

**Developing an assessment tool for brand identity, marketing strategy and visual design in  
the context of small town businesses**

by

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A creative component submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department: Art and Design  
Major: Graphic Design

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2014

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## DEDICATION

I grew up in a small town in Nebraska. As I got older I began to understand more and more the importance of having a grocery store in our community. If we happened to forget something like milk or bread while at school or work in the nearby town, we could easily (walk/stop at) run down to the store and grab it quickly. Even if we just finished the rest of the milk and needed some that day, we still had the chance to get it. Of course living in a smaller community had its pros and cons. One benefit was the togetherness that our community shared and another was how the few businesses that we had were more than willing to go out of their way to help you with whatever they could. A downside of living in a small community that I became aware of as I grew up was how some of these businesses struggled to stay alive in a community where more and more younger people, like me, moved away after high school or college and didn't continue to shop in or support this community with their earnings. To be honest, I began to pursue my undergraduate degree in graphic design because the potential for the pay is great. As I continued along with my degree, though I realized that although the pay could be great, there was more to pursuing design than just that. I began to take business and marketing classes, that I think made me understand graphic design as a whole even more.

Upon coming to Iowa State University, I kept in the back of my mind where I had come from and what I had learned while living there and also what I had learned while earning my undergraduate degree. I had begun to realize that what I wanted to do after completing my Master's degree was start my own business and find a way to give back to smaller communities like mine and help them to stay alive and thrive. I was able to figure out a way to start doing that with my creative component. Deb Satterfield, Susan Erickson and Ron Prescott all went along with my idea for my creative component dealing with small communities in some way. We

continued to brainstorm different ways that I could relate small communities into my creative component. Deb and Susan both recommended that I attend the Preserve Iowa Summit in Burlington, Iowa—by doing that hopefully I would learn more about small communities and different ways to develop them so they continue to draw people into them. Ron Prescott gave me some insight on small community grocery stores in the state of Iowa. Along with my other research, I used the insight that Ron gave me to help develop this thesis. All three of them had a hand in helping me come up with this idea and the direction for my thesis to go.

I dedicate this paper to those three. Without them, my interest in small communities, and grocery stores specifically, would not have grown and I would not have pursued this topic for my project.

I thank you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Debra Satterfield, and my committee members, Paul Bruski and Laura Smarandescu, for their guidance and support throughout the course of my research and project. Also, thank you to Susan Erickson and Ron Prescott for their guidance and insight on rural development and small community grocery stores in the state of Iowa.

In addition, I would also like to thank my fiancé, family, friends, and the department faculty and staff for making my two years at Iowa State University—as a graduate student—a fun, unique and excellent experience. I also want to thank Dave, Louise, Keli and Rob for their interviews; without them, this thesis would not have been complete.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the potential use for a literature review and interviews as a source of information for successful small business strategies and design. This thesis also explores the idea of the development of an assessment tool to assist graphic designers and small community grocery stores. From the research gathered with the literature review and also the interviews conducted, a survey was developed, along with a brand identity, marketing strategy and visual design assessment tool that graphic designers can use to strengthen current strategies and also courses action to take to develop areas that are nonexistent.

This thesis will address the following research questions.

- (1) Can a literature review and interviews be used as sources of information to identify successful brand identity, marketing strategies, and visual design?
- (2) Can a tool be developed to measure and assess the current brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design of a small business?

This thesis indicates that a literature review and interviews can be used as sources of information to identify successful brand identity, marketing strategies, and visual design; and how that is possible. The thesis also indicates that an assessment tool can be developed to measure and assess the current brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design of a small business; along with giving future courses of action the graphic designer and small business owners/managers should take.

This survey and assessment tool was developed by a graphic designer. For the purpose of simplifying the discussion of the survey and assessment tool, graphic designer will be the example of the person doing the assessing. Keep in mind though, that this survey and assessment tool can be used by a variety of people such as: marketers, advertisers, and owners/managers of businesses as well.

## INTRODUCTION

Small town grocery stores have been around for many years. The first grocery stores started off as trading posts, which then developed into larger retail businesses, known as general stores. Today, many rural areas still have general stores. Those stores may be known as: grocery stores, convenience stores or food centers—depending on the community or the stores affiliation.

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This thesis was developed using small community grocery stores as a basis for the interviews conducted, survey developed and assessment tool designed. It is believed that small community grocery stores help keep a rural town alive and thriving. That is the reason for choosing small community grocery stores as a basis for this research.

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## Chapter 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Small business**

Small businesses are an important part in the rural economy (McDaniel, 2001). The U.S. Small Business Administration defines a small business as “a firm with fewer than 500 employees” (McDaniel, 2001). In a report done by Kimberly Landry, LIMRA Product Research; she found that most U.S. businesses are small businesses—of the approximately 5.8 million businesses in the United States that employ at least one person—98 percent have fewer than 100 employees, while 89 percent have fewer than 20 (Landry, 2013). Kendall McDaniel, writer of “Small Business in Rural America,” had a similar finding—nearly three-fourths of all rural firms have fewer than twenty employees. McDaniel went on to say that “these small firms account for a quarter of all rural jobs and a fifth of rural payrolls” (McDaniel, 2001). According to Jeffrey Shields, “roughly one-fifth of all Americans lives and work in rural areas” (Shields, 2004).

According to Jeffrey Shields in “Does Rural Location Matter? The Significance of a Rural Setting for Small Business,” rural areas present unique conditions that have been associated with adversity for rural entrepreneurs and small businesses, consistent with external dependency (Shields, 2004). Small businesses in rural communities face issues such as low population density, consumer income and educational levels below those found in metropolitan areas, and socio-cultural values that wield economic influence (Shields, 2004).

Assumptions that rural settings for small business are like metropolitan settings or that rural areas are in crisis, presenting extreme adversity to business, are not necessarily accurate



(Shields, 2005). In “Small Business in Rural America,” McDaniel mentions that “The Center for the Study of Rural America” has sponsored a series of conferences and roundtables over the past two years to help answer the question of ‘How can community leaders and policymakers encourage small business in rural America?’” The participants at the conferences and roundtables identified three major challenges to entrepreneurial activity in rural America—infrastructure, labor, and capital (McDaniel, 2001). By improving infrastructures, boosting human capital and expanding the menu of capital providers—rural America could foster small business expansion in many of its communities (McDaniel, 2001). Small firms that expand their reach beyond traditional products and markets enhance their ability to compete in today’s global economy. By improving physical infrastructures and closing the digital divide—small businesses could foster expansion in rural America. Small firms also need larger pools of highly skilled labor to prosper in rural America (McDaniel, 2001). McDaniel also stated, that “to attract and retain highly skilled workers, small businesses and policymakers must find ways to boost rural wages and offer top-notch benefits to rural workers (McDaniel, 2001). Although the smallest firms tend to be newer on average, nearly half of all firms with fewer than nine employees have been in business for 20 years or more (Landry, 2013). When exploring the dynamics of the small business market, it is helpful to segment firms by their stage of growth—new, stable, declining or expanding. The current market has a lot more firms that consider themselves “new” or “stable” and significantly fewer firms that are actively “expanding”—compared with the year 2000 (Landry, 2013). That change is related to the economy of recent years. The 2008 recession caused many struggling firms to go out of business. At the same time, widespread economic uncertainty has encouraged more successful firms to prefer “stable” growth over active expansion (Landry, 2013).

Demography plays a critical role in rural locations. Low population density limits business growth, even when demand is high (Shields, 2004). Rural businesses, thus, tend to be small (Shields, 2004). In *Marketing: A Contemporary Analysis*, Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, and Levitt, talk about some differences between rural and urban areas:

“Beyond differences in size, composition, and concentration, there has historically been a cultural distinction in the *ways of life* associated with rural and urban living. Dwellers in rural areas tend to be relatively conservative, quiet, slow to change, and cling longer to traditions and established patterns of behavior. The “city mentality” is a freer one characterized by greater innovation, self-expression, and sophistication. In all nations, cities have been centers of the great achievements of modern civilization—learning, invention, art, and culture. They have also been the focal point of social and personal disorganization, as exemplified by the diminishing influence of the family, the church, and the community in urban life” (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). Small businesses are influenced by a number of other demographic factors that may be less salient for larger companies. Small firms are more likely to be owned exclusively by members of the same family, and significant proportions are based out of someone’s home (Landry, 2013). Seventy-eight percent of small firms are family-owned while thirty-three percent of small businesses are operated primarily from someone’s home. Small firms that are led by women, in roles that include owner, partner, and/or president make up twenty-four percent and fourteen percent of small businesses are owned by people belonging to racial or ethnic minority groups (Landry, 2013). Nancy Miller, Harriet McLeod, and Keun Young Oh in “Managing Family Businesses in Small Communities,” found that successful businesses can enhance rural and small community development through activities such as

manufacturing, finance, transportation, and construction—as well as—the distribution of both agriculture and consumer related goods and services (Miller, McLeod and Oh, 2001).

## **U.S. Small Business Administration**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in July of 1953 as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise, and to maintain and strengthen the Nation's overall economy ("History," n.d.). The charter also stipulates that SBA will ensure small businesses a "fair proportion" of government contracts and sales of surplus property. The SBA helps Americans start, build and grow businesses. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) established The Small Business Act to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise, to ensure that small businesses receive a fair portion of the Federal Government's purchases, and to maintain and strengthen the Nation's overall economy ("History, n.d.). The Act defines a small business concern as one that "is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation."

## **Rural development**

Rural development, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, is the improvement in overall rural community conditions, including economic and other quality of life considerations such as the environment, health, infrastructure, and housing ("Rural Development: Executive Summary," 2006). Rural areas are no longer dominated by agriculture; the rural economy has become highly diverse ("Rural Development: Executive Summary," 2006). In the "Rural Development: Executive Summary," about 40 percent of rural people lived

on a farm and one-third of the rural workforce worked in production agriculture in 1950. Today, less than 10 percent of rural people currently live on a farm and only 6.5 percent of the rural workforce is directly employed in farm production (“Rural Development: Executive Summary,” 2006). Manufacturing now directly accounts for over a quarter of rural private sector earnings. More than one in every four non-metro counties depends primarily on manufacturing for its economic base (“Rural Development: Executive Summary,” 2006). In the “Rural Development: Executive Summary” paper, the largest growth in rural population and employment has generally occurred in areas which rely on non-traditional income sources (“Rural Development: Executive Summary,” 2006). That was followed by this information; “those regions of the country that rely on farming, lack urbanization, or are remote from large cities have seen declines in population (“Rural Development: Executive Summary,” 2006). The USDA’s rural development programs are designed to: provide socially based assistance to local rural communities and residents in need and facilitate market-based rural development (“Rural Development: Executive Summary,” 2006). In *The Main Street Economist: Commentary on the Rural Economy* by Kendall McDaniel; he said that helping rural entrepreneurs attract venture capital is a key challenge for many rural leaders (McDaniel, 2002). McDaniel goes on to say that “one way to provide rural entrepreneurs with venture capital is to create nontraditional venture capital funds (McDaniel, 2002). McDaniel said that rural counties hold 19.2 percent of all U.S. business establishments, yet only 1.6 percent of all venture capital investments went to rural firms (McDaniel, 2002). He also said that rural communities require investments in both new and expanding businesses to provide the jobs and income to fuel future economic growth. New firms require capital and technical assistance to turn ideas into viable business enterprises. Existing firms must make capital investments to remain competitive in today’s global economy (McDaniel, 2002). He went

on to say that capital access problems for new and existing firms often translate into slower growth rates for rural communities (McDaniel, 2002). McDaniel also stressed how important it is to identify potential investors in rural communities and to recognize the differences between large national or regional investors and local investors (McDaniel, 2002). He said that larger investors usually participate in traditional venture capital funds which choose from many opportunities around the globe and that those funds base investment decisions solely on financial returns (McDaniel, 2002). Local investors may be more interested in the prosperity of their region and might accept lower financial returns for increased social benefits (McDaniel, 2002). Because of that, local investors may be willing to wait longer for the “payoff” on their investment (McDaniel, 2002).

According to Terry Buss and Xiannuan Lin in “Business Survival in Rural America: A Three-State Study,” there has been little research on rural economies; much of our knowledge is speculative. Much of what is perceived about rural economies is based on extrapolations from studies of urban areas (Buss and Lin, 2001). In Martha Frederick’s paper “Directions in Rural Entrepreneurship,” (as cited in Buss and Lin’s “Business Survival in Rural America: A Three-State Study,”) she said that since urban entrepreneurs have difficulty identifying markets in cities, rural entrepreneurs, with fewer resources and in smaller markets, must have even greater difficulty (Buss and Lin, 2001). Rural economies are neither homogeneous nor, as is often assumed, dominated by agriculture (Buss and Lin, 2001).

In Mark Drabenstott’s “Meeting a New Century of Challenges” article, helping rural America tap new digital technologies will be a good starting point for a guide to policy responses (Drabenstott, 1999). He goes on to say that “such technologies offer the best hope of closing the distances that have historically left rural communities behind in the nation’s economic race”

(Drabenstott, 1999). Drabenstott also said that digital technologies offer a whole new paradigm—knowledge-based industries located everywhere. He also said that digital technology clearly has the potential to open up bold new economic vistas in rural places; but it will not be easily done (Drabenstott, 1999). Drabenstott also talked about brain drain; saying that “Studies show that rural America has a smaller share of people with college training that metropolitan areas have. This brain drain simply makes it that much harder to do a whole host of things in rural America—stoking entrepreneurship and attracting high-skill jobs to name two. Slowing that drain will depend on creating more viable economic opportunities and enhancing rural quality of life” (Drabenstott, 1999). He also said that rural communities will need more than high skill workers and a new generation of entrepreneurs. They will need strong local leaders (Drabenstott, 1999). Drabenstott also talked about the various policies for rural America and how the different acts and grants have had agriculture at their soul. He said that “those not aimed at agriculture generally have not been coordinated with the rest” (Drabenstott, 1999). Drabenstott summed it up by saying that the United States has not had a coherent “rural” policy (Drabenstott, 1999). Drabenstott concluded his article by saying that “rural America is undergoing enormous change.” Agriculture is no longer the tide that carries rural America (Drabenstott, 1999). Drabenstott said that it is a strong force, but it no longer assures rural economic success (Drabenstott, 1999).

### **What is a grocery store?**

Grocery, defined by The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language online, is a store selling foodstuffs and various household supplies—also a marketplace where groceries are sold. Another definition of a grocery store is a retail store that sells food and other non-food

items. U.S. grocery stores are descended from trading posts, which sold not only food but clothing, household items, tools, furniture, and other miscellaneous merchandise (“Grocery Store”, 2014). These trading posts evolved into larger retail businesses known as general stores. Many rural areas still contain general stores that sell goods ranging from cigars to imported napkins (“Grocery Store”, 2014). Traditionally, general stores have offered credit to their customers, a system of payment that works on trust rather than modern credit cards. This allowed farm families to buy staples until their harvest could be sold. A grocer is a bulk seller of food (“Grocer”, 2013). It also said that beginning as early as the 14th century, a grocer was a dealer in comestible dry goods such as spices, peppers, sugar, and (later) cocoa, tea and coffee. Those items were bought in bulk, hence the term grocer from the French *grossier* meaning wholesaler, this term derived from Medieval Latin *grossarius* from which we also derive the word gross (meaning a quantity of twelve dozen, or 144) (“Grocer”, 2013). In the United States and United Kingdom, supermarkets and convenience stores are sometimes described as grocery businesses, or simple grocers (“Grocer”, 2013).

At times, Grocery Store and Convenience Store may be used interchangeably. Michelle Payne wrote an article in the Houston Chronicle—*Difference Between a Grocery Store and Convenience Store*—explaining that. She breaks it down into four key differences: product offerings, services, store size and ownership and operation. Payne says that convenience store inventory is typically limited to high-convenience items and food basics that people commonly use and need quickly (i.e. toilet paper, soft drinks, and microwaveable and prepared foods) (Payne, n.d.). Grocery stores, however, “offer a wide variety of food products, including perishable items like meat, produce, and dairy, along with general merchandise items like cleaning supplies, paper products, and health/beauty care products” (Payne, n.d.). The next

difference Payne covers is services. Payne says that the biggest difference between grocery stores and convenience stores is that convenience stores usually sell gasoline (Payne, n.d.).

Payne goes on to say that many grocery stores are now providing that service as well. Store size is the third difference that Payne covers in her article. Payne says “grocery stores tend to be larger in size than convenience stores with an average size of 46,000 square feet” (Payne, n.d.).

The final difference that Payne talks about is ownership and operation. She says “many convenience stores are independently owned and are often part of a franchise of convenience store chains, while the majority of grocery stores are part of a chain that is run by a national or regional corporation” (Payne, n.d.). Payne also says that another difference is the operation.

“Convenience stores offer longer business hours and are open on most holidays, whereas grocery stores have shorter hours and are closed during some holidays” (Payne, n.d.).

### **Patronage to a certain grocery store**

Kusum Ailawadi and Kevin Keller in “Understanding Retail Branding: Conceptual insights and Research Priorities,” explain that branding can be especially important in the retailing industry to influence customer perceptions and drive store choice and loyalty (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004).

