords: slogans | fashion design | t-shirts

Article:

Introduction

Slogans, also called taglines or signature lines, are short, memorable phrases often used in marketing materials and advertising. They characterise a large proportion of brand advertising and are designed to attract consumer attention, crystallize brand positioning, increase advertising memorability, and improve brand affinity (Keller, 1993; Miller & Toman, 2015; O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2003). As one of the brand identity components, slogans play a supplemental but often significant role in branding names and logos within communicating brand identity. In addition to being found in advertisements, slogans are also widely displayed in other promotional formats: banners, uniforms, company vehicles and stationery, packages, signage, sales promotions, and corporate reports (Slogan, 2003).

A slogan is a way for fashion brands to communicate who they are and differentiate themselves from competitors. They can evoke consumers' positive emotions and feelings associated with the products/brands and increase the products/brands' desirability. They often act as links between a brand and the consumer's perception and awareness of the brand, helping form positive

consumer–brand relationships, promoting favourable brand associations, and strengthening brand differentiation and positioning. Effective slogans can grab consumers’ attention quickly and lure consumers into consuming the clothing products. A t-shirt is a clothing product where slogans often appear. The simplicity of the t-shirt makes it stand apart from the rest of the clothing pieces. A simple t-shirt could be very stylish just because of the unique slogan. Young consumers especially love t-shirts with attractive slogans. T-shirts with unique and eye-catching slogans have been a predominant fashion staple in many young American consumers’ wardrobes (Talbot, 2013).

Literature review

The importance of slogan

Companies employ slogans for various reasons, such as helping differentiate the company/brand, maintaining a solid brand identity, providing customers with a reason to buy, or stating a distinctive competency (Dowling & Kabanoff, 1996; Keller, 1993). Therefore, it is not surprising that most brands today use slogans to communicate with their multiple stakeholders, including customers, employees, and even investors (Mathur & Mathur, 1995).

Keller (1993) suggests that brand identity has three integral elements — name, logo, and slogan. Although as pieces of the same whole, each component of brand identity is distinct and serves a particular function in shaping the brand image, slogans provide a unique and significant contribution to a brand's identity (Keller, 1993; Kohli & Suri, 2002). Names and logos are somewhat limited in articulating a message, but a slogan can partially bridge this gap. Slogans can serve as ‘hooks’ or ‘handles’ in capturing the meaning of a brand and in relaying what makes the brand special, such as Nike's attitude in ‘Just Do It’ and Target's ‘Expect More. Pay Less’ (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2005; Kohli, Leuthesser, & Suri, 2007). Besides, while names and logos cannot easily be changed, slogans are in a unique position to act as a bridge between a brand's legacy and its evolving image (Kohli et al., 2007).

Slogans are believed to be especially useful in commanding consumers’ attention, building brand equity, and inspiring lasting impressions and good memories about specific attributes and values delivered by the associated brand (Brierley, 2005). The proximity of slogans to the brands in commercial messages makes them attractive vehicles for building brand awareness and image. According to Rosengren and Dahlén (2006), slogans can enhance more general brand attitudes in at least three ways: (1) through the priming of specific brand associations; (2) by the transfer of likability from the slogan to the brand, and (3) by serving as a memory aid to reinforce positive brand evaluations. Dahlén and Rosengren (2005) found that brands with strong slogans are evaluated more favourably. Brands slogans are expected to affect how consumers perceive a brand not only in its own right but also with its competition. Since slogans reflect the brand's positioning strategy and facilitate learning about some aspect of a brand or company, they can help to differentiate the company/brand, provide customers with a reason to buy, or state a distinctive competency (Dass, Kohli, Kumar, & Thomas, 2014; Dowling & Kabanoff, 1996). When a marketer wants the audience to associate rational benefits and warm feelings with the brand or marketer, slogans are used to facilitate this process by summarising and repeating the dominant selling proposition. As such, slogans play a central role in marketing strategy and have

become popular in advertising (Lamons, 1997). In summary, slogans can assist in advertising and brand recall, promote brand awareness, transfer positive affect to the brand, promote attributes that can strengthen brand image, facilitate the purchasing process, and persuade consumers that one brand is better than another.

The effectiveness of slogans

Powerful slogans contribute to the brand in multiple ways (Keller, 1993). They tell consumers what the brand is, influence what consumers think about the brand, and impact how consumers evaluate the brand. Previous work suggests that brand slogans' effectiveness depends on three factors: the nature of the recipient, the slogan design, and the context in which the slogan is received (Dimofte & Yalch, 2007). It implies that, first, the slogans should point out the essential advantage of a brand or a product and respond to the audience's needs; second, as the literature indicated, effective slogans must be likable, creative, clear and simple, meaningful, motivating, and memorable (Briggs & Janakiraman, 2017; Dass et al., 2014; Miller & Toman, 2015). Third, a slogan must be part of a strategic view of brand identity and tell where the brand is going so that the brand and the slogan can be accurately linked together by consumers (Pham & Johar, 1997, 2001).