The location of a store and the distance that the consumer must travel to shop there are basic criteria in their store choice decisions (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). In “Determining Where to Shop: Fixed and Variable Costs of Shopping,” David Bell, Teck-Hua Ho and Christopher Tang investigate store visit behaviors of households visiting stores over a time horizon of days (Bell, Ho, Tang, 1998). They assumed that the household’s decision to make a shopping trip is exogenous and that store choice is driven primarily by the total cost of shopping for that particular shopping visit (Bell, Ho, Tang, 1998). Bell, Ho, and Tang also mentioned habitual



store visit behavior—saying that a household can develop habitual store visit behavior that generates two kinds of store loyalty: category-independent and category-specific (Bell, Ho, Tang, 1998). They said that a household's category-independent store loyalty captures its habitual preference for a store, independent of the shopping list. Also, that this category-independent loyalty tends to lower the fixed cost of shopping at the store (Bell, Ho, Tang, 1998). Bell, Ho, and Tang then go on to explain a household's category-specific store loyalty (e.g., buys Pampers disposable diapers from Wal-Mart and Crystal Geyser mineral water from Trader Joe's) depends on the shopping list and thus can vary from trip to trip (Bell, Ho, and Tang, 1998). They said that category-specific loyalty tends to reduce the variable cost of shopping, because it reduces the search cost and increases the shopper's ability to recognize deal occasions for the item at the store (Bell, Ho, and Tang, 1998). At the end of their research, Bell, Ho, and Tang said that standard retail site selection models assume that shoppers are influenced predominantly by store location and travel distance (Bell, Ho, and Tang, 1998). They also said that retail pricing models suggest that shippers respond positively to promotion and price discounts (Bell, Ho, and Tang, 1998). Bell, Ho, and Tang said that for a store to be competitive in a market segment, it should avoid having high fixed and high variable costs of shopping simultaneously. If that is the case, a store in that position is vulnerable to losing store traffic and likely to be squeezed out of the market (Bell, Ho, and Tang, 1998). Ailawadi and Keller explain that different elements of a retailer's in-store environment, e.g., color, music, and crowding, can influence consumers' perceptions of a store's atmosphere, whether or not they visit a store, how much time they spend in it, and how much money they spend there (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). They also summarized that consumers are more likely to develop a favorable price image when retailers offer frequent discounts on a large number of products than when they offer less frequent, but steeper discounts

(Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Ailawadi and Keller also said that products that have high unit price and are purchased more frequently are more salient in determining the retailer's price image. They also said that price promotions are associated with store switching but the effect is indirect, altering consumers' category purchase decisions while they are in the store rather than altering their choice of which store to visit (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Ailawadi and Keller also talked about private labels and the impact that they may have on a consumer's decision. They said that private label users span a wide array of demographic and psychographic characteristics, so retailers who use a strong private label strategy are not limiting themselves to only a narrow section of the market (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Ailawadi and Keller said that it is not clear whether private labels really improve store loyalty, and though analytical research suggests that positioning next to the leading brand is a smart strategy for maximizing category profit, it is not clear whether such positioning is credible in the minds of the consumers (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004).

In Jacoby and Chestnut's book *Brand Loyalty Measurement and Management* (as cited in Josée Bloemer and Ko de Ruyter's "On the Relationship Between Store Image, Store Satisfaction and Store Loyalty,") store loyalty is defined as the biased (i.e. non random) behavioral response (i.e. revisit), expressed over time, by some decision-making unit with respect to one store out of a set of stores, which is a function of psychological (decision making and evaluative) processes resulting in brand commitment (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1997). Bloemer and Ruyter proposed that store commitment is a necessary condition for store loyalty to occur (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1997). They also said that, in their view, the level of consumer commitment can differ considerably and therefore they assumed that there is a continuum of store loyalty (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1997). Bloemer and Ruyter said that at one end of the

continuum, one finds true store loyalty; the repeat visiting behavior based on a maximum amount of commitment. At the other end, one finds spurious store loyalty; the repeat visiting of the store not based on any commitment at all (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1997). After doing some research Bloemer and Ruyter concluded that store loyalty might best be explained by amount and type of satisfaction, involvement, and deliberation (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1997). In “Assessing the Relationship Between Loyalty Program Attributes, Store Satisfaction and Store Loyalty” by Kerrie Bridson, Jody Evans, and Melissa Hickman; they said that at the heart of loyalty programs is the principle of reinforcement whereby it is believed that behaviors (such as purchase) which are rewarded will be repeated (Bridson, Evans, and Hickman, 2008). Loyalty programs have emerged as a separate retail strategy, often managed externally from the retailer or by a separate functional area internal to the retailer (Bridson, Evans, and Hickman, 2008). They go on to say that “this has meant that while it is a part of the retailers’ strategy repertoire it has evolved to operate independently of traditional strategies such as the look and feel of the store, pricing and quality decisions, advertising budgets or staffing levels within stores” (Bridson, Evans, and Hickman, 2008). Richard Barlow, “Five Mistakes of Frequency Marketing,” talks about ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ benefits; he said that on the emotional side, the goal is to create a feeling in the customer’s mind that, “They know I’m important.” That feeling is produced using “soft benefits.” Soft benefits include: recognition, special treatment, unexpected gratification and reliability and consistency (Barlow, 1995). Barlow said that on the rational side, the goal is to have the customer think, “I get my money’s worth.” He goes on to say that lowering the price every time isn’t what that means. It has more to do with a broader sense of value created using price, quality, quantity and “hard benefits”—tangible rewards such as free merchandise and services or free travel, for which the customer would otherwise have had to pay (Barlow, 1995). David

Meerman Scott's *The New Rules of Marketing and PR* also had an idea that reflected what Barlow said—frequency-marketing strategies must establish positive direct relationships with high-value customers to demonstrate respect and prove value (Barlow, 1995).

In Terance A. Shimp's book, *Advertising, Promotion, and other aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications*, he covers loyalty programs. Shimp says, “one well-known method for building customer relations is the use of loyalty programs, which are also called frequency or ambassador programs” (Shimp, 2010). Shimp follows that by saying that “loyalty programs are dedicated to creating customers who are committed to a brand and encouraging them to satisfy most of their product or service needs from offering organizations (Shimp, 2010).

## **Branding, brand, and brand identity**

Kevin Keller describes branding—as a means to distinguish the goods of one producer from those of another—in the book *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity* (Keller, 2003). Keller goes on to say that according to the American Marketing Association (AMA), a brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (Keller, 2003). Alina Wheeler has a similar meaning for branding in her book *Designing Brand Identity*. She defines branding as a disciplined process used to build awareness and extend customer loyalty (Wheeler, 2013). She also says that it requires a mandate from the top and readiness to invest in the future. Wheeler goes on to say that branding is about seizing every opportunity to express why people should choose one brand over another (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler says that a desire to lead, outpace the competition, and give employees the best tools to reach customers are the reasons why companies leverage branding

(Wheeler, 2013). Keller also said that “the key to creating a brand, according to the AMA definition, is to be able to choose a name, logo, symbol, package design, or other attribute that identifies a product and distinguishes it from others. These different components of a brand that identify and differentiate it can be called brand elements.” Brand elements, sometimes called brand identities, are those trademarkable devices that serve to identify and differentiate the brand (Keller, 2003). Brand names, URLs, logos, symbols, characters, spokespeople, slogans, jingles, packages and signage are main brand elements (Keller, 2003). Kevin Keller also mentions that a brand is a valued intangible asset that needs to be handled carefully (Keller, 2003). Other intangible assets that Keller mentioned were management skills, marketing, financial, and operations expertise—most important though was brands themselves (Keller, 2003). From an economic perspective, brands allow consumers to lower search costs for products both internally—in terms of how much they have to think—and externally—in terms of how much they have to look around (Keller, 2003). Keller also mentions in his book “brands also provide a number of valuable functions to firms” (Keller, 2003). He goes on to say “Fundamentally, they (brands) serve an identification purpose to simplify product handling or tracing for the firm. Operationally, brands help to organize inventory and accounting records” (Keller, 2003). Brands represent enormously valuable pieces of legal property, capable of influencing consumer behavior, being bought and sold, and providing the security of sustained future revenues to their owner (Keller, 2003). Strong brands result in better earnings and profit performance for firms, which, in turn, create greater value for shareholders (Keller, 2003). Brands can generate consumer interest, patronage and loyalty in a store, and consumers learn to expect certain brands and products from a store (Keller, 2003). Keller also mentions that brands help to create an image and establish a positioning for the store—“you are what you sell” (Keller, 2003).

According to Claxton and Woo in *How to Say It: Marketing with New Media*, branding will also help a business clearly communicate and cut through information clutter (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

According to Wheeler, the branding process consists of: conducting research, clarifying strategy, designing identity, creating touch-points and managing assets (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler breaks down conducting research to: clarify vision, strategies, goals and values; research stakeholders' needs and perceptions; conduct marketing, competitive, technology, legal, and language audits (Wheeler, 2013). She also says to interview key management; evaluate existing brands and brand architecture; and present audit readout (Wheeler, 2013). Clarifying strategy is broke down to: synthesize learnings; clarify brand strategy; develop a positioning platform; co-create brand attributes; write a brand brief and achieve agreement (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler also includes create a naming strategy; develop key messages and write a creative brief in clarifying strategy as well (Wheeler, 2013). The third step of the process is designing identity. In that step Wheeler includes: visualize the future; brainstorm bid idea; design brand identity; explore applications; finalize brand architecture; present visual strategy; and achieve agreement (Wheeler, 2013). The following step is creating touch-points. This step includes: finalize identity design; develop look and feel; initiate trademark protection; prioritize and design applications; design program; and apply brand architecture (Wheeler, 2013). The fifth and final step, according to Wheeler, is managing assets. In this last step Wheeler includes: build synergy around the new brand; develop launch strategy and plan; launch internally first; launch externally; develop standards and guidelines; and the last piece, nurture brand champions (Wheeler, 2013).

Brand architecture, according to Ailawadi and Keller in their article *Understanding Retail Branding*, involves defining both brand boundaries and brand relationships (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). The role of brand architecture is two-fold: (1) to clarify all product and service offerings and improve brand awareness with consumers and (2) to motivate consumer purchase by enhancing the brand image of products and services (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Ailawadi and Keller say that there are three key brand architecture tasks: defining brand potential, identifying opportunities to achieve brand potential and organizing brand offerings (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004).

Alina Wheeler describes a strong brand as standing out in a densely crowded marketplace. She goes on to say that people fall in love with brands, trust them, and believe in their superiority (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler says that how a brand is perceived affects its success, regardless of whether it's a start-up, a nonprofit, or a product (Wheeler, 2013). In her book Wheeler looks to David Haigh's—CEO, Brand Finance—idea that brands have three primary functions: navigation, reassurance, and engagement (Wheeler, 2013). Haigh says for navigation—brands help consumers choose from a bewildering array of choices; reassurance—brands communicate the intrinsic quality of the product or service and reassure customers that they have made the right choice; and engagement—brands use distinctive imagery, language, and associations to encourage customers to identify with the brand (Wheeler, 2013).

Wheeler says brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses (Wheeler, 2014). She says you can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, and watch it move. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meaning accessible (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler says that brand identity takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole systems (Wheeler, 2013).

In *Designing Brand Identity*, Wheeler also discusses the naming of a business or brand. She says that the right name is timeless, tireless, and easy to say and remember; it stands for something, and facilitates brand extensions (Wheeler, 2013). She also said that the right name looks great in the text of an email and in the logo (Wheeler, 2013). According to Wheeler, a well-chosen name is an essential brand asset, as well as a 24/7 workhorse (Wheeler, 2013). In Wheeler's book, she showed a quote from Danny Altman—Founder and Creative Director, A Hundred Monkeys—"The right name captures the imagination and connects with the people that you want to reach" (Wheeler, 2013).

Wheeler also discusses coherence in her book. She says that the brand should feel familiar and the experience should have the desired effect—whether a customer is using a product, talking to a service representative, or making a purchase on his iPhone (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler then goes on to explain how coherence is achieved—unified voice, a dynamic central idea (clear about its positioning and how company wants to be perceived); one company strategy; every touchpoint (understanding the needs and preferences of the target customer); look and feel (unified visually and structurally, utilizes special designed colors, typeface families and formats); uniform quality (imparts a degree of care that is given to each of the company's products or services); clarity and simplicity (using clear language consistently to communicate about a product or service) (Wheeler, 2013).

Color, as defined by Wheeler, is used to evoke emotion and express personality (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler goes on to say that it stimulates brand association and accelerates differentiation (Wheeler, 2013). She also says that, traditionally, the primary brand color is assigned to the symbol, and the secondary color is assigned to the logotype, business descriptor, or tagline (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler also mentions some color brand identity basics: use color to facilitate



recognition and build brand equity; colors have different connotations in different cultures; color is affected by various reproduction methods; the designer is the ultimate arbiter for setting color consistency across platforms; ensuring consistency across applications is frequently a challenge; most of the world uses a PC; sixty percent of the decision to buy a product is based on color; you can never know enough about color; and finally, quality insures that the brand identity asset is protected (Wheeler, 2013).

Coca-Cola is an example of using the color red for their primary brand color. The company uses the color red to facilitate recognition with their products. Figure 1.1 shows various Coca-Cola packaging using their primary color—red.

**Figure 1.1.** Packaging design for Coca-Cola



*Figure 1.1.* Packaging design for Coca-Cola, showing use of primary color—red.

Logotype, as defined by Doyald Young in *Fonts and Logos*, is the name of a company, product, or service, and is an essential part of commerce (Young, 1999). Young also explains that a good logo must be equally legible in small and large sizes (Young, 1999). He also says that ideally the logo should be strong and simple and easily reproduced on different materials (Young, 1999). Young also says that all businesses benefit from having a logo as a simple means of identification—from the local handyman to multinational conglomerates (Young, 1999). In his book Young also says that a logo should be appropriate and suggest quality—it should be distinctive and legible (Young, 1999).

In another section in *Designing Brand Identity*, Wheeler covers typography. She defines typography as a core building block of an effective identity program (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler says that a unified and coherent company image is not possible without typography that has a unique personality and an inherent legibility (Wheeler, 2013). She also says that typography must support the positioning strategy and information hierarchy (Wheeler, 2013). Also, identity program typography needs to be sustainable and not on the curve of a fad (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler also mentions that the typeface needs to be flexible and easy to use, and it must provide a wide range of expression—clarity and legibility are the drivers (Wheeler, 2013).

Following are some comparisons of a range of businesses that had poor typography but have since developed stronger, more clarified and legible typography for their logo.

Figure 1.2 shows an old John Deere logo. The typeface is very thick and has thick serifs that turn into blobs when it is shrunk down in size.

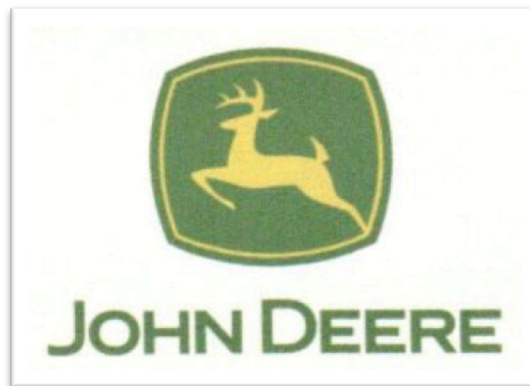
**Figure 1.2.** Old John Deere logo



*Figure 1.2.* Old John Deere logo, showing thick text that blurs together.

Figure 1.3 shows the new typeface for John Deere. It is sans serif and presents itself as a cleaner lined typeface. When this logo is shrunk down, it is still legible and does not blur together like the previous one.

**Figure 1.3.** New John Deere logo



*Figure 1.3.* New John Deere logo, showing sans serif type and cleaner lines.

Figure 1.4 shows Pinterest's old logo. This typeface is very complicated with a shadow and also an outline around it. By having both of those elements it makes the logo almost illegible and the readability of it is poor as well.

**Figure 1.4.** Old Pinterest logo



*Figure 1.4.* Old Pinterest logo, showing the use of a shadow and outline.

Figure 1.5 shows Pinterest's new logo. The new typeface for Pinterest is simplified down, making it legible and readable. It still has the feeling that the original logo was trying to capture—craft, creativeness and uniqueness.

**Figure 1.5.** New Pinterest logo



*Figure 1.5.* New Pinterest logo, showing cleaner lines and readability.

Figure 1.6 shows Kleenex's old typeface. The old typeface for Kleenex did not have clean edges causing its readability to be poor.

**Figure 1.6.** Old Kleenex logo



*Figure 1.6.* Old Kleenex logo, showing unclean edges and poor readability.

Figure 1.7 shows Kleenex's new typeface. The new typeface has clean edges and an arch to it—giving it an airy and light feel—rather than straight and flat like the feel of the original one. The weight of the typeface is also lighter which helps the legibility and readability of it.

**Figure 1.7.** New Kleenex logo



*Figure 1.7.* New Kleenex logo, showing clean edges and an arch.

The previous images were all found in Alina Wheeler's book, *Designing Brand Identity*.

Websites is another topic that Wheeler covers in her book. Websites lead the top of the brand necessity list—no longer enslaved to the desktop, they migrate to wherever the consumer is, on her iPad or her smartphone, to the mall, on a hike, or under her pillow (Wheeler, 2013).

Wheeler also says that websites have made every business a global business accessible by almost anyone anywhere (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler goes on to say that the best websites know who their visitors are, and give them a reason to come back again and again (Wheeler, 2013).

Wheeler also talks about the business card in her book, *Designing Brand Identity*. The business card is a small and portable marketing tool (Wheeler, 2013). The quality and intelligence of the information are a reflection of the cardholder and his/her company (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler also discusses some business card design basics: think of a business card as a marketing tool; make it easy for the receiver of a card to retrieve information; make it easy for new cards to be produced; minimize the amount of information—within reason; consider using the back as a place for more information or a marketing message; make sure that all abbreviations are consistent; and develop system formats (Wheeler, 2013).

Signage is another topic covered in Wheeler's book. Effective retail signage increases revenues, and intelligent wayfinding systems support and enhance the experience of a destination (Wheeler, 2013). Wheeler also laid out some signage basics in her book: signage expresses the brand and builds on understanding the needs and habits of users in the environment; legibility, visibility, durability and positioning must drive the design process; distance, speed, light, color and contrast affect legibility; signage should always complement the overall architecture and land use of a site (Wheeler, 2013).

Wheeler also covers vehicles as a means to get out a businesses brand and message. Wheeler says that vehicles are a large, moving canvas on which almost any type of

communication is possible (Wheeler, 2013). She also says that whether on an urban thruway at rush hour of a remote country road at sunset, the goal remains the same: make the brand identity immediately recognizable (Wheeler, 2013).

## **Marketing and the 4 P's**

Marketing—as defined by Louis Boone and David Kurtz in *Contemporary Marketing*—is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, services, organizations, and events to create and maintain relationships that will satisfy individual and organizational objectives (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Another definition of marketing—found in *Marketing: A Contemporary Analysis*—is involvement of business activities which are concerned with (1) identifying and stimulating demand for a company's goods or services, (2) meeting that demand by making available the goods or services in the most effective manner, and (3) achieving the profit and other objectives related to the identification, stimulation and satisfaction of demand (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). Not only does marketing apply to profit-oriented organizations but also non-profit.

Economists refer to the want-satisfying power of a good or service as utility (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). All organizations must create utility to survive—designing and marketing want satisfying goods, services and ideas are the foundation for the creation of utility (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Marketers must persuade customers that this product/service can create utility for them. They do this by:

- Identifying customer needs
- Designing goods and services that meet those needs
- Communicating information about those goods and services to prospective buyers

- Making the goods or services available at times and places that meet customers' needs
- Pricing goods and services to reflect costs, competition, and customers' ability to buy
- Providing the necessary service and follow-up to ensure customer satisfaction after the

purchase. An organization can create a customer by a three-step approach—identifying needs in the marketplace, finding out which needs the organization can profitably serve, and developing an offering to convert potential buyers into customers (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Confusion can arise when marketing and selling are believed to be the same. It is important to remember that selling is concerned with the plans and tactics of trying to get the consumer to exchange what he has (money) for what the business has (goods or services). While marketing is concerned with a more sophisticated strategy of trying to have what the consumer wants (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). According to *Marketing: A Contemporary Analysis* “a truly market-minded firm tries to create value-satisfying goods and services that customers will want to buy” (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). The 4 P's of Marketing consist of: product, place, price and promotion. A product is the goods and services that a business provides for sale to their target market. When developing a product a business should consider quality, design, features, packaging, customer service and any subsequent after-sales service (“Strategy and Implementation, n.d.). A similar definition of product—found in *Marketing: A Contemporary Analysis*—is “making sure that the product (or service) is the right one, for a specific group of customers, in terms of quality, other operating and physical characteristics, packaging, brand, and relationship to other items in the company's line” (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). According to SmallBizConnect—funded by the New South Wales Government—place is in regards to distribution, location and methods of getting the product to the customer. Included in place is the location of the business, shop front, distributors, logistics and the potential use of the



internet to sell products directly to consumers. *Marketing: A Contemporary Analysis* sums up place as—putting the product where it can be most effectively available to customers (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). SmallBizConnect also said that price concerns the amount of money that customers must pay in order to purchase your products. There are a number of considerations in relation to price including price setting, discounting, credit and cash purchases as well as credit collection. A similar definition of price would be—establishing a price that makes the product as attractive as possible to customers and channels of distribution, while observing whatever legal restrictions may apply, and yielding a satisfactory profit (Buzzell, Nourse, Matthews, Levitt, 1972). Promotion—according to SmallBizConnect—refers to the act of communicating the benefits and value of the business’ product to consumers. It then involves persuading general consumers to become customers of your business using methods such as advertising, direct marketing, personal selling and sales promotion (“Strategy & Implementation”, n.d.).

## **Marketing strategy and planning process**

The definition of a firm’s mission begins the marketing planning process (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). The following part to the process is—determining the firm’s objectives, assessing its resources, and evaluating environmental risks and opportunities. Guided by this information, marketers within each business unit then formulate a marketing strategy, implement the strategy through operating plans and gather feedback to monitor and adapt strategies when necessary (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). In *Contemporary Marketing* a marketing strategy is defined as—an overall, companywide program for selecting a particular target market and then satisfying consumers in that market through a careful blending of the elements of the marketing mix—

product, distribution, promotion, and price—each of which is a subset of the overall marketing strategy (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). To achieve success the marketing mix should be an ever-changing combination of variables. The basic elements of a marketing strategy consist of (1) the target market, (2) the marketing mix variables of product, distribution, promotion and price that combine to satisfy the needs of the target market (Boone and Kurtz, 2006).

A mission statement shows potential customers the purpose for the business and the values the business respects and abides by (Claxton and Woo, 2008). For a small business owner it's important that you want to honor your own authenticity and integrate your values into your mission statement. The mission statement is the underlying force that drives or fuels the business (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

Similar to the mission statement is the marketing message. Lena Claxton and Alison Woo define a marketing message as a succinct statement that explains the purpose of your business to your target audience (Claxton and Woo, 2008). They said in their book—*How to Say It: Marketing with New Media*—that you should be able to say what you do, who you do it for, and the benefits you provide in the time it takes to ride the elevator—about thirty seconds (Claxton and Woo, 2008). The advantage of a clear marketing message is that it immediately reaches your audience and defines the benefits you offer (Claxton and Woo, 2008). Claxton and Woo also mentioned that the marketing message should be dynamic, not static and that you should continue to update your marketing message when there's a change in the product or service offered (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

An effective marketing strategy reaches the right buyers at the right time, convinces them to try the product, and develops a strong relationship with them over time (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). A good marketing plan revolves around an efficient, flexible and adaptable marketing

strategy (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Before a marketing strategy can be developed there are some steps that need to take place prior. A business must define its objectives. Following that a business needs to go through the process anticipating future events and conditions and of determining the best way to achieve organizational objectives—that process is known as planning (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Not only does a business need to identify objectives but they also need to determine the actions through which they can attain those objectives (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). By going through the planning process it defines checkpoints so that people within the organization can compare actual performance with expectations to indicate whether current activities are moving the organization toward its objectives (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Planning is not just important for large companies, it is very important for small ones as well. In order to establish a basis for a marketing strategy, marketing planning needs to take place—implementing planning activities devoted to achieving marketing objectives (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Product lines, pricing decisions, selection of appropriate distribution channels, and decisions relating to promotional campaigns all depend on plans formulated within the marketing organization (Boone and Kurtz, 2006).

According to *Contemporary Marketing* “good relationships with customers can arm a firm with vital strategic weapons” (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Strategic planning is very similar to planning; it has a critical impact on a firm’s destiny because it provides long-term direction for its decision makers. Complimenting strategic planning is tactical planning—which guides the implementation of activities specified in the strategic plan. Typically, tactical plans address shorter-term actions that focus on current and near-future activities that a firm must complete to implement its larger strategies (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). SWOT analysis is an important strategic planning tool. It helps compare internal organizational strengths and weaknesses with

external opportunities and threats (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). In order for the planning process to be most effective, input from a wide range of sources—employees, suppliers and customers—is needed (Boone and Kurtz, 2006).

## **SWOT analysis**

As mentioned in the previous section, Boone and Kurtz cover SWOT analysis in their book, *Contemporary Marketing*. They said, “An important strategic planning tool, SWOT analysis, helps planners compare internal organizational strengths and weaknesses with external opportunities and threats (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Boone and Kurtz went on to say that this form of analysis provides managers with a critical view of the organization’s internal and external environments and helps them evaluate the firm’s fulfillment of its basic mission (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). According to Boone and Kurtz, “A company’s strengths reflect its core competencies—what it does well. Core competencies are capabilities that customers value and competitors find difficult to duplicate” (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). They continue by saying “if a company drifts too far from the things it does well, it can stumble (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). Boone and Kurtz also said that matching an internal strength with an external opportunity produces a situation known as leverage (Boone and Kurtz, 2006). They followed that by saying that marketers face a problem when environmental threats attack their organization’s weakness (Boone and Kurtz, 2006).

## **Intergraded Marketing Communication (IMC)**

Integrated marketing communication (IMC), according to Terance A. Shimp in *Advertising, Promotion, and other aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications*, is a communications process that entails the planning, creation, integration and implementation of diverse forms of marcom (advertisements, sales promotions, publicity releases, events, etc.) that are delivered over time to a brand's targeted customers and prospects (Shimp, 2010). Shimp says that the goal of IMC is ultimately to influence or directly affect the behavior of the targeted audience (Shimp, 2010). Shimp also says that IMC requires that all of a brand's communication media deliver a consistent message (Shimp, 2010). A consistent message can also be thought of as speaking with a single voice, rather than having a variety of messages that do not send the same message to the target audience. "The IMC objective is to reach the target audience efficiently and effectively using touch points that are appropriate" (Shimp, 2010).

In his book Shimp also touches on 360-degree branding. That is defined as a brand's touch points being everywhere the target audience is (Shimp, 2010). 360-degree branding is the notion of surrounding the customer or prospect with a brand's marcom (marketing communication) messages (Shimp, 2010).

## **New media marketing**

In a 2007 survey done by Jupiter Research, only 36 percent of all businesses with fewer than 100 employees had a web presence (Claxton and Woo, 2008). Lena Claxton and Alison Woo talk about the day of mom-and-pop businesses—in their book *How to Say It: Marketing with New Media*—and how they would build relationships one customer at a time in that town. It used to be that when a customer walked into a store you spoke to them individually. Claxton and Woo

say that new media allows you to replicate this model online and achieve the same results on a much larger scale (Claxton and Woo, 2008). Claxton and Woo also mentioned that approximately 23 million Americans are very active in online communities. Online communities meaning—people email their principal online group several times a week (Claxton and Woo, 2008). Claxton and Woo also stressed that new media cannot replace face-to-face communication. They said that technology is a supplement, not a replacement, for human contact—it serves to enhance that conversation (Claxton and Woo, 2008). New media cannot reach an entire customer base or provide instant gratification. Claxton and Woo defend that by saying that not everyone has joined the digital world and that creating a new media platform is a process—it's not a silver bullet, consistent efforts will make a significant difference (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

In Claxton and Woo's book they talk about “finding your target audience,” they say that when you serve a core group or target audience online, several things need to happen. The first is—speak specifically and directly to your audience, not just to any arbitrary person who may be surfing the web, the second—express yourself with authority on your audience's needs, becoming the go-to person and expert in your field, and the third—connect with your audience by offering valuable information (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

A website can do many things for a business, according to Claxton and Woo the most important thing that it does is set the stage for building the businesses brand (Claxton and Woo, 2008). They also mentioned that having the same brand across the board is critical. By having a consistent brand on and off-line it will reinforce the business's brand (Claxton and Woo, 2008). Claxton and Woo also recommend using the full business name rather than an abbreviated version or initials for the domain name. They also advise a business to consider misspellings or

typos of the business name and purchase those as well so the consumer can be pointed in the right direction (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

According to Claxton and Woo, 79 percent of web visitors only scan web pages—use relevant headlines and sub-headlines to guide the reader along as he or she checks out the pages. The headlines need to pull the reader in and make them want to learn more (Claxton and Woo, 2008).

### **Old versus new rules of marketing and public relations**

In David Meerman Scott's book, *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, he talks about how the “old” marketing and public relations rules are ineffective in today's world, and online world. Though some of the mass advertising (i.e. TV, radio, magazine) is still used today; it is more about understanding your target audience and how to effectively reach them (Scott, 2013).

In his book Scott explains that “Before the web, organizations had only two significant options for attracting attention: Buy expensive advertising or get third-party ink from the media. But the web has changed the rules. The web is not TV. Organizations that understand the New Rules of Marketing and PR develop relationships directly with consumers like you and me” (Scott, 2013). He goes on to say that he doesn't mean that only marketing worth doing is on the web. He just wants a business to look at all marketing and PR ways to draw in customers. Scott also said that if you aren't present and engaged in the places and at the times that your buyers are, then you're losing out on potential business—now matter if you're looking for a job or marketing your company's product or your organization's service (Scott, 2013). In Scott's book he also says that the type of marketing that works for large corporations, such as Procter & Gamble, doesn't always apply to niche products, local services, and specialized nonprofit

organizations. “Nor do those businesses have the money to spend on advertising like Procter & Gamble does” (Scott, 2013). Scott says that in today’s world, advertisers can no longer break through with dumbed-down broadcasts about their wonderful products. The web is different. Instead of one-way interruption, web marketing is about delivering useful content at just the precise moment a buyer needs it. It’s about interaction, information, education and choice (Scott, 2013). Scott goes on to say that if you are a smaller and less famous business but have an interesting story to tell, you need to tell it yourself and that the web is a terrific place to do so (Scott, 2013). Scott also suggests developing information that your buyers want to consume. Instead of spending large amounts for dumbed-down TV commercials that purport to speak to the masses and therefore appeal to nobody—think about the information that niche audiences want to hear (Scott, 2013).

Another point that Scott talks about is thought leadership. He says that instead of just directly selling something, a great site, blog or video series tells the world that you might be an organization that would be valuable to do business with (Scott, 2013). Scott describes social media/networking like a cocktail party. He asks “Do you go into a large gathering filled with a few acquaintances and tons of people you do not know and shout ‘BUY MY PRODUCT!’” or “Do you go into a cocktail party and ask every single person you meet for a business card before you agree to speak with them?” No, you do not. Scott says to think of social media as a fun place where you give more than you get. Yes, you can do business there, but the kind that you do at a cocktail party and not at the general store (Scott, 2013). Scott says that by following that rule in return for your valuable interactions are lasting friendships, many of which lead to business opportunities (Scott, 2013).



In *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, Scott also talks about news releases and the ‘new’ rules for those. He says not to just send news releases when big news is happening but to find good reasons to send them all the time. Also, include offers that compel consumers to respond to your release in some way and place links in releases to deliver potential customers to landing pages on your website (Scott, 2013). Scott also recommends linking related content to your website (i.e. videos, blog posts, or e-books). He also says to point people to your news releases from your social sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn (Scott, 2013). A valuable point to take from Scott’s book is that today it doesn’t matter what size your business is; if you are active in the media that your consumers use or are on you can be successful. It is more important today to inform consumers rather than to force your product or service on them. If you can become a business that is informative and trustworthy consumers will more than likely chose to purchase from your business.

## **Design principles**

According to *Graphic Design Solutions* by Robin Landa the formal elements of two-dimensional design are line, shape color, and texture (Landa, 2014). Line can be broken down to a point or dot, which is the smallest unit of a line. Landa defines a line as en elongated point; a mark made by a visualizing tool as it is drawn across a surface (Landa, 2014). Landa also says that lines can be straight, curving or angular. The basic functions of a line are: define shapes, edges, forms; create images, letters and patterns. Also, delineate boundaries and define areas within a composition, assist in visually organizing a composition and assist in creating a line of vision (Landa, 2014). Landa says that a line can also establish a linear mode of expression. The next element is shape.

Landa defines shape as the general outline of something (Landa, 2014). A shape is also a closed form or closed path. Landa also says that a shape is a configured or delineated area on a two-dimensional surface created either partially or entirely by lines or by color, tone or texture (Landa, 2014). All shapes may essentially be derived from three basic delineations: the square, rectangle and triangle. Landa goes on to say that each of those basic shapes has a volumetric form or solid: cube, pyramid and the sphere (Landa, 2014).

Color is a powerful and highly provocative design element, Landa says. It is a property of description of light energy (Landa, 2014). Landa says that color can be discussed more specifically if we divide the element into three categories: hue, value and saturation. Hue is the name of a color; red or green, blue or orange. Value refers to the level of luminosity; lightness or darkness of a color—light blue or dark red (Landa, 2014). Landa says that shade, tone and tint are different aspects of value. She also says that in graphic design projects that require blocks of text, the value of the mass of the type block, paragraph, or column takes on a tonal quality, creating a block of gray tone (Landa, 2014). Landa defines saturation as the brightness or dullness of a color—bright red or dull red, bright blue or dull blue (Landa, 2014). Chroma and intensity are synonyms for saturation, Landa says. A hue can also be perceived as warm or cool in temperature. Temperature refers to whether the color looks hot or cold (Landa, 2014).

The tactile quality of a surface or the simulation or representation of such a surface quality is a texture (Landa, 2014). Landa explains that there are two categories of texture: tactile and visual. Tactile textures have actual tactile quality and can be physically touched and felt; they are also called actual textures (Landa, 2014). Embossing, debossing, stamping, engraving and letterpress are printing techniques that can produce tactile textures on a printed design (Landa,

2014). Visual textures are illusions of real textures created by hand, scanned from actual textures (such as lace), or photographed (Landa, 2014).

Before Landa defines the basic principles of design she first explains format. Format is the defined perimeter as well as the field it encloses—the outer edges or boundaries of a design. Landa also says that format refers to the field or substrate (piece of paper, mobile phone screen, outdoor billboard, etc.) for the graphic design project (Landa, 2014). Landa says that balance, visual hierarchy, rhythm, unity, scale and the laws of perceptual organization—similarity, proximity, continuity, closure, common fate and continuing line all make up the basic principles of design (Landa, 2014). Balance is stability or equilibrium created by an even distribution of visual weight on each side of a central axis as well as by an even distribution of weight among all the elements of the composition (Landa, 2014). Symmetric and asymmetric are two types of balance. Symmetry is an equal distribution of visual weights (size, shape, color and texture), a mirroring of equivalent elements on either side of a central axis—also called reflection symmetry (Landa, 2014). Asymmetry is an equal distribution of visual weights achieved through weight and counter weight by balancing one element with the weight of a counterpointing element without mirroring elements on either side of a central axis (Landa, 2014). Landa says that in order to achieve asymmetrical balance, the position, visual weight, size, value, color, shape and texture of a mark on the page must be considered and weighed against every other mark.