A slogan, a message from a brand to a current or a potential customer, is contained within a larger piece of advertising. According to previous studies, slogan characteristics (e.g. *message length and clarity, creativity, the inclusion of benefits, wordplay, brand appropriateness, and brand name inclusion*), media expenditure (e.g. *advertising expenditure and frequency of exposure*), and respondent characteristics (e.g. *gender, age, income, and education*) are the major antecedents of the likeability of a slogan (Dass et al., 2014). Slogans that are well-liked can transfer some of the effects to the brand and affect consumers' behaviours (Kohli, Thomas, & Suri, 2013).

T-shirt and slogans

Clothing is a great way to make a statement and serves as an expression of personality and self (Rosenfeld & Plax, 1977). According to Grantham (1994), a communicative dress is any clothing item with a message conveyed by signs, symbols, or words, for example, message t-shirts. A t-shirt is a simple garment with minimal material value; however, it can take on social, political, and cultural meanings simply by the graphic design applied (Talbot, 2013). The simplicity of the t-shirt makes it stand apart from the rest of the clothing pieces. It is also one of the few products we wear that contain text, which clearly and immediately tells the audience the purpose of the t-shirt. As the fashion designer Katharine Hamnett stated: '*If you want to get the message out there, you should print it in giant letters on a t-shirt.*' Slogan t-shirts allow us to send messages, provide a unique symbol of self-definition, and supply a label to a cultural category (Cornwell, 1990). Fashion designers have played a particularly central role in transforming the t-shirt into a mode of self-expression and cultural signifier throughout the years.

Prior research indicated different motivations for people to wear a slogan t-shirt: to make an explicit political (or other) statement, follow fashion trends, or draw attention to themselves through clothing. T-shirts with slogans serve as a fundamental way of telling the world who you

are, giving you a voice, and serving as an emotional connection with others. Wearing one is like branding yourself (Klerk, 2018). Slogan t-shirts can also contribute to popular culture as a socio-political medium. For example, Dior's signature slogan t-shirt saying, 'We Should All Be Feminists,' was designed to support feminism and make a lasting impact. They signified a way for people to communicate their values. Thus, slogan t-shirts can be something that can make people stand out and stand up for a cause at the same time. Compared to other general advertising slogans, slogans appearing on t-shirts have some unique features. They use an advertising slogan to influence not only consumers' brand perceptions but also product attractiveness.

Purpose of this study

Despite the popularity of t-shirts and slogans' usage on t-shirts, there is virtually no empirical research on t-shirt slogans. While it is known that consumer liking for a slogan transfers over to the brand and the purchase of the brand's products, no study has been done to determine what makes t-shirt slogans likable. Therefore, this study was designed and conducted to fill this gap. Specifically, there are three research questions we intend to answer in this study: (1) *What are the popular t-shirt slogans?* (2) *Who are the companies selling t-shirts with slogans?* (3) *What are the characteristics of the slogans that are liked by young consumers?* We believe the findings of this research can serve as a foundation for future research on t-shirt slogans and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on slogans.

Methodology

Previous studies suggest that young people are more aware of slogans than older people and young consumers are more likely to wear clothing with slogans (Beltramini & McDonald, 1982). Therefore, this study used a convenience sample of college students in different majors as research subjects. In order to understand young consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards t-shirts slogans, we collected a large sample of t-shirt slogans to ensure a sufficient variety of slogans was generated. A self-report survey was administered to undergraduate and graduate students in different majors at two universities in the US. Students enrolled at these two universities came from all 50 states in the US, and a small percentage of participants were international students. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, instructors from several courses helped distribute the survey and collected the data over three weeks in March 2018. 74% of the 118 participants in this study were female, and most of them (95%) were under 25 years old.

As you can see in Appendix 1, participants were asked to collect t-shirt slogans from popular fashion brands they were familiar with in the self-report survey. Firstly, the participants were asked to provide information about the content of the slogans, brand names, and type of the t-shirts. In order to collect a large set of t-shirts slogans from a variety of clothing brands, we didn't specify the sources they could use to collect the information. Based on the data gathered from the participants, slogans were collected from diverse sources, including the t-shirts they or their friends own, t-shirts sold in both online and offline stores, t-shirts promoted and shared on social media. Next, they were asked to indicate whether they liked or disliked each of the slogans they provided using a binary rating scale and then explain the reasons behind their choice using

an open-ended approach. An open-ended response format was employed in this study in an attempt to capture a wide range of reasons for participants' liking or disliking of the slogans they collected. The nature of the open-ended question also allows the participants to express their viewpoints fully (Turner, 2010). For example, although this study mainly focused on the content design of a t-shirt slogan, many participants also mentioned how the graphic design of a t-shirt slogan could also affect their liking for the slogan in their explanations.