Visual hierarchy—arrangement of all graphic elements according to emphasis—is used to guide the viewer (Landa, 2014). Landa explains that emphasis is the arrangement of visual elements according to importance, stressing some elements over others, making some superordinate (dominate) elements and subordinating other elements (Landa, 2014). Landa mentions John Rea, a creative director, and his ABCs of emphasis: where do you want the

viewer to look first, where do you want the viewer to look second, and where do you want the viewer to look third? Landa says that the design must determine what to emphasize and what to de-emphasize (Landa, 2014). She explains that emphasis is directly related to establishing a point of focus or focal point—the part of a design that is most emphasized (Landa, 2014). Position, size, shape, direction, hue, value, saturation, and texture of a graphic element all contribute to establishing a focal point, according to Landa.

Figure 1.8 shows examples of visual hierarchy within the FedEx logo. The various sections within FedEx all needed a point of difference so they were not confused with each other. With all of these, since FedEx is the company and most important aspect, it is larger and bold. Then each of the sections within FedEx is listed below in a smaller and thinner typeface. Color also plays a role with FedEx's hierarchy. Since Fed is shown in a dark blue that stands out first. Then the “ex” in various colors helps to separate each section within FedEx from one another. This concept is brand architecture—the hierarchy of brands within a single company (Wheeler, 2013).

**Figure 1.8.** FedEx logos



*Figure 1.8.* FedEx logos, showing hierarchy within the company.

Rhythm in graphic design, similar to a beat in music, is a strong and consistent repetition. A pattern of elements can set up a rhythm, which causes the viewer's eyes to move around the page (Landa, 2014). Landa says that many factors can contribute to establishing rhythm—color, texture, figure/ground relationships, emphasis, and balance (Landa, 2014).

Unity, according to Landa, is where all the graphic elements in a design are so interrelated they form a greater whole (Landa, 2014). She says that when unified, all the graphic elements look as though they belong together. Landa says viewers understand and remember a composition that is unified (Landa, 2014).

Figure 1.9 shows examples of a family of companies' original logos (left) compared with their new logos (right). In their original logos there is no unity between all the different companies' logos. They do not look like they belong with each other at all. The new logos for the companies are more unified and the audience is able to tell that these are all part of the same family and they belong together, unlike the old logos. By having this unity all the logos' readability is much stronger. There is also hierarchy within each of the logos and color is used to separate each section from one another—like the FedEx logos.

**Figure 1.9.** Old ASRC logos (left), new ASRC logos (right)



*Figure 1.9.* ASRC new logos (right), showing unity between all the sections.

Scale is the size of a graphic element seen in relation to other graphic elements within the composition (Landa, 2014). Landa explains that scale is based on proportional relationships between and among forms. Through our experience of the natural world, we expect an apple to be much smaller than a tree. If a designer plays with our expectations, distorting scale compared to how we normally see things in nature, then the result is surreal (Landa, 2014). Landa also says that along with utilizing fundamental principles, one must control scale for these reasons: manipulating scale can lend visual variety to a composition; scale adds contrast and dynamism among shapes and forms; and manipulation of scale can create the illusion of three-dimensional space (Landa, 2014).

Landa defines the laws of perceptual organization as: similarity, proximity, continuity, closure, common fate and continuing line (Landa, 2014). Similarity is like elements, those that share characteristics are perceived as belonging together. Landa says that elements can share likeness in shape, texture, color or direction and that dissimilar elements tend to separate from like elements (Landa, 2014).

Proximity as described by Landa is, elements near each other, in spatial proximity, are perceived as belonging together (Landa, 2014).

Continuity is perceived visual paths or connections (actual or implied) among parts, explains Landa. Elements that appear as a continuation of previous elements are perceived as linked, creating an impression of movement (Landa, 2014).

Landa explains that closure is the mind's tendency to connect individual elements to produce a completed form, unit, or pattern (Landa, 2014).

Common fate elements are likely to be perceived as a unit if they move in the same direction, Landa explains in *Graphic Solutions* (Landa, 2014).

Landa describes continuing line as lines that are always perceived as following the simplest path. If two lines break, the viewer sees the overall movement rather than the break. This can also be called implied line (Landa, 2014).

## **Case Study: Target**

In “The Target Brand Gets the Simple Things Right (and a lot more),” article written by Allen Adamson; he talked about the branding game being a lot more complicated than it used to be because of the new products and deluge of new media opportunities (Adamson, 2010). Adamson said that there are some things that haven’t changed; among them is making a promise to consumers and making sure you deliver, at the very least, on the simple things (Adamson, 2010). When he attended the ANA Masters of Marketing Conference earlier in 2010, he listened to Michael Francis, chief marketing officer of Target. Adamson said that the discount retailer’s promise is summed up very nicely in its tagline, “Expect More. Pay Less” (Adamson, 2010). Adamson went on to say, “the company knows what it means to deliver on this is apparent in every Target experience. Or, as Mr. Francis put it during his presentation, it’s the ‘balance between making our ‘guests’ aware of value while emphasizing superior merchandise and a pleasant shopping experience” (Adamson, 2010). Adamson said that a distinction such as using the word ‘guest’ when referring to those who shop at Target speaks to the brand’s ability to get the simplest things right (Adamson, 2010). He went on to say that so does its marketing. Even if you’ve never been to a Target store, you immediately pick up the Target vibe from watching any of its television ads, or seeing any of its print or online marketing (Adamson, 2010). Adamson said that the look is crisp, clean, and incredibly engaging, from the whimsical, yet stylish casting, to the music, to the sharp and contemporary production values (Adamson, 2010). He went on to say that “you just know it’s a Target ad even without seeing the logo. And in a world where it’s getting harder to decipher one brand’s message from another’s brilliant execution can be a huge differentiating factor (Adamson, 2010). Adamson also said that color, as a branding application, is one of the simplest ways to form consumer associations with a brand. Target is right on in this



department (Adamson, 2010). Adamson concluded by saying that “building a brand and keeping it strong is and always has been hard work. But if you keep your focus on making a promise and delivering on the simple things you’re moving in the right direction—or in Target’s case, on your way to hitting the bulls eye” (Adamson, 2010).

Combining all the information gathered about what makes a successful brand identity, marketing strategy and visual design; an analysis of Target was conducted. Following are images pulled from the Target website. The analysis of just these images shows Target’s consistency with the use of their brand, color, logo, etc. online. Target stays this consistent and efficient in all other forms of branding, marketing and any other visual designs that they choose to use. Using the different definitions from the literature review a brief explanation about why each piece is successful accompanies the image. Figure 1.10 shows Target’s online weekly ad shows Target’s logo—identifies what business this ad is for. Color used is also associated with Target. Target’s tagline is also present at the bottom of the ad page.

Figure 1.10. Page from Target's weekly ad

**free \$10 GiftCard** when you buy any two allergy items listed  
Quantities limited, no rain checks. Terms and conditions apply to gift cards.

**all day allergy relief**  
up & up 30-ct. cetirizine 10mg tablets **\$14**

**BONUS 33% MORE**  
Zyrtec 30+ 10-ct. allergy relief tablets **\$19**  
Bonus quantities limited, no rain checks.

**33% MORE FREE!**  
Non-Drowsy Claritin 24 Hour 40 30 TABLETS **\$18**  
Indoor & Outdoor Allergies. Relief of: Sneezing, Runny Nose, Itchy, Watery Eyes, Itchy Throat or Nose. Bonus quantities limited, no rain checks.

**Allegra Allergy** 15-ct. 24-hour allergy relief tablets or Nasacort allergy relief spray **\$12**

**Mucinex ALLERGY** 30-ct. allergy relief tablets **\$20**

Select other allergy relief items included in gift card offer.

**buy three get one for \$1**  
Household care Select Scrubbing Bubbles, Windex, Glade or Shout. Quantities limited, no rain checks.

**\$12** Vitamins Flintstones 150-ct. chewables or One A Day 200-ct. women's tablets. • 10% off select other Flintstones and One A Day vitamins.

**\$5** Clif or Luna 6-pk. nutrition bars • 10% off select Clif Zbar multipacks.

**\$7** SALE Listerine Select 32-oz. or 1.5-liter mouthwash.

**\$7** NEW AT TARGET Dr. Scholl's DreamWalk high heel insoles and select others. • All other Dr. Scholl's insoles on sale.

**\$4** Secret or Old Spice 2.6-oz. deodorant and select others. • Old Spice and Gillette 2-pk. deodorant, 2 for \$15

**\$3** Deodorant Select Mitchum or Right Guard.

value of promotional gift cards received in the transaction. Target.com Free Shipping: Free standard shipping at Target.com when you use your REDcard. REDcard Extended Returns: Purchases made with your REDcard at Target stores in the U.S. or Target.com can be returned 30 additional days beyond and Target Visa® Credit Card. Subject to application approval. Target Visa Credit Card not available to new applicants. The REDcard credit cards are issued by TD Bank USA, N.A. The REDcard debit card is issued by Target Corporation. VISA is a registered trademark of VISA USA, Inc. Pat 5,622,048 and 5,770,718. In a competitor's current local print ad, we'll match the price. Price match must be requested at the Guest Service desk prior to your purchase with proof of the current lower price. For post-purchase, bring in your original Target store receipt and proof of price, errors, marketplace, liability out of stock and select special pricing. Online competitor match is not available in Alaska and Hawaii. Important additional restrictions apply. See the Guest Service desk or Target.com for details.

**expect more. pay less.** 7

Figure 1.10. Page from Target's weekly ad, showing unity and consistency with the Target logo. Copyright 2014 by Target.

Figure 1.11. Page from Target's weekly ad

**Target**

**BUY MORE, SAVE MORE**  
OR \*\$3.29 SALE, EACH  
Pepsi products  
12-pk. 12-oz. cans  
or 6-pk. bottles.  
\*8-pk. bottles or  
mini cans, sale \*3

**4 for \$10**

**IAMS**  
IAMS 10.8-lb. original  
chicken cat food,  
15-lb. ProActive  
MiniChunks dog food  
and select others.

**\$16**

**dollar power**

**\$1**

**bleach lavender scent  
concentrated**  
up & up

**SALE up & up  
64-oz. bleach**  
Quantities limited;  
no rain checks.  
Limit 3 per guest,  
except in RM.

**FREE** **\$5**  
@GiftCard  
WHEN YOU BUY ANY TWO  
TIDE ITEMS LISTED

**\$12**

**Tide**  
Tide 92- to 100-oz. 40- to  
68-load liquid or 68-load  
powder, 37-ct. Boost or  
5-ct. machine cleaner.  
Quantities limited; no rain checks.  
Terms and conditions apply to gift cards.

**2 for \$5**

**SALE 59-oz.  
Simply Juice**  
Quantities limited;  
no rain checks.

**2 for \$5**

**SALE Hair care**  
28-oz. Suave  
and 10.1-oz.  
Herbal  
Essences  
shampoo and  
conditioner.

**Cartwheel**

**save an extra 10%** when you combine these  
front cover deals and Cartwheel

download the free app today!

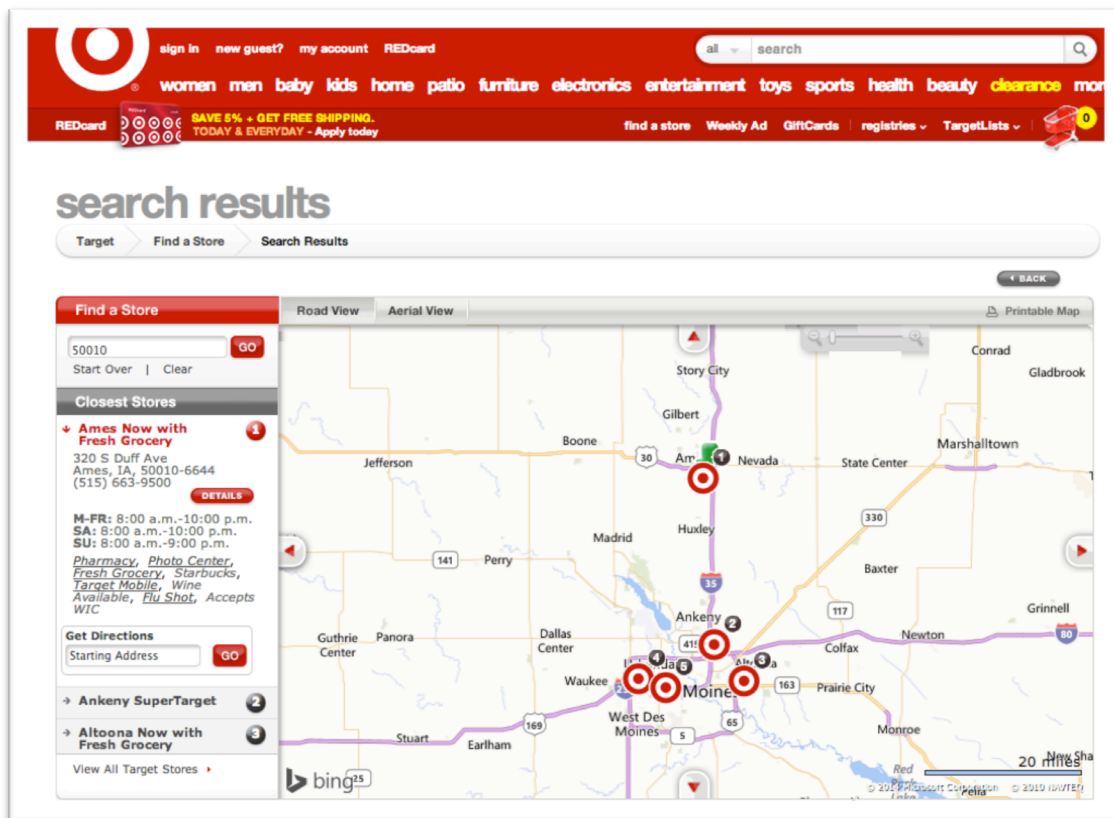
CC-FG

Figure 1.11. Page from Target's weekly ad, showing unity and consistency with the Target logo. Copyright 2014 by Target.



Figure 1.11 shows another page from the same ad as mentioned previously. This ad also shows Target’s logo and the color red associated with the logo. There is also a sense of visual hierarchy (dollar power, product in the red rectangle, followed by the products located in the blue). A focal point is also created with the Target logo (competing are the words “dollar power”).

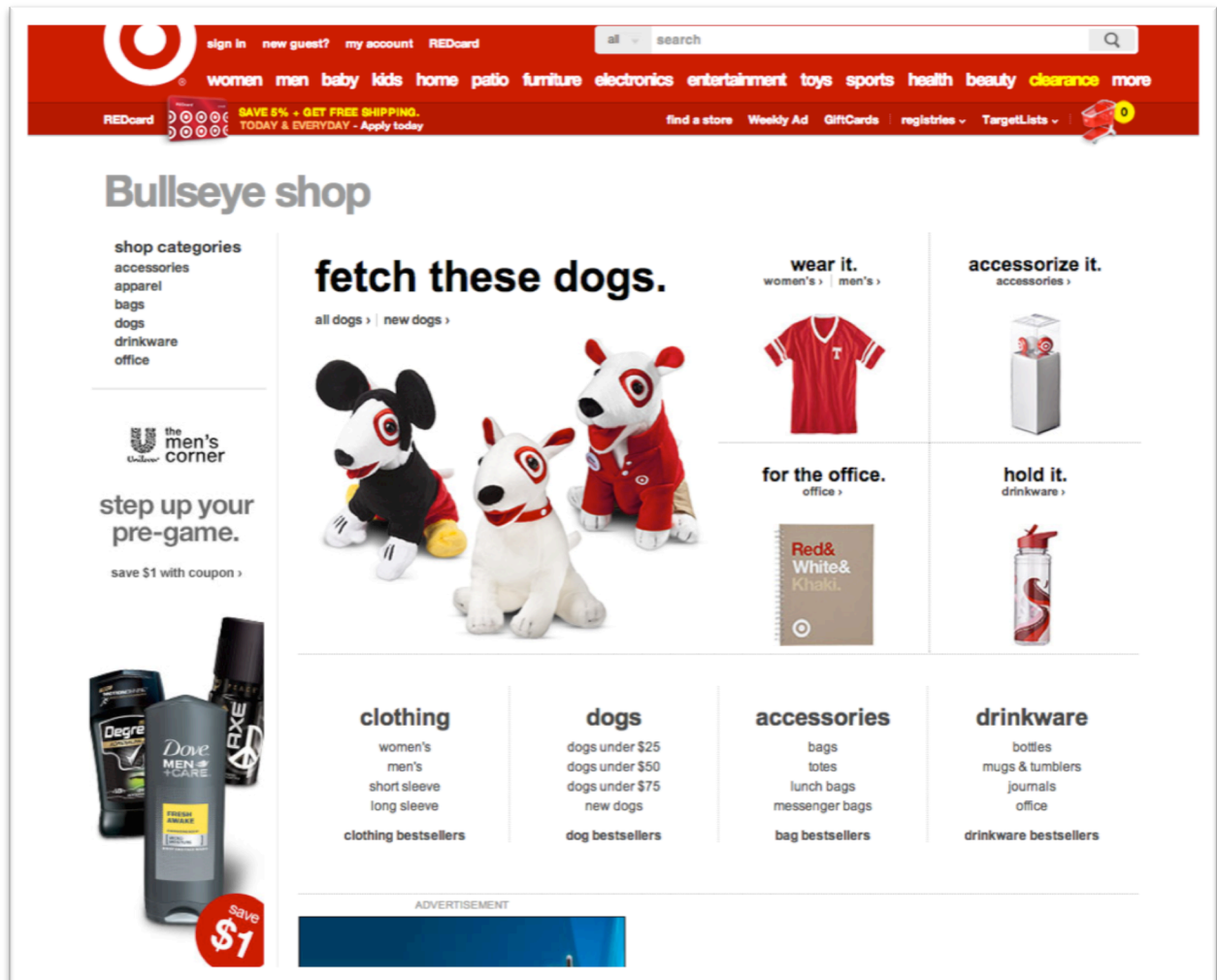
**Figure 1.12.** Screenshot from Target’s “Find a Store” page



*Figure 1.12.* Screenshot from Target’s “Find a Store” page. Copyright 2014 by Target.

Figure 1.12 is from Target’s “Find a Store” page. Target chose to replace the standard map points with the logo. It is still understood that the logo stands for a location. Once again the color is consistent—red, with yellow highlighting certain links.

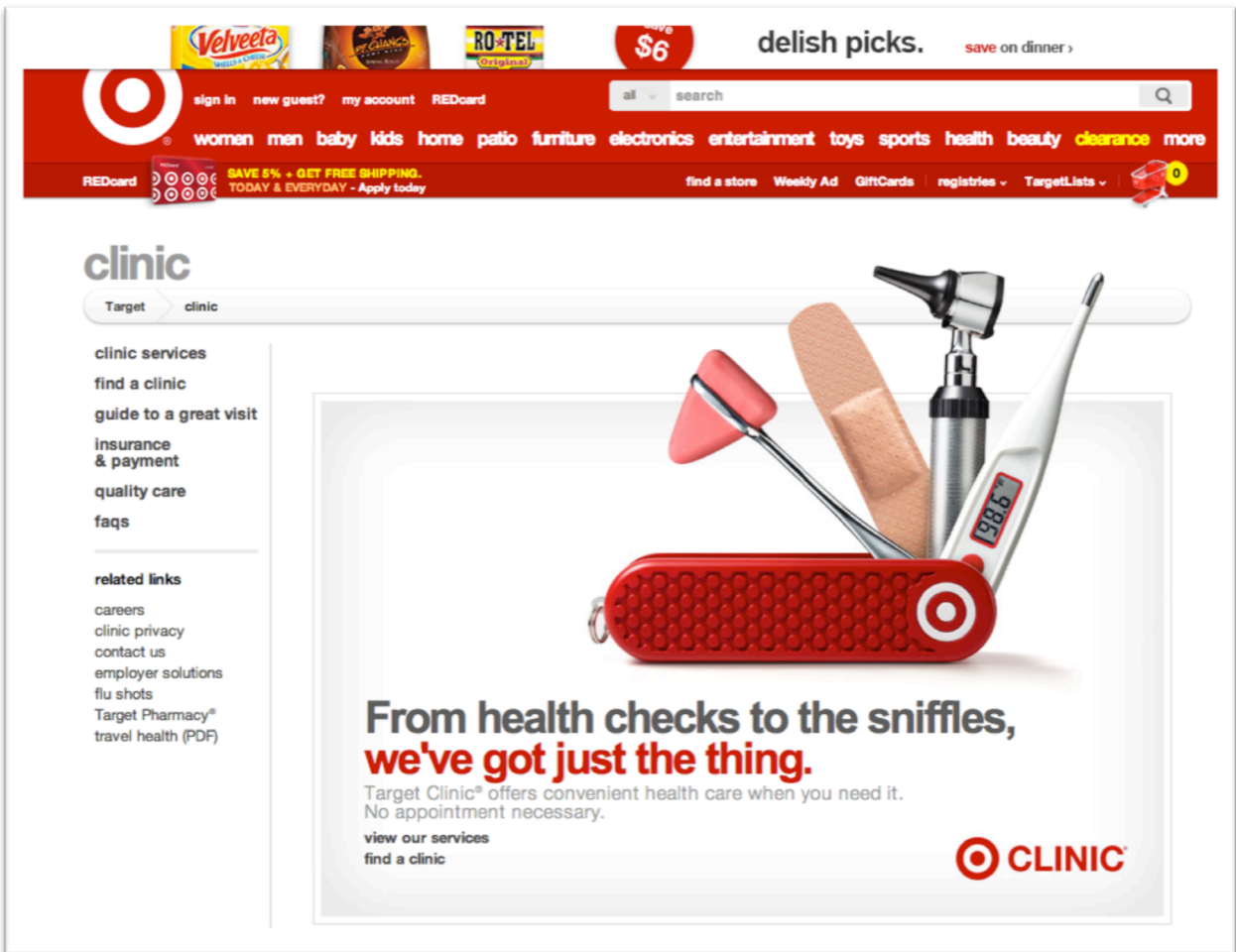
**Figure 1.13.** Screenshot from Target’s “Bullseye Shop” page



*Figure 1.13.* Screenshot from Target’s “Bullseye Shop” page. Copyright 2014 by Target.

Figure 1.13 shows the Bullseye shop page. The page still remains consistent in the use of Target’s logo and the colors red; and yellow for highlighting links. Bullseye is used in other Target promotional pieces. The dog is also associated closely with Target, like the color red.

**Figure 1.14.** Screenshot from Target’s “Clinic” page



*Figure 1.14.* Screenshot from Target’s “Clinic” page. Copyright 2014 by Target.

Figure 1.14 shows Target’s Clinic page. Once again Target’s logo is present—in multiple locations. The colors red and yellow are also present and consistent. Scale is also being used in this image. By having it so large, it makes that object the focal point.

**Figure 1.15.** Screenshot from Target’s “Pharmacy” page.



*Figure 1.15.* Screenshot from Target’s “Pharmacy” page. Copyright 2014 by Target.

Figure 1.15 shows Target’s Pharmacy page. As mentioned previously, the colors red and yellow continue to be used; along with Target’s logo. The imagery used is also edited and designed consistent to other imagery used throughout these images.

Throughout Figures 1.10-1.15 there was a strong sense of unity and balance. All the images had consistent use of color and also the quality of photographic images that were used (all photos edited and designed similar). Visual hierarchy was also present throughout all the pieces. Some instances it was subtler than others. Scale was also used to assist the development of visual hierarchy throughout the images. As Allen Adamson said in his article, "...keep your focus on making a promise and delivering on the simple things you're moving in the right direction—or in Target's case, on your way to hitting the bulls eye." (Adamson, 2010).



## Chapter 2

# METHODOLOGY

### **Research**

The methodology for this research began with developing a literature review. Research was conducted to identify a working definition of a small business, rural development, marketing and branding. The literature review identified design principles and also an analysis of Target's brand identity. This research also involved face-to-face interviews and the development of a survey from the information gathered through the literature review and the interviews that were conducted. Following the development of the survey a branding/marketing strategy and visual design assessment tool was created. The assessment tool is intended to help graphic designers—or as previously mention, in the Abstract, a number of other professions—with the assessment of the survey responses—i.e. if an owner/manager answers “Yes” to a question, what is the course of action that the designer should take. The following sections explain each part of the research more in depth.

### **Interviews**

A series of face-to-face interviews were conducted with present and previous grocery store owners and managers. The people interviewed consisted of one previous small community grocery store owner and three current grocery store managers. Two women and two men were interviewed. One of the interviews took place at the previous owner's home. The other three interviews took place at the grocery store the manager worked at.

These interviews were used to develop survey questions and also to gain a stronger understanding of small community grocery stores. The interviews can be found in Appendices A-D.

### **Developing the survey**

Survey questions were developed by identifying common themes found in the interviews. This was combined with information from the literature review, to develop specific questions. An emphasis was placed on clarity when developing the survey questions. Qualitative and quantitative questions were developed for the survey. Some of the survey questions have answers containing either, Yes or No, while others listed answers that the store manager/owner can go through and select multiple ones if they feel are correct for the store. Another answer option for the survey questions is an answer where the manager/owner can type an explanation. The survey was developed with the intent for it to be sent out via email through Qualtrics, for quick and easy usability. The survey also has the potential to be used face-to-face and one-on-one by the graphic designer and that particular business. The survey can be found in Appendix E.

### **Developing the assessment tool**

Following the development of the survey was the development of the assessment tool. Graphic designers and business owners/managers will use this assessment tool. The tool is intended to streamline the design process and the branding/marketing strategy using the information gathered from the survey. The assessment tool will help graphic designers by breaking down the possible responses from the survey and the next step for the designer—using the responses from the survey. The assessment tool can be found in Appendix F.

## Chapter 3

### DISCUSSION

For this thesis, a literature review was developed from various online journal sources and articles, and book sources that contained topics from small town business and rural development to marketing, branding and design principles. Target—a business that has developed a strong brand and brand image—was used for a case study that is found at the end of the literature review. Within the literature review image comparisons of logos and typefaces are presented to better explain the rationale for a good logo and a bad logo—rather than trying to explain it all with type.

#### **Interviews**

A series of interviews with small community grocery store managers and an owner were conducted. By conducting those interviews, first hand experience about some of the benefits and difficulties that go along with running and owning a small town grocery store were gathered. The interviews were used to develop survey questions that could be sent out to small community grocery stores in the state of Iowa. By conducting those interviews, the interviewer learned that not all small grocery stores are family owned—the community can own grocery stores as well. As mentioned in Chapter 2, interviewees consisted of both male and female—one previous grocery storeowner and three current grocery store managers.

## **Analysis of the interviews**

After the interviews were conducted, a comparison of the responses was done to find commonalities between the stores and also any differences that the stores had.

The interview with the previous grocery storeowner was conducted in her home. She gave insight into a wide variety of problems and benefits that grocery store owners have. Even though she has been retired since 1997, the information from her interview still correlated to some of the information from the other three, current manager's interviews. Something that was different in her interview compared to the others was the use of the Small Business Administration for guidance with loan payment. Two of the other store manager's grocery store is community owned and the Co-op in the community owns the third grocery store—convenience store, the manager stated that it is not technically a grocery store since they do not provide full grocery services. Ownership of the stores was one key difference between the interviews.

Another difference was the use of technology in marketing and promotion. The previous grocery store owner commented about the use of technology in the interview. Her response to the question—"Do you think that having a web presence, to get your name out there as another way to market yourself instead of just locally with newspapers, is a good idea?"—was "Oh yes absolutely. We advertised on the radio, didn't access any TV because there are not any local TV stations. Also all of the mailing, put up posters, support different community activities—County Fair." She also added that had the Internet been were it is now when she was in business she and her husband would have used that as a marketing and promotion medium as well. Two of the three managers interviewed have websites developed for their stores. The websites are setup through their providers and were not created by the managers. A store manager mentioned in her interview that their website contains their ads and also recipes and coupons. She also mentioned

that her store has a Facebook page. She said that it only gets updated when she has time, which is not very much. She did emphasize that they store tries to cover all aspects and stay up with the times, even though they are a small grocery store.

A common theme throughout all the interviews was the desire to serve the community and to provide access to groceries just blocks away, rather than driving 20-30 minutes to the nearest town or city for groceries. All of the interviewees' communities consist of an older population that may not be able to drive that far on their own to purchase groceries. One interviewee also pointed out that their prices are actually \$1.00 to \$2.00 cheaper than the Fareway in the neighboring town. She said that by the time gas prices and drive time are considered, their grocery store is a much better option.

Another common theme throughout the interviews was the difficulty of trying to provide the community with the products the needed and wanted. One of the stores had a hard time keeping a provider coming to the store—and currently is buying products through a nearby towns' grocery store. Two of the other stores work with each other to meet the minimum number of cases that need to be purchased through the provider. The previous grocery store owner mentioned that her store did not have a problem with their provider. Her problem was trying to “figure out what people would be eating in the coming week, and trying to have the right supplies ready for them when they decided that ‘this is what I want to serve for dinner.’”

## **Survey**

After comparing the responses from the interviews, a survey was developed. Information from the literature review helped build a foundation for the interview questions and also carried

over to the survey questions. The survey questions were broken up into 3 sections (the third section containing four subcategories) with 20 questions total:

- (1) Business Information
- (2) Product/service Information
- (3) Marketing and Promotion Strategies

Strategies

Media

Suppliers/affiliation

Competition

The reason for the Business Information section was to develop an understanding of the size of community the store is in, the ownership of the store (i.e. family-owned or community owned), if there are multiple store locations, if the store is seasonal, and if there are store loyal customers. The Product/service information section was developed to see if the store offered any other products or services besides groceries to the community. The final section, Marketing and promotion Strategies, was developed to learn about the grocery store's strategies that they are currently using; also to learn if the store's suppliers provide the store with a marketing or promotional materials for the store to use. The reason for asking those questions in the third section is to inform the designer about each individual medium that the store uses for promotion. If the store only uses one medium, that can help the designer to customize a design and marketing strategy for that business within the stores budget and keep the design and marketing consistent and effective. Instead of just having a generic strategy for multiple stores since each store will have different budgets and limitations. The competition subsection is inquiring about the distance to the grocery stores nearest competitor, or seeing if there is another business in the

same community that provides products or services that the grocery store already does. By figuring out where the grocery store's competitors are it will help the designer determine what design and marketing strategy will work best for the business.

The survey can be found in Appendix E.

### **Branding and marketing strategy and visual design assessment tool**

The assessment tool was developed so a graphic designer can go through and quickly look at what the responses were in the survey and what the course of action should be according to the answers from the store owner/manager.

This assessment tool was developed to be used along with the survey (shown in Appendix E). The tool breaks down the sections of the survey to help streamline the design, branding, and marketing strategy process for the graphic designer. The same headings are used in this tool that are used in the survey for easy usability. The assessment tool will tell the designer what the next step is depending on how the business answers the questions.

Following is a breakdown of the questions from the survey that will help the graphic designer develop a branding and marketing strategy and visual designs for the grocery store, by using the assessment tool.

### **Business Information**

This section of questions was developed so the designer can learn more about the business. The first four questions are basic information about the business.

**Question #5 Is your business seasonal? and Question #6 What is your busy season?**

Questions #5 and #6 are closely related. The designer needs to find out if the business is seasonal and if the business has a certain busy season. By finding out if the business is seasonal and/or when the busy season is, the designer can then know to ask if the business chooses to market and promote their business year round or if they only do that during their busy season. After figuring out the business' current strategy, the graphic designer can talk to the owner/manager and explain a better strategy if they feel there is a better one suited for the business (i.e. choosing to market and promote outside of their busy season(s)).

### **Question #7 Do you have store loyal customers?**

By finding out if the grocery store has loyal customers, the designer can then ask if the store does anything for those loyal customers. One example would be if the store serves coffee (or different beverages). If the store does, do they have a loyalty program for the coffee (i.e. buy six cups of coffee and get the seventh cup free)? That idea can be transferred to almost any product within the store. Another example would be if the store has a deli. The possibility could be the same—buy six sandwiches and get the seventh free. The reason behind loyalty programs is to make the customer feel like they are getting something back from the business that they constantly shop at. Also, as mention in the Brand, Branding, and Brand Identity section in the literature review, by having a strong brand people trust and learn to love that brand and also believe in its superiority. Strong brands also grab consumers' interest, patronage and loyalty. That, in the end, is what store loyal customers are—someone who loves and trusts a particular brand.



**Product/service Information**

This section of questions was developed so the designer can learn what products/services the business offers.

**Question #8 If you offer other products/services what are they?**

The graphic designer can find out other products/services that the store may offer, by looking at the answer to this question. If the store does offer something besides just groceries that would be a point of differentiation. The store could use that point of difference in their design and marketing strategies. Instead of just marketing or promoting their store as just a grocery store, they can add that they also have a bakery or café, etc. That point of difference may be what draws in customers if they are aware of that—this grocery store is a little more expensive...but they have a bakery and I can get fresh bread there—as an example. Offering other products/services can also be part of the store's unique story (as mentioned in the literature review).

**Marketing and promotion strategies**

This section of questions was developed so the designer can learn about the marketing and promotion strategies the store has in place and what future actions can be taken to better the store.

**Question #10 Do you do price discounts?**

If the grocery store answered yes to this question, the next step for the graphic designer is to find out more about the discounts. The store does discounts, but are the customers aware of them? Do the customers use the discounts? If the discounts are constantly on products that the

consumer has no interest in, maybe the item the discounts are on should be reevaluated. Price discounts can draw customers in for a certain product—once they are in the store they might realize something else they need or have an impulse buy. Having clear marketing messages—reaching the audience and defining benefits offered—is important to think about when dealing with price discounts.

**Question #11 Does your store do promotions throughout the year?**

Depending on how the store owner/manager answers (Yes/No), the graphic designer can understand the store's promotion strategy. If the store does promotions throughout the year they are staying engaged with the community and will be on consumer's minds more often than if the store doesn't do promotions. If the store answered no to doing promotions, is there a reason why? The promotions do not have to cost a lot of money. After the interview was over with the previous grocery store owner she added that their store—raffled off a turkey around the time of Thanksgiving. By doing that it got the community involved—all they had to do was go into the store (possibly buy groceries) and put their name in. That idea can be adapted for other holidays/events as well. When dealing with promotions, it is important to have an effective marketing strategy—reaching the right buyers at the right time, then convincing them to try the product; all while continuing to develop a strong relationship with the consumer.