Each participant was asked to provide at least eight slogans. This process yielded a total of 994 slogans (*dataset 1*). We deleted 54 'slogans' because they are brand names, not slogans (e.g. Nike on Nike t-shirt). This process yielded a total of 940 slogans from 175 clothing brands (*dataset 2*). Figure 1 shows the different datasets used in this study.

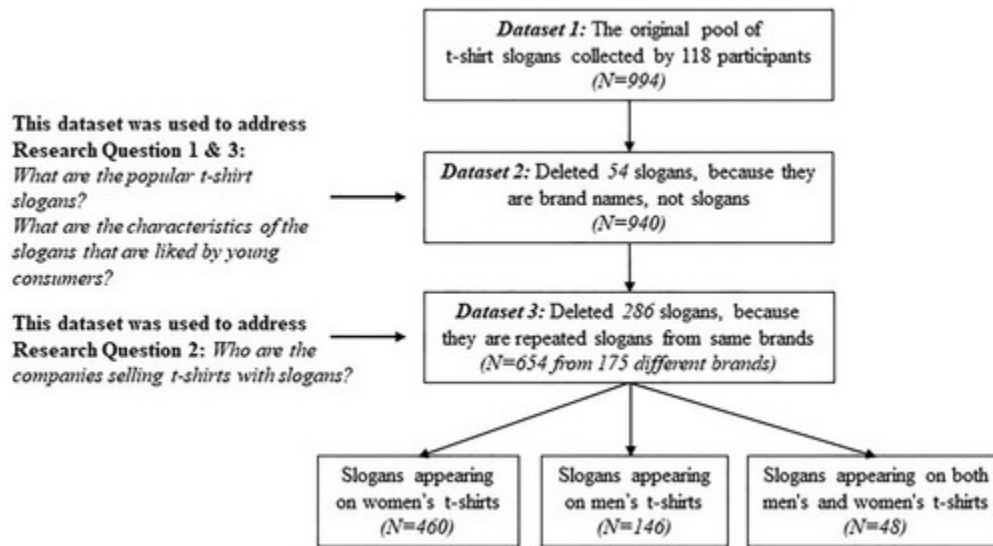


Figure 1. Datasets Used in this Study.

In order to answer the first two research questions, content analysis was used to analyze the responses. A frequency analysis was used for the content analysis. The key findings were summarised and presented by using frequency and percentage tables in the results section. Content analysis is a research method that allows for the counting and tallying of categorised themes within data. Content analysis has been described as a systematic and replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2000). It is useful in studies carried out in the framework of the social sciences, especially in the areas related to advertising and promotion (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Pitt & Papania, 2007). According to prior research, content analysis has also been proven to be an effective and quantitative textual method for analyzing slogans (Bayrak, 2013). Thus, content analysis was used as a data analysis technique in this study.

Thematic analysis was employed to address the research question 3. The open-ended question in the self-report survey explored why survey participants liked the t-shirt slogans they collected. In coding the reasons, open and axial coding of the participants' responses was used. Thematic analysis procedure was followed to produce a depth of understanding of the likability of t-shirt slogans. Researchers analyzed the data collectively to identify salient themes within the data, specifically the characteristics of the likable t-shirt slogans. Researchers familiarised themselves

with the data, developed codes, identified themes, and wrote results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both open coding and axial coding were used to generate an initial set of categories and then themes emerged from category consolidation. Two researchers independently reviewed the responses, coded the responses, and developed a set of categories that formed a checklist. When responses reviewed had more than one reason to like or dislike a slogan, they were coded with multiple codes. The researchers then compared their checklists to reconcile any differences between the lists. After extensive discussion, the two checklists were consolidated. Interrater reliability was high (87% agreement between the two researchers).

Results

Research question 1: what are the popular T-shirt slogans?

As shown in Figure 1, 940 t-shirt slogans (*dataset 2*) were collected in this study. The popularity of a t-shirt slogan was determined by the frequency of occurrence of a slogan. Table 1 lists the top 20 popular t-shirt slogans based on participants' responses in this study. 286 slogans are repeated slogans from the same brands. After removing the 286 duplicate slogans, the pool consists of 654 slogans from 175 different brands. Among the 654, 460 slogans appear on women's t-shirts; 146 slogans appear on men's t-shirts, and 48 slogans appear on both men's and women's t-shirts (*dataset 3*).