**Question #12 Do you have a marketing strategy (a selected target market and then satisfying that market through product, distribution, promotion, and price)?**

Most of the stores will have a marketing strategy but is that marketing strategy effective? That is where the graphic designer can come in and say “Yes, you have a target market and you

are satisfying that market by listening to the products that they suggested be in the store—or no it doesn't look like you have a well-defined market or you are not satisfying their needs.” The promotion may be an area for improvement. The designer needs to find out how products are being promoted and making sure the customer is aware of them. Do the products show up on the store's website? Are they in the weekly ad? This goes along with having a well built and designed website. The store's website should give consumers a reason to come back again and again. The business should also know who the visitors are and cater their website to fit their needs and wants.

**Questions #13 Do you have a mission statement or a stated purpose for your business? And**

**Question #14 Do you have a business plan or a plan for growing your business? —** are similar to each other and also relate to Question #12 in some aspects. The business might have a stated purpose for being in business—but are the customers aware of it? The mission statement is very important. It is a chance for the business to honor its authenticity and integrate its own values into the statement. The business may also have a plan for growth but they only have a Facebook page—or possibly nothing online. The store needs to reach their customers anyway form of marketing that the customers are using (aka 360-degree marketing). These small businesses are not intended to compete with a Target or Wal-Mart with their advertising and marketing spending—but they can take steps to help their business succeed. By reaching their customers online (Facebook, a website, blog, etc.) instead of just a print ad—it opens up the business to more customers and possibly a larger target market.

**Questions #15-18** (under the Media section) ask about a website, Facebook page, Twitter account, and other forms of marketing that the store might use.

The graphic designer needs to know what mediums the business uses to market and get the word out about their business. Another very important note is to find out if the store uses multiple mediums—is the message consistent? And are all the forms speaking with one voice? An extreme example of speaking with one voice would be the store having a website, the website says that their mission is to serve the community. But on Twitter, the store complains about community events and does not support the community. That is not speaking with one voice (to the extreme). The designer needs to keep in mind that social media is not where the store should be doing business, those are places where customers can learn about the business and find out where the business is located and hours of operation (refer to the literature review section Old versus New Rules of Marketing and Public Relations). Social media is not the place to bombard people with various ads and promotions. The business' website is the place where different promotions going on can be shown. The social media sites should direct the consumer to the business' website instead. Once again the messages that are being communicated to the consumers need to be consistent, effective and efficient. When looking at the store's website—do the headlines pull in readers? Is there a sense of visual hierarchy? Is there a focal point? Does the website have unity and is it balance? Those are all very important areas that should be analyzed when looking not just at the website but also other design pieces that the store is using. When designing the various pieces (i.e. website, Facebook, promotional materials, etc), it is important to think about the information that the audience wants to hear. As mentioned previously, when consumers are on certain sites or social media, they are looking for different things. When a consumer is on Facebook, that does not necessarily mean that they want to be

bombarded with different ads and marketing efforts. It is important to know the state of mind the consumer will be in when using each of the mediums (i.e. website, TV, Facebook, etc.).

**Question #19 Are you affiliated with any national chains?**

The store's answer to this question should prompt the designer to ask if the store does get marketing help or help with different specials/promotions and what kind of help is it? An example might be that the provider has a website developed for the store. Another example might be an employee from the provider coming in and demonstrating how to properly package an item and present it. If the provider does give assistance with things like that, is the store taking advantage of them—especially if they are free of charge for the store. If not, that would be something the designer should explain would be beneficial to start doing—taking advice and learning from a larger, successful provider/business.

**Question #20 Are there any other stores near you that sell products that you offer?**

This is the final question to the survey. The designer should be made aware of any nearby competition the store has. Nearby competition will make a difference in designs and the marketing strategy for the store. Going back to the point of difference question that can be used to set this store apart from its competitor. If customers are aware of the store's bakery and its quality that should be emphasized and shown as a difference. The store also needs to be aware of what the competitor(s) is doing. With larger businesses it is common to compare how much they are spending and where they are advertising to your business and the actions you are taking. Yes, these are smaller businesses; but the same competitive thought should be kept in mind.

This was an in-depth discussion of the assessment tool. The assessment tool is designed to be very simple, easy to understand, and quick to go through. The brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design assessment tool can be found in Appendix F.

## Chapter 4

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### **Summary**

This thesis began with an idea to create an assessment tool for graphic designers to use—also with the potential to be used in conjunction with small business owners/managers—as there have been no guidelines or assessment tools established specifically for those stores. Upon researching and defining brand identity and marketing strategy in the literature review, then analyzing Target’s brand identity and interviewing one previous grocery store owner and three current managers of different grocery stores, a list of similarities and best practices began to form throughout the interviews.

From the literature review, a definition of small business was formed. A stronger understanding about what a grocery store is and why people might show patronage to a certain grocery store was also gained. At the beginning of this research a hypothesis was formed about the possibility of using the literature review and interviews as sources of information to identify successful brand identity and marketing strategies. Also, if there was a potential for a tool to be developed to measure and assess these areas. The literature review and the interviews that were conducted supported that idea and also expanded it.

While conducting the interviews, commonalities of best practices began to show in each of the interviews. Using the information gathered from the literature review and also from the interviews, the development of the survey began.

By developing the survey and creating the branding and marketing strategy and visual design assessment tool to go with it, the results will be something similar to a SWOT analysis.

SWOT analysis, however, is more for larger businesses. The survey and assessment tool created are directed towards a smaller business. With the results from the survey, the graphic designer can see what the business is strongest at (i.e. a well developed website) or what the business needs to improve on (i.e. mission statement or stated purpose for the business) and the steps to take to make the improvements happen.

## **Conclusion**

From this research, questions previously asked in the Abstract were answered:

- (1) Can a literature review and interviews be used as sources of information to identify successful brand identity, marketing strategies, and visual design?
- (2) Can a tool be developed to measure and assess the current brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design of a small business?

In answering question one, yes a literature review and interviews can be used as sources of information to identify successful brand identity, marketing strategies, and visual design. In the literature review a case study of a successful brand identity (Target's) was conducted, along with research from business, marketing and design professionals about what makes a successful brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design. By using the information gathered in the literature review, questions were developed and successful small community grocery store owners and managers were interviewed. A survey was developed, using the owners/managers answers to the interview questions and also the information learned by compiling the literature review. The survey asks questions dealing with: Business Information, Product/service information, and Marketing and Promotion Strategies. The questions and sections from the survey helped to set up the assessment tool outline. Depending on the responses from the grocery



store owner/manager, a course of action is given to the designer. Also included within the course of action are the steps involved to improve that area or suggestions for starting from an inexistent piece.

The answer to question two is also yes. By using all the information gathered from the literature review, interviews and developing a survey; an assessment tool can be created to measure and assess the current brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design of a small business. Along with the current brand identity, marketing strategy and visual design, the assessment tool gives a plan of action the graphic designer should take for the future with that particular business. Not only can the designer use the assessment tool but the simplicity allows the opportunity for the owner/manager to be able to use it as well.

## Chapter 5

### LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

#### **Limitations**

This study was unfunded and limited in scope by the number of interview participants. It was also limited because the survey and assessment tool have not been tested on small businesses prior to the completion of this paper. All the information collected was limited to the materials found from performing online searches rather than accessing larger databases. The only access to literature review sources were from Iowa State University's book collection in the library and also their online journal articles and books.

#### **Areas for future study**

Sending out the survey developed during this research is another area for future study. Additional questions were developed after the interviews were conducted. By sending out the survey developed for small community grocery stores, an understanding of their current marketing strategies and how their store impacts the community can be gained.

After sending out the survey developed from this research, further exploration of small community grocery stores would be beneficial to find similarities and differences between grocery stores across the United States. It would be beneficial to explore if there are similarities in small community grocery stores throughout certain sections (i.e. Midwest, Northeast) across the United States. If there is a strategy that Midwest grocery stores use that could be improved upon by looking at the same situation and how the Northwest handles it—could also lend itself to further exploration.

Another area for future study may be a comparison between larger stores in larger towns to these smaller stores in the smaller towns. It would be interesting to see if there are marketing strategies that larger stores are utilizing that could be altered to fit the smaller stores.

Comparing community grocery stores, not just at a national level but an international level as well, would be another area for future study. After researching this on a national level and analyzing the information, it would be interesting to take the concept to an international level. There may be ideas and innovative ways of marketing a small grocery store in a different country that can be adapted and used in the United States.

The survey and assessment tool developed from this research may also have the potential to be altered be used with other small community businesses (i.e. banks, hardware store, café, etc.). The majority of questions used in the survey are interchangeable throughout various businesses. Some of the questions asking more specific grocery stores can be changed to fit with whatever business is being surveyed. The assessment tool can be adapted just like the survey can. Whenever one of the questions is changed in the survey, the assessment tool just needs to reflect that question and what the outcomes and courses of action should be.

Future study could also involve the client filling out an interactive PDF of the assessment tool, along with the graphic designer filling one out. By having both the client and designer fill out an interactive PDF of the assessment tool, a comparison can be made between the answers followed by discussion about each of the PDFs. The designer can then get an understanding of what the client feels their business is successful on and what needs improvement. It can also help explain a designer's reason for wanting to make changes to a strategy or brand identity.

Next step will be to send out the survey to small businesses and run the assessment tool with the store owner/manager's answer to the questions. The survey will be sent out to small

community grocery store owners/managers in the state of Iowa. The reason for choosing grocery stores is because of a list that has already been assembled by Ron Prescott. In addition to Ron's list I have gathered ten more stores to give a wider variety of population size for the communities the grocery stores are in. After sending out the surveys to the store owners/managers the assessment tool can be used for the first time.

Prior to sending out the survey to those small community grocery stores; at Iowa State University an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Exempt Study Review Form needs to be filled out by the person conducting the survey. The form must be submitted to board for approval. The form is an exempt form since this study doesn't involve a great detail about the store owner/manger and that there will not be testing done on the subjects besides filling out the survey. The IRB Exempt Study Review Form, filled out, can be found in Appendix G.

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## APPENDIX A

## SMALL TOWN GROCERY STORE MANAGER INTERVIEW

MALE—TOWN POPULATION OF 346 PEOPLE

February 23, 2014 9:00 a.m.

**Could you please tell me about your position in this business and why you went into business?**

OK. The Co-op actually owns the Pilger Store. I'm the manager. We had some older stores in town that the people retired and the buildings were shot. So that is why we decided to build a store and move our gas station with the store at that time; so that is why we are in business now.

**Why did you go into this business?**

Because we felt that the town actually needed a store to supply milk, bread and just some essentials. So that is why we went ahead and moved everything together.

**When did you buy this business?**

In 1991.

**How did you pay for the business? Bank loans? Family?**

Bank loans from the local bank.

**Why were you successful? Not go out of business?**

We merged two businesses into one. We can sell gas. And the other grocery stores at the time didn't sell any beer or anything. We moved about 10 different things into one store. So that is why it is successful today.



**Why are you still in business today?**

Mainly because of that reason. People do come in and get gas and buy a few groceries and stuff. We have a big farming community. They come into town to get their farming stuff and then stop in the store and get a pop or a bag of chips.

**What was hard to figure out with this business? Did you have trouble figuring a niche for certain products or anything?**

No we had help. One of the grocery store owners kind of gave me a six month trial. I worked with him. He gave me ideas for the grocery part of the business. I knew already, working 20 years prior to that, with the gasoline and the farming area. So that's why it pretty much worked.

**Did you ever have to change what you were doing with the business?**

We did because we sold a lot more groceries at first and that wasn't really working because we would start getting supplies in and our prices were higher, since we were a smaller store. So we had to go away from having groceries and go to a convenience store type. It was more grocery at first but we did have to switch to convenience store then.

**What are the benefits about owning and running this grocery store?**

Gives 6 people a job for one thing. Helps the town, they can run up town for milk if they forget it. A lot of people work out of town. And that's the thing, where it is easier for them to go to the bigger stores in the bigger towns because most everybody works out of town. We do have 2 full-time employees here and about 5 part-time. So it gives the people some jobs here and helps the people so they don't have to drive so far if they forget something like milk or bread.

**What are your hours of operation during the week?**

7am-8pm Monday thru Saturday and Sunday we are open 9am-5pm.

**Do you have more than one grocery store/convenience store?**

Yes we do now. We did open another store in a town 16 miles away. We are doing the same thing there just like we are doing here. It seems to be working just as well as it is here. More or less the same scenario. Small town farming area, co-op has been there for years, guy that had the

grocery store retired and we merged the whole thing together. And it is working also.

**What are some difficulties that you've had? Providers not serving your store, etc.?**

Yes, that is one big thing. That is one reason we went to the convenient store rather than groceries, we lost our grocery supplier. We were kind of grandfathered in with the guy that owned the store before and they agreed to keep us supplied, it was Fleming Foods in Lincoln. Then they had bankruptcy problems and they quit. So that was the end of us. We couldn't get supplied with the main grocery line items. So now we just have the grocery store in another town and he worked with us and we order some stuff from him and he is glad to supply us with some groceries that way. So that was a big problem was getting people to supply us.

**Ok. Did you have anything else to add?**

Not that I can think of. That pretty well sums it up.

**Ok. Well thank you for taking time to do this.**

Yes. You're welcome.

## APPENDIX B

### SMALL TOWN GROCERY STORE OWNER INTERVIEW

FEMALE—TOWN POPULATION OF 6,089 PEOPLE

February 23, 2014 1:00 p.m.

**Could you please give me some background about how you were involved in the grocery store business?**

Alright. I was the bookkeeper when we were in business. I also could do all the other chores/work that needed to be done, except the meat department. I never worked in the meat department. And for a while we had a small bakery and I never did any of the baking. Otherwise I could do everything in the store. Ordered, help to order the groceries and produce for the business.

**Why did you go into the grocery store business?**

Because my husband worked for 20 years for other people as a meat cutter and a meat department in a grocery store is probably the largest money maker. The meat cutters are the highest paid employees and yet he felt like he was making his boss/company that he worked for money; that by owning a business he would be making that for himself and his family.

**When did you and your husband buy this business?**

In 1978. January 1, 1978.

**And when did you retire from that business?**

In 1997.

**How did you pay for the business when you purchased it? Bank loans? Family?**

Yes and yes. We had not been able to accumulate money to make a down payment. Didn't have any assets the only thing we owned was a house and cars, but we didn't actually own the house.

So we didn't really have any money to go into business. But the company that we used as our wholesaler/service supplier had good plans and knowledge of helping people to set up these businesses. So we had a family member that loaned us enough money to be our personal investment into the business and then we went thought the Small Business Association, which I hope still exists, the government program; they helped people to make arrangements to pay for things over a period of time. So you made a loan with the SBA and they in turn sold it or turned it over to a local bank. So our payments then went directly to a local bank. We had to make payments there then. So we, for the first few years that we were in businesses, were making two payments, one to the relative that loaned us the money and one to the bank. And the SBA oversaw all of this. Nash Finch was our supplier company, they kept very close tabs on us to help us succeed then.

**Ok. And to answer your curiosity about Small Business Association, it does still exist.**

Oh ok thank you I didn't know that—wasn't sure of that.

**Why were you successful? Not go out of business.**

I guess because our intentions were to serve the community, have a successful business, my husband and I both like people and just took care of the town and whatever their needs were—food for Thanksgiving and Christmas, helped them do holidays, birthdays and anniversary parties. We were very interested in seeing that they had what they needed and so we found ways to supply them.

**So you had a strong connection and relationship with the community?**

I feel so yes. And I think that a lot of people would still say that.

**What was hard to figure out with the grocery store business?**

What people are going to be eating next week. To have the right supplies ready for them when they decide that 'this is what I want to serve for dinner'—to have that ready for them is probably the hardest part about a grocery store.

**Did you ever have to change what you were doing with the business?**

Oh ya. Absolutely. With the customers, trying to accommodate people that needed maybe some credit, needed to charge (before credit cards were not really being used), we had to get tougher about not giving credit to people in order to not be giving away groceries, because people would take advantage of us, and our good nature. Then we also through the years, there were definitely changes in product and how it was packaged from the farms/manufacturers, we'd rearrange the

store add cases or shelves and take out things that weren't being useful anymore in order to display product in the best way. And people always wanted, even in a small town, what was new. Campbell's would advertise a new soup, maybe only marketed in New York, but people would see that advertisement and come in wanting that soup and yet it wasn't available in our area, yet—as an example. The manufacturers and the growers would change their product, repackaged it. Sometimes their packaging didn't fit the way you had your shelves set up, so you would have to change that.

**So the same could be said with technology too, as the internet and everything has increased. Do you think that having a web presence, to get you name out there as another way to market yourself instead of just locally for newspapers, etc. is a good idea?**

Oh ya, absolutely. We advertised on the radio, didn't access any TV because there isn't any local TV stations. Also all of the mailing, put up posters, support different community activities—County Fair.

**So like event sponsorship?**

Event sponsorship, yes. But definitely the new technology now, in the years that we have been out of business, has surpassed what we were doing so much that if we were still in business, we would be doing that.

**What were the benefits about owning and running this grocery store?**

My husband's skills and the money that he was making and generating was ours. We got the profits from his skills and the things that he knew what to do. And then we could employ our teenage/young adult kids. Helped our family to be more prosperous. I would still advice people to own your own business.

**You had children, were they involved with the grocery store?**

Oh ya, from day one. To take the inventory of everything that was in the store we had to count cans. And that first day, our kids, all five of them were here and helped to count the product that the previous owner was leaving for us to buy. And then they helped clean the building and worked at all the different places in the store—produce, meat department, helped with everything. But they were on payroll and got paid.