Table 1. Popular Slogans by the Frequency of Occurrence.

Frequency	Slogans	Brands
22	<i>Just Do It</i>	Nike
14	<i>Guccify Yourself</i>	Gucci
14	<i>The Force Is Female</i>	Nike
11	<i>Equality</i>	Nike
6	<i>I Wrote a Long Love Letter to You Because I Found It too Hard to Write a Short One</i>	Gucci
6	<i>Impossible Is Nothing</i>	Adidas
5	<i>Working Hard at Hardly Working</i>	Wildfox
5	<i>Love Never Gives Up</i>	Forever 21
5	<i>Protect This House</i>	Under Armour
5	<i>Every Mother Counts</i>	J. Crew
5	<i>Team USA</i>	Ralph Lauren
4	<i>Friday</i>	J. Crew
4	<i>Shoes and Spaghetti</i>	H&M
4	<i>We Should All Be Feminists</i>	Dior
4	<i>Tacos Are Always a Good Idea</i>	Show Me Your Mumu
4	<i>Never Catch Feelings</i>	Forever 21
4	<i>Made in the 90's</i>	Forever 21
4	<i>Love Never Gives Up</i>	Forever 21
4	<i>Love First</i>	J. Crew
4	<i>Higher.</i>	H&M

It is worth mentioning that among the 654 slogans, about 20 slogans are either the same or similar slogans but from different clothing brands. Examples are given in the table below (Table 2). These results indicate that popular slogans are likely to be used by multiple brands. For example, the slogan ‘*Amour*’ appeared on t-shirts from at least three brands identified in this study: Forever 21, J.Crew, and Maison Labiche. Another interesting finding was that a few exact opposite slogans were used on t-shirts from different brands. Such as ‘*You Can't Sit with Us*’ (from H&M and Forever 21) and ‘*You Can Sit with Us*’ (from Only Human).

Table 2. Same or Similar slogans Used by Different Brands.

	Slogans	Brands
1	Amour	<i>Forever 21, J.Crew, Maison Labiche</i>
2	Be Yourself Babe	<i>Boohoo, Nasty Gal, Alley & Rae</i>
3	Comme Ci Comme Ca	<i>Project Social, Banana Republic, French Connection</i>
4	Girl Power	<i>H&M, Forever 21, Unicorn Tees</i>
5	Girls Can Do Anything	<i>Free People, Forever 21</i>
6	Good Vibes Only	<i>Rue 21, American Eagle</i>
7	Let the Good Times Roll	<i>Madewell, Zara</i>
8	Love	<i>H&M, Loft, Weekday</i>
9	Made in the 90's	<i>Forever 21, Lost Cove Apparel, Riff Raff</i>
10	Queen	<i>Dolce & Gabbana, Rue 21</i>
11	Sassy	<i>Missguided, Charlotte Russe</i>
12	The force is Female	<i>Nike, Rebecca Minkoff</i>
13	Uh Huh Honey	<i>Topshop, Pacsun</i>
14	Woman	<i>Off-white, Forever 21</i>
15	You Can't Sit with Us	<i>H&M, Forever 21</i>
	You Can Sit with Us	<i>Only Human</i>
16	More Love	<i>Forever 21</i>
	More Love, Love More	<i>Urban Outfitters</i>

Research question 2: who are the companies selling T-shirts with slogans?

Based on the t-shirt slogans collected in this study, it was found that various clothing brands at different price points offer t-shirt with slogans, including affordable, fast-fashion brands, mid-priced premium brands, and high-end designer brands. Table 3 shows the 15 clothing brands contributing more than 300 unique t-shirt slogans in this study. The results suggest that sportswear brands (e.g. Nike and Adidas) and fast fashion brands (e.g. H&M, Forever 21, and Zara) are more likely to offer t-shirts with slogans. Specifically, over 35% of the brands are either sportswear brands or fast fashion brands.

Table 3. Top Brands Offering T-shirts with Slogans.

Brands	Type of Brand	# of Slogans	Slogan Examples
Forever 21	Fast fashion brand	90	<i>Always on Vacation; Feed We then We Can Talk; Eat Less; Never Catch Feelings, Wild & Free</i>
Zara	Fast fashion brand	42	<i>Blind Date; Future Dreamer; Right or Wrong Make a Decision; Now; Zara Woman</i>

Brands	Type of Brand	# of Slogans	Slogan Examples
H&M	Fast fashion brand	34	<i>Don't Look Back; You're Not Going That Way, Fight for It; Happiness from Within, Speak Up or Shut Up</i>
Nike	Sportswear brand	23	<i>Built not Born; Just Don't Quit; Shut Up and Run; Why not? Kiss My Airs</i>
Urban Outfitters	Retail brand	20	<i>All Good Never Better; Keep It Cozy, Leave Me Alone; Trust Nobody; Take Me Home</i>
Adidas	Sportswear brand	16	<i>Brothers through Everything; I'm Not the Cart Girl; Rocks Were Made to Climb Not to Hide Under; Fearless; Rise above the rest</i>
J. Crew	Premium brand	16	<i>On Island Time; Every Mother Counts; Love First; Heels on FIRE; Made in the Shade</i>
Under Amour	Sportswear brand	14	<i>I Will What I Want; Gains Aren't Given; Baseball or Nothing; I Will; Protect This House; Brunches & Crunches</i>
Asos	Retail brand	14	<i>Cheap Monday; More is More; World Peace Now; Choose Love; Fresh</i>
Charlotte Russe	Fast fashion brand	11	<i>Amour Paris; I Don't Stalk, I Investigate; Not Your Honey; Sundays are for the Girls; Mermaids Have More Fun</i>
Dolce & Gabbana	Designer brand	11	<i>Yes! Thanks!; I have a Beautiful Life; Vote for D&G Women; I am a New Dolce & Gabbana Model; Boycott</i>
Gucci	Luxury brand	11	<i>Black Cat Blind for Love; Never Marry a Mitford; Don't Grow Up it's a Trap, Guccification; Life is Gucci</i>
Show Me Your MuMu	Contemporary brand	11	<i>Always on the Slopes; Brunch, Brunch, Brunch; Tacos are Always a Good Idea; The One that Found the One; Sleep All Day</i>
Wildfox	Contemporary brand	11	<i>Carb Enthusiast; I Love My Dog; I'll Rise but I Won't Shine; Anti-social Butterfly; Make Space Great Again</i>
Old Navy	Fast fashion brand	10	<i>Best Never Rest; Keep It Simple; Lost the List; Always Say Yes to Dancing; Stay Golden</i>

Research question 3: what are the characteristics of the slogans that are liked by young consumers?

Of the total 940 t-shirt slogans we collected from the self-report survey in this study (dataset 2), over 71.3% of the t-shirt slogans were labelled with 'like' by the participants, suggesting that young American consumers have favourable attitudes toward the majority of the t-shirt slogans. The detailed results are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Consumers Attitudes toward T-shirt Slogans.

Slogans	Like (%)	Dislike (%)	Not Sure (%)
Slogans appearing on women's t-shirts	71.5%	27.5%	1%
Slogans appearing on men's t-shirts	65.2%	32.8%	2%
Slogans appearing on unisex t-shirts	86.4%	13.6%	0
Total	71.3%	27.5%	1.5%

Since a t-shirt is a relatively undifferentiated product, a slogan becomes a determining factor affecting consumers' evaluation of the product. A positive evaluation of a slogan could easily lead consumers to purchase the t-shirt. Thus, it is important to examine why young consumers like slogans. Table 5 shows the themes that emerged based on the thematic analysis of the

reasons provided by the respondents for their liking for the slogans. Eight themes were identified which represent the eight characteristics of likable t-shirt slogans, including (1) simple and clear messages, (2) creative or unique messages, (3) meaningful or inspiring messages, (4) slogan building an emotional connection, (5) slogan with brand name, (6) slogans reflecting brand identity, (7) wordplay slogans, and (8) design of the slogan. For each characteristic, Table 5 includes examples of slogans and respondents' reasons for their liking for the slogans. Moreover, detailed interpretations of each characteristic are also provided in the table. For example, there is an agreement among survey participants that they like slogans that are simple and effective. One survey participant likes the slogan '*Equality*' from Nike because 'It is simple and impactful. It states a clear initiative that not only is important in society but also within the company.' Likewise, the participants like the slogans that have meaningful or inspiring messages, as one participant explained, 'Adidas' slogan, '*Impossible is nothing*', is a quote from Mohammed Ali, who supported them at the height of his career. This is inspiring because he was one of the best athletes ever.'

Table 5. Characteristics of Likable T-shirt Slogans.