**And how old would they have been at the time?**

Youngest would have been probably fifteen.

**And the oldest one?**

The oldest was 21. Two of them were in college then, and the other three were high school students.

**Did you have more than one grocery store?**

No. If my husband had been healthier and lived longer we might have. We could see the benefits of having a second store in one of the small towns around here because you could supply two places out of one case of green beans—you could order a case of green beans and put half of it in one store and half of it in the other store and both places would have product, but there wasn't as much inventory.

**Do you think that would have hindered the businesses if you would have had multiple? Would one business have failed because you were trying to run two at the same time?**

No.

**You think that they would've been successful?**

Yes, in two different communities, separated by a few miles.

**What are some difficulties that you had? Providers not serving your store, etc?**

Our major provider, we never had a problem with them, they were there twice a week. Nash Finch and they still exist. I think that they have merged with other companies, so their name might not be Nash Finch anymore. They had had a warehouse in a near by city. But they had already closed that by the time we came to this town, so our closest warehouse was Grand Island and then Lincoln, for the bulk of the groceries. But at that time there was still the chip companies and cookie companies and some of the small meat companies—they'd have trucks on the road—and the bread truck would come five times a week, everyday except Wednesday and Sunday. And so we didn't have trouble with suppliers, like they do now. The small stores have trouble getting supplies now, more than we did then. So I can't say that was a problem for us.

**Do you think that is because people have started to shift away from small communities to larger communities, after they have graduated high school or college?**

Well that is definitely why small businesses in small towns don't have the business in order to be attractive to a large supplier. Large suppliers don't want to mess with the small stores/businesses in small communities because they aren't needing as much product and so it is not financially

encouraging for the big suppliers. And there are so many big companies, everything is owned by one or two companies, and they don't believe that they can help out these small businesses because they don't see it as being a good economical thing for the big business. Which I have a whole bunch of other opinions about that.

**Was there anything else that you wanted to add, about the experience that you had in this business?**

Just observing the people that bought our business and how they cut down on the variety of the things that they have in this small town store and that then causes people to need to go to a larger or another place to get things they really want. And so while they are there they buy more things that they could've bought at that small town business. So it becomes a detriment to the small town business to not be able to carry a variety of product causing their customers, that really would like to shop with them, to have to go some place else to get that stuff.

**Yes. Do you think that price plays an issue with that? Finding a cheaper option, instead of spending a dollar more to shop in the small town?**

Absolutely. Price plays a big part of it. And that's where advertising comes in. Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee, in this area,—their advertising convinces people that they're cheaper, when actually if you really compare some things it would not be cheaper. Especially having to pay for gas and all the other things that you spend money on when you go into a bigger town. You don't just go buy that package of particular bologna you wanted, you wind up buying a whole lot else. Advertising is a huge thing and people believing what they hear. But the public doesn't believe that themselves, mostly the consumer doesn't think that they are as gullible as they really are, in my opinion.

**Did you ever do price discounts, or coupons, when you had the store.**

Absolutely. We ran a sale that we advertised every week, or every two weeks. When one sale ended another one began that next day. We never had a period in there when we didn't have a flier or something out that had the special prices on it. I don't know if they would still do this either, but to be a full service grocery store, and this was something that Nash Finch promoted (company turned a 100 years old while we were working with them), so they had a lot of experience. Our sale bill had in it each week the things that the homemaker could buy her meat, bread, vegetables and something for dessert, there was something to make a complete meal at reduced prices/sale prices every week and they were coordinated so that they made a nice meal.

**Ok. So did Nash Finch provide assistance in marketing or any store specials?**

Yes they did. They had people, at no expense to us, that came in and helped talk about packaging

and presenting the meat. Talking about changes, back to one of your previous questions, that was something that had changed in my husband's 45 years of meat cutting—having a service counter where people walked up and said 'I want a pound of hamburger' and you dipped them out a pound of hamburger. To where things were pre-wrapped and called a self-service counter. And you pre-wrapped it and put three pork chops in one package and four in another. The frozen foods evolved into a big part of the grocery business while we were in business.

**So would you say that you had a strong store loyalty?**

Yes. My husband had people, meat customers, that followed him from the previous community that he worked in—to where we were—to where we bought our store.

**How many miles away was that?**

About 30—or well, over 30. But they would call him and say, 'package me up this and I'll be over to pick it up.'

**And did he have any specialty that he did with the meat? Did he have a certain type of meat that he was known for?**

Ya, the way he would fix a roast and steaks, just all the things that he did. How he would trim the piece of meat so that people didn't have to buy a lot of fat. And when he laid anything on the tray—for the self-service—like a steak, pork chop, or roast—he would always put the worst side of the product up for the customer to see. So when they got it home and turned it over they weren't surprised and 'oh look at all that fat under there.' They saw it first and were surprised to see how nice it looked on the other side. They knew that we weren't tricking them into buying some inferior product.

**Would you say that that was your niche or area of specialty? Having the good variety and strong knowledge of the meats?**

Yes, I would.

**Did you offer anything else besides groceries? Hardware, clothes?**

No. Well we had a few socks and gloves—farmers-type gloves being in this rural community. But no we didn't get into the clothing line at all, we didn't have the space. We had a rack of thumbtacks and that sort of thing. We kept a section of basic school supplies—notebooks, tablets, colors, crayons. We had a little toy section—cheap little things that if a child came in and wanted something, mom might be able to find something that wasn't going to cost her a lot of money.



**Did you guys have a business plan when you started this business? And would you say that, if you did have it, would be an important thing to have?**

Yes we had a plan. We evaluated it quarterly. And it is definitely something that everybody should have. I wouldn't advice anybody to go into a business blind and not know what your goals were, to keep really good track of your income and then your expenses and see what was helping make you some money and the things that were not. Then you need to decide whether getting rid of a product—where maybe there is a small cliental that really wants that product—and you not having that causes them to look someplace else. So you need to really have a plan. And think about well where are we going and where do we want to be at the end of the year, and five years.

**How did you guys learn that having a business plan would be a good idea? Did you learn that while growing up? Or did somebody share that knowledge with you?**

Someone shared that knowledge. With my husband working for Safeway for a few years, they really worked on that, having plans and goals. Of course, your goal is to move more product this quarter than you did the last quarter. Knowing which periods you will have higher sales. There's going to be slow times, but you try to figure out a way to make those times better too. But yes, we learned that.

**Did you have a really busy period during the year? What was that period?**

Yes. Thanksgiving and Christmas. The holidays where people feast on food were our busiest times. And 4th of July, holidays were usually the time when we would have our biggest sales. Then depending on pay roles at other businesses, when people were getting their paychecks and coming in to buy their groceries for that week or month.

**Did you have a mission statement, or a stated purpose for your business?**

No we never really did that, I guess. Not like they think of mission statements now. We aimed to serve the community.

**Would you say that you had a marketing strategy?**

Yes. Every sale bill that we put out, we were targeting. That part of the calendar whatever people would probably need and knowing that that is what we needed to do.

**Ok, well you have answered all of my questions. Thank you for taking time to do this.**

Well you're welcome. And there is one more thing I would like to tell you. Talking about making changes and how the progress with electronics and things affected business. I have one little story that I like to tell people that shows how you have to know what your business is. When they started keeping track of their product by computer, so they had some young people running the computers and look through the inventory and look at the items that had been selling. So, one fall in October, we were selling all the pumpkin from our shelves, we had to order from the warehouse. But the warehouse didn't have pumpkin. And the old people, more experienced people couldn't figure out why they didn't have pumpkin on the warehouse shelves. So they tried to figure it out and found that the young people, who had been watching all the computers, way back in July they realized that they weren't selling any pumpkin, so they hadn't brought anymore pumpkin in and let their supply of pumpkin run out because they weren't selling any in July. Well in October they needed pumpkin for fall—Halloween and Thanksgiving for pumpkin pie. So you have to know your business and be able to look ahead and see that. You just can't rely all on technology in some ways. You still have to have that human knowledge and know your market.

**Ok. Well thank you.**

Thank you. This has been fun.

## APPENDIX C

## SMALL TOWN GROCERY STORE MANAGER INTERVIEW

FEMALE—TOWN POPULATION OF 729 PEOPLE

March 7, 2014 9:00 a.m.

**Could you please explain about how you came into the grocery business?**

I am the manager here. I will have been here two years in May. The previous manager decided to move on. I used to work at Fareway so that's what helped me get into here. And that's why I am here.

**Ok. Why did you go into business?**

This is a community owned store. There has always been a grocery store here. But when it closed the last time, we were without a store for a couple years. It is very inconvenient to not have the store here. So it is community owned; the community raised the funds to open the store.

**So you didn't buy this business, the community did.**

Correct.

**How did the community pay for it?**

Lots of hard work selling shares.

**Did you guys have bank loans, or any family?**

Nope. It is all individually community owned.

**Ok. Why were you successful and not go out of business?**

(Knocks on wood) We are still working on that part. We have been open 5 years this January.

You just have to watch your inventory, try to control your expenses, basically, and get customers to come in. We are trying different things with ads. Instead of putting them in the paper that a lot of people don't get; we are mailing the ads to the customers. You know, trying to cover more people and that seems to be helping getting more people in the store.

**Have you guys emailed ads to customers?**

Yes, we do do that also.

**What was hard to figure out with this business?**

Products to order. Um. Time management is an issue. As far as knowing what your customer wants. And if you have a request for something and you bring it in you hope it sells, instead of just one person purchasing it. Because you can't just purchase one item, you have to purchase the case. And sometimes they don't understand that. "Well, will you get this in for me?" "Yes, but..." there's always got to be if I have more requests for it; rather than "Are you going to buy the whole case?" Because otherwise than it sits and expires and we lose that money. And they don't quite understand that sometimes.

**Why do you think you are still in business today?**

I have only been here not quite two years. There was some issues with the previous manager not managing the money properly. As far as ordering too big of trucks for what we have to cover. So you just have to be disciplined on expenses. Watch your income and watch your expenses. That's the bottom line in keeping this going.

**Did you ever have to change what you were doing with the business?**

Umm...Not really. Again, when I took over, it was already established. So they had the routines in place and I am just trying to follow through with that stuff, basically.

**What are the benefits of the community owning the grocery store and you running the business?**

That's a tough one. It keeps people buying local for one thing. Or at least you try to get them to stay and buy local. It is difficult with our location because you can go 15 miles either direction and maybe get a better offering. Because we can't carry quite everything the bigger stores can. But we do have a good variety and our prices are competitive, so those are the advantages of it being community owned, because they want to see it succeed.

**Ok. You were talking about competitive pricing.**

Once a year we have the shareholders meeting, where we go and give them the financials and that kind of stuff. And we had a gentleman, the couple of years that we didn't have a store, and he has a business down the street and frequents here when we did have the store. The years that we didn't have a store he went to Fareway, picked up the items that they need for their Christmas party. Any at our annual meeting just a couple months ago, he still had the receipt from 2008 and his current receipt from this year. There was only a \$2 difference—we were cheaper. So that was pretty exciting, 5 years later to be that competitive. And yes, some things are a little bit higher, but if you go price compare—we have a girl that does that a couple times a year. You don't have to drive—you're right here; you only go 2 blocks instead of 15-20 miles. So that's helpful too.

**Do you guys have more than one grocery store?**

Not here no. There's a community owned one that is about 8 miles away with a similar set-up. It is still an Affiliated store, it's community owned. They've got a bigger advantage because it is 25 miles to a store, so they do a little bit better than what we do.

**What are some difficulties that you have had? Providers not serving your store?**

We have had a couple vendors that it's hard to get them in here. Part of it we think was the vendor itself. But that vendor is not longer with that company, they have a new rep now that comes in. It is harder to get vendors in here because of the location, but in the long run you have to be firm. Sometimes you just have to put your foot down to certain vendors and say 'Hey, do you want to sell your product here or not?' And if they have a turnover, it makes it difficult for us to keep up with them. Because we have a couple that have sold out to another business; so now it is up to me to place the orders instead of having that representative coming in. Which is more difficult because I forget and it isn't in my routine, I need that representative to come in and get their product in the store. Other than that, again the bigger vendors it is not an issue with, it is some of the smaller ones. Little Debbie was difficult to get in here for the longest time. But part of that was their companies' problem because their representative didn't want to come in; even though I had people asking for their product. But now we've got what we need in here; we've got everybody in a routine as far as their deliveries and stuff. So now it is not as big of an issue anymore. And it is good to have variety in here, instead of just what we can get through our warehouse. You know, have those outside vendors coming in.

**How many people does the grocery store employ in the community?**

We have 7.

**And they are all full-time?**

Part-time. I'm the only full-time.

**Do you guys use Facebook, Twitter or any other form of social media to market?**

We use Facebook. When I have time to get on there. And again, we have our website that our ads are on—also recipes and coupons and that kind of thing on there. Other than that it is word-of-mouth. We have a lot of older cliental. Lot of older people in the community that want that paper ad that they can see and hold. So we try to cover all aspects and stay up with the times, you know, even being small.

**Ok, well did you have anything that you wanted to add to this?**

I don't think so.

**Well, thank you for doing this.**

Thank you.

## APPENDIX D

## SMALL TOWN GROCERY STORE MANAGER INTERVIEW

MALE—TOWN POPULATION OF 818 PEOPLE

March 10, 2014 1:00 p.m.

**Could you please explain about how you came into the grocery store business?**

Manager here. 10 years ago I was looking for a job—I had been a hardware manager. I was looking for something a little closer to where my kids go to school. And this job was available, so I thought ‘well I’ll apply for a grocery store manager job.’ Never had done it before, but I put my application in and got the job.

**Ok. Why did you go into the business?**

Looking at a challenge—the business was kind of on the down side, when I first started. Just looking for a challenge to see if I could make it right. That was kind of why I did it.

**When did you buy this business?**

It is community owned. It was started in 2001 by a group of shareholders in the area. They raised money by donations and selling shares. Then I took over in 2004.

**How did the community pay for the business?**

They sold the shares and then had money donated.

**They didn’t have bank loans or anything like that?**

Not when it started. I had to borrow some money a couple years after it was going but not when it started.

**Why were you successful and not go out of business?**

Hard work—I hate to be that blunt. We do a lot of catering, and I do a lot of it myself. Trying real hard at keeping the payroll down. My family and I did a lot of the work ourselves. And we are real careful about what we order and put a lot of time and effort in. It's a very vital part of the community and the community has really supported it since it has been community owned. That's a big part of why it is still in business today.

**How many people does this employ?**

There's 10-12. Sometimes in the summer I hire a couple extra people just to help me get some extra things done.

**Ok. And are they all full-time? Part-time?**

7 full-time and 3 or 4 part-time.

**What was hard to figure out with this business?**

The perishables. How to manage on what we order is getting sold. Keeping coolers and everything working.

**Why are you still in business today?**

Umm...I don't know how to answer that question. Well it's a big community asset. We're in business today because the community really supports it. And I think that they feel strongly that this is something that they need to have. So they support it. Being 30 miles from Fort Dodge, it is just something that we have to have.

**Did you ever have to change what you were doing with the business?**

Myself, personally, no. But when I started there was a lot of changes made to make it successful—because it was kind of going down the wrong path.

**What were some of those changes?**

Less labor. Cutting labor costs. Making sure we had the correct inventory on hand and not letting stuff go out of date that wasn't on the shelf. Tighten the reins, as far as, making sure that everything that was purchased was being sold and not the result of theft going on. Just making sure what was purchased was being sold.



**What are some of the benefits about the community owning this grocery store?**

One of the big benefits is—we are a community of a lot of elderly people. It's a very important part of the community for the elderly to be able to call up and get groceries any time that they want. We offer free delivery in town five days a week. I think that that is one of the big benefits. And that people don't have to drive 30 miles just to get their groceries. That's one of the big benefits having the store here.

**Do you have more than one grocery store?**

No. We just have one.

**Ok. What is your connection with the neighboring town and their grocery store?**

They are tied in with us. We both have different ownership, but they buy groceries through us. We are a member of Affiliated Foods Midwest, so instead of them becoming a member, I just let them buy groceries through me. So they get one of our trucks every week. That way we didn't both have to be members and pay the membership fee.

**What are some difficulties that you have had? Providers not serving your stores?**

Some of our problems were early on. We weren't meeting our minimums with Affiliated and that was one of the things we really had to work hard to meet. We would have to purchase everything we possibly could with Affiliated and not have any outside vendors come in. One of the big things was this neighboring town buying through us. Now we don't have to worry about the minimums. But that was probably the biggest thing was buying the quantities to fulfill the minimums with Affiliated Foods.

**Ok. Well thank you for doing this.**

Yup. You bet.

## APPENDIX E

### SMALL COMMUNITY GROCERY STORE SURVEY

#### **Business Information**

*The following questions will address your business.*

1. What is your job position at this grocery store?

Owner

Manager

Assistant Manager

Other (please specify)

2. What is the size of your town?

500 or less

501-800

801-1,000

1,001-5,000

5,001 or more

3. Is this a family owned business?

Yes

No

If yes, has it been a family owned business throughout its past? How long? How many family members are involved?

4. Do you have multiple store locations?

Yes

No

If yes, where are they located?

5. Is your business seasonal?

Yes

No

6. What is your busy season?

Spring

Summer

Fall

Winter

7. Do you have store loyal customers?

Yes

No

**Product/service Information**

*The following questions will address the products/services that your business offers.*

8. If you offer other products/services what are they?

Hardware

Clothing

Bakery

Café

Other (please specify)

9. What product lines do you offer at your grocery store?

**Marketing and promotion strategies**

*The following questions will address the current marketing/promotion strategies you have.*

10. Do you do price discounts?

Yes

No

11. Does your store do promotions throughout the year?

Yes

No

**Strategy**

12. Do you have a marketing strategy (a selected target market and then satisfying that market through product, distribution, promotion, and price)?