Characteristics	Examples of Slogans and Reason of Likability	Interpretations
(1) Simple and clear messages	<p><i>Just do it (Nike)</i>: 'It's short, simple, & effective. It's motivating and relates to the athletic nature of the brand, so it stays true to the brand image'</p> <p><i>Live simply (Patagonia)</i>: 'Sometimes less means more'</p> <p><i>Equality (Nike)</i>: 'It is simple and impactful. It states a clear initiative that not only is important in society but also within the company.'</p> <p><i>Love First (J. Crew)</i>: 'It conveys a simple and sweet message.'</p> <p><i>Now (Zara)</i>: 'It is simple and modern and trendy.'</p> <p><i>Fearless (Adidas)</i>: 'Simple.'</p> <p><i>Work it (Kate Spade)</i>: 'Positive message.'</p> <p><i>Rise (Forever 21)</i>: 'It is simple and promotes strength and confidence.'</p> <p><i>Team USA (Ralph Lauren)</i>: 'It is patriotic and is very simple and to the point.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since consumers have limited cognitive abilities, the length of the slogan contributes to its overall complexity and will adversely influence its likeability (Corder, 1986; Dass et al., 2014; Molian, 1993) • The purpose of a slogan is to deliver a clear and • focused message to consumers to help articulate the benefits provided by the brand (Dass et al., 2014) • The clarity of the message has a positive effect on the liking for a slogan (Dass et al., 2014; Sidelinger & McCroskey, 1997) • Easy slogans are better understood and generally lead to a better evaluation than difficult slogans (Hendriks, Meurs, & Poos, 2017)
(2) Creative or unique messages	<p><i>Maybe baby (Topshop)</i>: 'It implies mystery.'</p> <p><i>No Thank you (Junk Food)</i>: 'I thought this slogan was funny and sassy.'</p> <p><i>Shut up and run (Nike)</i>: 'Cool.'</p> <p><i>I had nothing to wear, so I put on this Moschino T-shirt (Moschino)</i>: 'I just like it because it's fun and shows off the brand in a cute way.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slogans are linked with creativity. Creative slogans generate favourable emotional responses and tend to be likable (Ang & Low, 2000; Dass et al., 2014) • A creative advertising concept signals the brand's ability and desire to think outside the box (Dahlén, Rosengren, & Törn, 2008)
(3) Meaningful or inspiring messages	<p><i>You can never dream big (H&M)</i>: 'It is cute and inspirational.'</p> <p><i>Impossible is nothing (Adidas)</i>: 'Adidas' slogan is a quote from Mohammed Ali, who supported them in the height of his career. This is inspiring because he was one of the best athletes ever.'</p> <p><i>Protect this house (Under Armour)</i>: 'Strong slogan, sports inspired, sounds powerful.'</p> <p><i>The force is female (Nike)</i>: 'This slogan is very empowering,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate slogans impress audiences deeply with both positive feelings and delightful imaginations (Wang, Niu, & Li, 2015) • Effective slogans emphasise points of difference that are not only meaningful but congruent with existing brand perceptions (Kohli et al., 2007)

Characteristics	Examples of Slogans and Reason of Likability	Interpretations
	and it perfectly fits their target market's personality.' <i>Work Train Win (Under Armour):</i> 'It motivates people as they are training or exercising to be the best they can.'	
(4) Slogan building an emotional connection	<i>Beachin (O'Neill):</i> 'I like the beach.' <i>Tacos are always a good idea (Show Me Your Mumu):</i> 'I love tacos.' <i>I love my dog (Wildfox):</i> 'I love my dog so I love the slogan.' <i>Made in the nineties (Forever 21):</i> 'It is very cute; 90s on trend; target market was born in the 90's.' <i>Shoes & Spaghetti (H&M):</i> 'Both are things that are near and dear to me.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising slogans convey messages of how the product or service can satisfy the need of consumers and sell an image or lifestyle (Rybackzewska et al., 2020) A slogan evoking an emotional response can create a more meaningful bond between the brand and customer (Rybackzewska et al., 2020)
(5) Slogans with brand name	<i>Guccify Yourself (Gucci):</i> 'I like how this slogan uses the brand name to extend the brand name into guccification.' <i>Juicy (Juicy Couture):</i> 'You know this word is heavily associated with 1 brand.' <i>Love Pink (Victoria's Secret Pink):</i> 'Company brings attention to the extension of their brand for younger girls.' <i>Classic like a pair of Reebok (Reebok):</i> 'It lets people know that you are unique in your way, while mentioning how classic their brand is.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating the brand within the slogan facilitates recall and association with the brand (Galí, Camprubí, & Donaire, 2017; Garrido Lora, 2005; Kohli et al., 2007) Including the brand name in the slogan has a positive effect on the association of ideas to be conveyed (Pike, 2004)
(6) Slogans reflecting the brand identity	<i>Off the wall (Vans):</i> 'I like this slogan because it explains the brand perfectly and shows that Vans knows the exact target market they are trying to reach based on how they designed their brand.' <i>East Hampton (Ralph Lauren):</i> 'Fitting for the brand.' <i>Never Stop Exploring (The North Face):</i> 'It goes with the brand.' <i>Forever faster (Puma):</i> 'Rememberable statement makes you remember brand.' <i>Live simply (Patagonia):</i> 'I like this slogan because I feel like it goes with its brand's image.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A slogan that is viewed as appropriate for its brand is expected to be better liked than one that is not (Dass et al., 2014) Effective slogans emphasise points of difference that are not only meaningful but congruent with existing brand perceptions (Kohli et al., 2007) Every slogan is a brand positioning tool, and it should position the brand in a clear manner (Kohli et al., 2007)
(7) Wordplay slogans (rhyme, antithesis, metaphor, and pun)	<i>More Love, Love More (Urban Outfitters):</i> 'Cute and positive.' <i>Working Hard at Hardly Working (Wildfox):</i> 'Clever slogan.' <i>Fine Like Wine (Sandilake):</i> 'That is just an old saying that I have always liked.' <i>Follow me to Tennessee (Urban Outfitters):</i> 'I like how it rhymes. I think it's a fun slogan.' <i>Nothing comes between me and my Calvins (Calvin Klein):</i> 'Calvin Klein expresses how you should feel confident and beautiful in any of their items, and I respect that.' <i>No prob-llama (Asos):</i> 'It is cute and makes a pun about llamas and problems. It also features a picture of a llama. Llamas are also very in right now and are seen everywhere.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The linguistic devices used in a slogan has a significant positive impact on slogan's memorability and likeability (Reece, Van den Bergh, & Li, 1994; Skorupa & Dubovičienė, 2015) Slogan effectiveness can be enhanced with the inclusion of linguistic devices (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Reece et al., 1994) A slogan can appear as more creative using linguistic devices (Miller & Toman, 2016)
(8) Design of the slogan	'I think it is a nice slogan, but I don't like the way it is printed and laid out on the t-shirt.' 'The slogan scale is too big and not appealing.' 'I like the way the slogan is designed.' 'The design itself makes this slogan likable for me.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective graphic design can communicate and evoke certain feelings and responses in viewers (Alexander, 2019) Advertising visual design can affect consumers' perceptions and mindsets (Negm & Tantawi, 2015)

Some interesting findings emerged. As the information in Table 5 suggests, our findings on t-shirt slogans are consistent with the studies on general advertising slogans. On the other hand, our study also yielded a few results different from prior studies' findings. For example, previous studies have suggested that the brand name's inclusion in the slogan will reduce its likeability (Dass et al., 2014; Laran, Dalton, & Andrade, 2011). However, our results confirmed that young American consumers generally like a t-shirt slogan that incorporates the brand name. For example, respondents express their likes for the slogan '*Guccify Yourself*' from the brand Gucci because they think the slogan was a nice play on words; it is creative, unique, and playful; and it can bring something youthful to an old brand.

Conclusions & managerial implications

Previous studies have indicated a significant relationship between the themes of a slogan and the product categories to which it can be applied (Boush, 1993). It is somewhat surprising that most of the previous slogan studies have focused on a general company or advertising slogans. The present research adds to slogan research by examining slogans appearing on products (specifically on t-shirts). Likeability is one of the several important goals that marketers want to achieve when they design their slogans. While most brands today have a slogan, the literature on what determines their likeability is sparse. Thus, this study represents one of the few studies to identify likability factors of slogans. Therefore, we believe that the current study can provide some interesting insights into what makes a slogan likable, particularly the slogans on clothing and related products.

Unlike general company or advertising slogans, slogans appearing on t-shirts play a dual role, promoting the brand and making the product more attractive. Previous studies have suggested that the medium used to link the slogan to the brand should have a consistent image with the brand. We believe, therefore, there is no better place for a clothing brand to place a slogan on its clothing products such as t-shirts. Slogans placed on their products, such as t-shirts, can play a crucial role in affecting customers' minds about the brands. The study's findings clearly suggest that young consumers hold a favourable general attitude toward the majority of t-shirt slogans collected in this study. The results imply that the companies offering t-shirts with slogans have done a great job creating eye-catching slogans. They should continue creating t-shirts or other clothing products with attractive slogans to meet their customers' needs.

Consistent with previous studies, the study has shown that short and straightforward t-shirt slogans are more effective and likable than long and complex ones. However, 'simple' is not always the best recommendation because the study has also confirmed that frequent use of linguistic devices (e.g. rhyme, antithesis, metaphor, and pun) in a slogan can make the slogan more attractive and positively highlight the advertised brand. It implies that, while simpler slogans can be understood better and more easily remembered than longer ones, on other hand, slogans with a modest degree of linguistic complexity would enjoy deeper processing and easier recall compared to the simpler ones. Thus, marketers need to find the balance between length and complexity when creating slogans that will appear on t-shirts or other clothing-related products. A good example of a well-balanced slogan is the slogan '*Working Hard at Hardly Working*' from Wildfox.