Yes

No

If yes, what type of strategy do you have and how did you formulate it?

13. Do you have a mission statement or a stated purpose for your business?

Yes

No

If yes, what is your mission statement or stated purpose?

14. Do you have a business plan or a plan for growing your business?

Yes

No

If yes, what is your business plan and how did you formulate it?

**Media**

15. Do you have a website?

Yes

No

If yes, was the website set up through one of your providers?

16. Do you have a Facebook page?

Yes

No

17. Do you have a Twitter account?

Yes

No

18. Do you use other forms of marketing?

Yes

No

If yes, what are your other forms of marketing?

TV

Radio

Magazine

Newspaper

Other (please specify)

**Suppliers/affiliation**

19. Are you affiliated with any national chains?

Yes

No

If yes, do they provide you with any assistance in marketing or store specials?

**Competition**

20. Are there any other stores near you that sell products that you offer?

Yes

No

If yes, how close is that store?

## APPENDIX F

### BRAND IDENTITY, MARKETING STRATEGY, AND VISUAL DESIGN ASSESSMENT TOOL

This assessment tool was developed to be used along with the survey that is shown in Appendix E. The assessment tool will tell the designer what is successful with the businesses current brand identity, marketing strategy, and visual design; and areas where there can be improvement in the future for those items.

**The following pages show the assessment tool.**



## Brand Identity, Marketing Strategy, and Visual Design Assessment Tool for Small Businesses

This assessment tool was developed for a graphic designer to use. The tool does have the potential for the designer's client to use as well—ideal for comparison and discussion of each other's findings.

The assessment tool is designed to work with the survey that has also been developed. Both survey and assessment tool have the ability to be adapted and used with a variety of small businesses.

Check the answer that is the best for each question.

The Priority is intended for the designers and owners/managers to go back through and prioritize each section in the order of most important being 1st.

### **Business Information**

The first three questions of this section will not be covered in the assessment. The assessment will begin on Question #4.

#### **4. Do you have multiple store locations?**

All the locations consistent with brand identity, marketing strategy and visual design

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Ok
- ☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

#### **5. Is your business seasonal?**

Promotion done outside of busy season?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**6. What is your busy season?**

Promotion and marketing continue to keep consumers engaged in the store.

N/A

Poor

Fair

Ok

Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Do you have store loyal customers?**

Loyalty programs

☐ Yes

☐ No

Customers aware and take advantage of loyalty program(s)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Promotion of loyalty program(s)

☐ N/A

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Ok

☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**Product/service Information****8. If you offer other products/services what are they?**

Promotion of other services offered

☐ N/A

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Ok

☐ Excellent

Message consistent with overall brand identity and marketing strategy

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Marketing and promotion strategies

### 10. Do you do price discounts?

Are discounts known/easy to find (via website, paper/online ad, etc.)

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

### 11. Does your store do promotions throughout the year?

Promotions speak with a single voice (consistent) throughout the year

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Strategy

### 12. Do you have a marketing strategy (a selected target market and then satisfying that market through product, distribution, promotion, and price?)

Are target market's needs being satisfied

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Do you have a mission statement or stated purpose for your business?**

Mission statement accessible or visible to customers

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**14. Do you have a business plan or a plan for growing your business?**

Use a variety of mediums (website, Facebook, newspaper, etc.) to grow business

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**Media****15. Do you have a website?**

Color used

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Visual hierarchy

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Focal point

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Unity throughout the website

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Balance

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Relevant information to audience

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**16. Do you have a Facebook page?**

Relevant information to audience

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Name of page same as business name (easier to search and find)

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Directs back to store's website

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**17. Do you have a Twitter account?**

Relevant information to audience

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Direct back to store's website

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**18. Do you use other forms of marketing?**

Clear and consistent messages throughout all forms of marketing

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**Suppliers/affiliation****19. Are you affiliated with any national chains?**

Use assistance provided

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

**20. Are there any other stores near you that sell products that you offer?**

Use point of difference to stand out from competition

- ☐ N/A  
☐ Poor  
☐ Fair  
☐ Ok  
☐ Excellent

Priority (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G

## IRB EXEMPT STUDY REVIEW FORM

IRB ID: 





**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)**  
**Exempt Study Review Form**

Title of Project: Developing and assessment tool for brand identity, marketing strategy and visual design in the context of small town businesses
---

Principal Investigator (PI): <b>279495216</b>		Degrees: MA
University ID: <b>278183758</b>	Phone: 402.449.3766	Email Address: belindaw@iastate.edu
Correspondence Address: 4214 Maricopa Dr Ames, IA 50014		
Department: Graphic Design		College/Center/Institute: College of Design, ISU
PI Level: <input type="checkbox"/> Tenured, Tenure-Eligible, & NTER Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Adjunct/Affiliate Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborator Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Emeritus Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting Faculty/Scientist <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Lecturer/Clinician <input type="checkbox"/> Lecturer/Clinician, w/Ph.D. or DVM <input type="checkbox"/> P&S Employee, P37 & above <input type="checkbox"/> Extension to Families/Youth Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> Field Specialist III <input type="checkbox"/> Postdoctoral Associate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate/Undergrad Student <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: )		

<b>FOR STUDENT PROJECTS</b> ( <i>Required when the principal investigator is a student</i> )		
Name of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty: Debra Satterfield		
University ID: 192945867	Phone: 515.245.3993	Email Address: dsatterfield@iastate.edu
Campus Address:		Department: Graphic Design
Type of Project: (check all that apply) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thesis/Dissertation <input type="checkbox"/> Class Project <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: )		

Alternate Contact Person: Debra Satterfield	Email Address: dsatterfield@iastate.edu
Correspondence Address: 124 College of Design	Phone: 515.245.3993

**ASSURANCE**

- I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate and consistent with any proposal(s) submitted to external funding agencies. Misrepresentation of the research described in this or any other IRB application may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct.
- I agree to provide proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are protected. I will report any problems to the IRB. See [Reporting Adverse Events and Unanticipated Problems](#) for details.
- I agree that modifications to the approved project will not take place without prior review and approval by the IRB.
- I agree that the research will not take place without the receipt of permission from any cooperating institutions when applicable.
- I agree to obtain approval from other appropriate committees as needed for this project, such as the IACUC (if the research includes animals), the IBC (if the research involves biohazards), the Radiation Safety Committee (if the research involves x-rays or other radiation producing devices or procedures), etc., and to obtain background checks for staff when necessary.
- I understand that IRB approval of this project does not grant access to any facilities, materials, or data on which this research may depend. Such access must be granted by the unit with the relevant custodial authority.
- I agree that all activities will be performed in accordance with all applicable federal, state, local, and Iowa State University policies.

Signature of Principal Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(*Required when the principal investigator is a student*)

- I have reviewed this application and determined that departmental requirements are met, the investigator(s) has/have adequate resources to conduct the research, and the research design is scientifically sound and has scientific merit.

<b>For IRB Use Only</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Research Per Federal Regulations	<input type="checkbox"/> No Human Participants	Review Date:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal Risk	EXEMPT Per 45 CFR 46.101(b):	

IRB Reviewer's Signature

Printed Name of Department Chair/Head/Director

Signature of Department Chair/Head/Director

Date

### Exempt Study Information

Please provide **Yes** or **No** answers, except as specified. Incomplete forms will be returned without review.

#### Part A: Key Personnel

- 1. List all members and relevant qualifications of the project personnel and define their roles in the research.** Key personnel include the principal investigator, co-principal investigators, supervising faculty member, and any other individuals who will have contact with the participants or the participants' data (e.g., interviewers, transcribers, coders, etc.). This information is intended to inform the committee of the training and background related to the specific procedures that each person will perform on the project. For more information, please see [Human Subjects – Persons Required to Obtain IRB Training](#).

NAME	Interpersonal contact or communication with subjects, or access to private identifiable data?	Involved in the consent process?	Contact with human blood, specimens, or other biohazardous materials?	Other Roles in Research	Qualifications (i.e., special training, degrees, certifications, coursework, etc.)	Human Subjects Training Date
Belinda Wolverton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Principal investigator	
Debra Satterfield	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	major prof		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Please complete additional pages of key personnel as necessary.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>2. Does your study include children (persons under age 18) as research subjects?</b>
<p>If <b>Yes</b>, please read and respond to the following:</p> <p>ISU policy requires that background checks be completed for all researchers and key personnel who will have any contact with children involved in this research project. Details regarding this policy can be found <a href="#">here</a>. <b>Principal Investigators and faculty supervisors are responsible</b> for ensuring that background checks are completed BEFORE researchers or key personnel may have any contact with children. Records documenting completion of the background checks must be kept with other research records (e.g., signed informed consent documents, approved IRB applications, etc.) and may be requested during any audits or Post-Approval Monitoring of your study.</p>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agreed		<b>2.a. Please check here to indicate that you have read this information and agree that you will comply with these requirements.</b>

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## Part B: Funding Information and Conflicts of Interest

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>1. Is or will the project be externally funded?</b>
<p>If <b>No</b>, skip to question 8.</p>		
<p>If <b>Yes</b>, please identify the type(s) of source(s) from which the project is directly funded.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency  <input type="checkbox"/> State/local government agency  <input type="checkbox"/> University or school  <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation  <input type="checkbox"/> Other non-profit institution  <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit business  <input type="checkbox"/> Other; specify: _____         </p>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>2. Is ISU considered to be the Lead or Prime awardee for this project?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>3. Are there or will there be any subcontracts issued to others for this project?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>4. Is or will this project be funded by a subcontract issued by another entity?</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	5. If ISU is the recipient of the subcontract, does it involve any federal funding, such as federal flow-through funds?
6. If this project will be externally funded, please provide the complete name(s) of the funding source(s); please do not use acronyms. If any subcontracts will be issued to others, please describe and include a list of all entities.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Attached		7. Please attach a <u>complete and final</u> copy of the entire grant proposal or contract from which the project is or will be funded.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	8. Do or will any of the investigators or key personnel listed on this application have a conflict of interest management plan in place with the Office of the Vice President for Research & Economic Development?

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### Part C: General Overview

Please provide a brief summary of the purpose of your study:
The purpose of this study is to gather information from small community grocery stores (as a small business example) about their business and the brand and marketing strategy that they currently have. Then use the assessment tool that was developed to analyze were their strategies can/should go in the future.
Please provide a brief summary of your research design:
The survey will be sent out via Qualtrics, for ease and simplicity of use for the store owner/manager. After completion of the survey Qualtrics can track the answers to each question and show the percentages for the answers.

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### Part D: Exemption Categories

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	1. Are you conducting research on Educational Practices (e.g., instructional techniques, curriculum effectiveness, etc.)? If Yes, please answer questions 1a through 1e. If No, please proceed to question 2.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	1.a. Will the research be conducted in an established or commonly accepted educational setting, such as a classroom, school, professional development seminar, etc.?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	1.b. Will the research be conducted in any settings that would <b>not</b> generally be considered to be established or commonly accepted educational settings? If Yes, please specify: _____

- ☐ Yes ☒ No      **1.c.** Will the research procedures and activities involve normal educational practices (e.g., activities that normally occur in the educational setting)? Examples include research on regular or special education instructional strategies or the effectiveness of instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- ☐ Yes ☒ No      **1.d.** Will the research procedures include anything **other than** normal educational practices? If Yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Yes ☐ No      **1.e.** Will the procedures include randomization into different treatments or conditions, radically new instructional strategies, or deception of subjects? If Yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

☒ Yes ☐ No      **2.** Does your research involve use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior? If Yes, please answer questions 2.a. through 2.b. If No, please proceed to question 3.

- ☒ Yes ☐ No      **2.a.** Will the research involve one or more of the following? (Check all that apply.)
- ☐ The use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement)
  - ☒ Surveying or interviewing adults
  - ☐ Observations of public behavior\* of adults
  - ☐ Observations of public behavior\* of children, when the researcher will not interact or intervene with the children
- \*Note: Activities occurring in the workplace and school classrooms are not generally considered to involve public behavior.

- ☐ Yes ☒ No      **2.b.** Are **all** of the participants elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office?

☐ Yes ☒ No      **3.** Does the research involve the collection or study of *currently existing* data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens? If Yes, please answer questions 3.a. through 3.b. If No, please proceed to question 4.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No      **3.a.** Are **all** of the data, documents, records, or specimens **publicly** available?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No      **3.b.** Will the data you record for your study include ID codes? If Yes, please answer 3.b.(1) and 3.b.(2).
- ☐ Yes ☐ No      **3.b.(1).** Does a "key" exist linking the ID codes to the identities of the individuals to whom the data pertains?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No      **3.b.(2).** Will any persons on the research team have access to this key?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>4. Does your research involve Taste and Food Quality tests and Consumer Acceptance Studies involving food? If Yes, please answer questions 4.a. through 4.c. If No, please proceed to question 5.</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>4.a.</b> Is the food to be consumed normally considered wholesome, such as one would find in a typical grocery store?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>4.b.</b> If the food contains additives, are the additives at or below the level normally considered to be safe by the FDA, EPA, or Food Safety and Inspection Service of USDA? Consider additives in commercially available foods found at a grocery store and/or any additives that are added to food for research purposes.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>4.c.</b> If there are agricultural chemicals or environmental contaminants in the food, are they at or below the level found to be safe by the FDA, EPA, or Food Safety and Inspection Service of USDA?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>5. Is your study a research or demonstration project to examine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal public benefit or service programs such as Medicaid, unemployment, social security, etc.; or</li> <li>• Procedures for obtaining benefits or service under these programs; or</li> <li>• Possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or</li> <li>• Possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs?</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>5.a.</b> If Yes, is the research or demonstration project pursuant to specific federal statutory authority?

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### Part E: Additional Information

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>6. Does your research involve any procedures that do not fit into one or more of the categories in items #1–#5 listed above, such as the following? (Check all that apply.)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Usability testing of websites, software, devices, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Collection of information from private records when identifiers are recorded</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Procedures conducted to induce stress, moods, or other psychological or physiological reactions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of materials typically considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Video recording or photographing non-public behaviors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of deception (e.g., misleading participants about the procedures or purpose of the study)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Physical interventions, such as           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> blood draws</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> new collection of biological specimens</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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		<input type="checkbox"/> use of physical sensors (ECG, EKG, EEG, ultrasound, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> exercise, muscular strength assessment, flexibility testing <input type="checkbox"/> body composition assessment <input type="checkbox"/> measuring of height and weight <input type="checkbox"/> x-rays <input type="checkbox"/> changes in diet or exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Tests of sensory acuity (i.e., vision or hearing tests, olfactory tests, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Consumption of food (other than as described in #4) or dietary supplements <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical studies of drugs or medical devices <input type="checkbox"/> Other; please specify: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>6.a.</b> If Yes, is your research conducted in an established educational setting, <b>and</b> are the checked procedures part of normal educational practices given that setting? If Yes, please describe: _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>7. Do you intend or is it likely that your study will include any persons from the following populations? (Check all that apply.)</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitively impaired <input type="checkbox"/> Children (persons under age 18) <input type="checkbox"/> Wards of the State <input type="checkbox"/> Persons who are institutionalized  <b>7.a.</b> If Yes, please describe how they will be involved and what procedures they will complete: _____
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>8. Will any of the following identifiers be <i>linked to the data</i> at any time point during the research? (Check all that apply.)</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Names: <input type="checkbox"/> First Name Only <input type="checkbox"/> Last Name Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First and Last Name <input type="checkbox"/> Phone/fax numbers <input type="checkbox"/> ID codes that can be linked to the identity of the participant (e.g., student IDs, medical record numbers, account numbers, study-specific codes, etc.) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addresses (email or physical) <input type="checkbox"/> Social security numbers <input type="checkbox"/> Exact dates of birth <input type="checkbox"/> IP addresses <input type="checkbox"/> Photographs or video recordings <input type="checkbox"/> Other; please specify: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>9. Is there a reasonable possibility that participants' identities could be ascertained from any combination of information in the data? If Yes, please describe:</b> _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>10. Will participants' identities be kept confidential when results of the research are disseminated?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>11. Could any of the information collected, if disclosed outside of the research, reasonably place the subjects at risk of any of the following? (Check all that apply.)</b>

		<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal liability <input type="checkbox"/> Civil liability <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to the subjects' financial standing <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to the subjects' employability <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to the subjects' reputation
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>12. Does the research, directly or indirectly, involve or result in the collection of any information regarding any of the following? (Check all that apply.)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Use of illicit drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal activity <input type="checkbox"/> Child, spousal, or familiar abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Mental illness <input type="checkbox"/> Episodes of clinical depression <input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts <input type="checkbox"/> Health history <input type="checkbox"/> History of job losses <input type="checkbox"/> Exact household income other than in general ranges <input type="checkbox"/> Negative opinions about one's supervisor, workplace, teacher, or others to whom the subject is in a subordinate position <input type="checkbox"/> Opinions about race, gender, sexual orientation, or any other socially sensitive or controversial topics <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual preferences or behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> Religious beliefs <input type="checkbox"/> Any other information that is generally considered to be private or sensitive given the setting of your research; if so, please specify: _____

After completion of Parts A, B, and C of this application, please send the completed form to:

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**  
**Office for Responsible Research**  
**1138 Pearson Hall**  
**Ames, IA 50011-2200**

*Data collection materials (e.g., survey instruments, interview questions, recruitment and consent documents, etc.) do not need to be submitted with this application.*

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the IRB office at [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu) or 515-294-4566.