The results also revealed that the creative elements could significantly affect the effectiveness of the slogans appearing on t-shirts. This result is not surprising since clothing products are interrelated with innovation and creativity. At the same time, our study found that American consumers like t-shirt slogans that include the brand name or reflect the brand identity. However, prior research has shown that having the brand name in a slogan may reduce its flexibility and creativity. Therefore, for designers and marketers, their goal should be to create a slogan that can successfully build an instant association with the brand in customers' minds, but the connection should be formed creatively or smartly, such as the slogans '*Classic like a pair of Reebok*' from brand Reebok and '*Guccify Yourself*' from Gucci.

Prior research has suggested that consumers are more likely to form a positive attitude toward slogans that have strong emotional resonance. Therefore, we suggest that fashion marketers utilise t-shirt slogans to highlight their brands' unique features and promote values or lifestyles that are most appealing to their target market to build a meaningful emotional connection with their customers (Kohli et al., 2007). Good examples are the slogans '*The force is female*' from Nike and '*Made in the nineties*' from Forever 21.

Although this study mainly focused on the content design of a t-shirt slogan, many participants also mentioned how the graphic design of a t-shirt slogan could affect their liking for the slogan. It is interesting to note that our results have shown that, unlike general advertising slogans, the way a t-shirt slogan is designed also affects its likeability. This implies that a slogan's effectiveness can be increased when an attractive aesthetic image accompanies it. Previous research has suggested that a slogan appearing on products plays a crucial role in communicating the essence of a brand or company's value proposition to customers (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2005; Keller, 1993). Our study showed that it is also a form of visual communication. Therefore, in addition to the content, t-shirt slogan designers and marketers also need to consider the impact of a slogan's colour, size, shape, and image on consumers to meet customers' expectations. Here are a few examples of respondents' comments about the slogan's design: '*The slogan scale is too big and not appealing*' and '*The design itself makes this slogan likable for me.*'

Some participants in the study stated that they like foreign language slogans because they think they are cool, engaging, and reflect the brand's international image. Here are a few examples of the respondents' positive comments about slogans in foreign languages: '*I like this slogan because the use of two languages catches the eye*'; '*I think it's so awesome that Forever 21 incorporates another language in their design*'; and '*A slogan in another language is always cute for summer travels.*' These findings are consistent with those of previous empirical studies, which showed that the point of using foreign languages in advertising is not to convey the content of the message but the symbolic significance of the foreign language (Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Kuppens, 2010; Piller, 2003). However, some respondents in this study expressed an opposite opinion about foreign language slogans. They stated that they don't like those slogans because they don't fully understand those slogans' true meaning, for example, '*Paix sur la terre*' from J.Crew, suggesting the relevance and importance of foreign-language comprehension in t-shirt slogans. These contrary results imply that fashion marketers face a difficult challenge when creating slogans for international use. For global marketers and advertisers, when they use foreign language slogans, they need to make sure that most target consumers can paraphrase or translate these slogans to generate good consumer responses. Or

they can adopt the multi-language slogan strategy, the same slogan displayed in multiple languages, to satisfy different types of customers' needs.

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations. First, our qualitative research only focused on the t-shirt slogans collected by a group of college students. Though a significant number of t-shirt slogans were collected in this study, it doesn't provide a complete picture. Second, it is worth pointing out that our research revealed that respondents differ in their response to some t-shirt slogans because of individual consumer differences. Prior research has suggested that individual differences, such as gender, education, and income, affect their information process, consumer judgment, and likeability of slogans (Dass et al., 2014). Therefore, more research is needed to understand the impact of respondent characteristics on the likability of slogans. Third, prior research has shown that brand strength affects the attitude towards slogans (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2005). This study involves slogans from real clothing brands, which implies that participants' opinions about these brands may influence their evaluations of the slogans. Thus, further research would be advised to examine the effect of the brand on consumers' evaluation of t-shirt slogans. Finally, prior research has consistently demonstrated that advertising likeability could positively influence consumer behaviour (Du Plessis, 1994; Smit, Van Meurs, & Neijens, 2006). This is an important role that slogans are expected to play and a worthwhile area for further investigation. Therefore, future studies need to empirically investigate whether slogan likability affects consumers' purchase intentions towards t-shirt products.

Disclosure statement

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Appendix 1 T-shirt Slogan Survey

Please collect T-shirt slogans from popular fashion brands you are familiar with and fill in the information in the table below.

	Slogan	Brand Name	Men's or Women's T-shirt	Do you like the slogan?	Please briefly explain WHY you like or dislike it
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					