Brand Salience and Brand Differentiation of the Florida Forest Service

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Abstract

This study addressed the themes affecting the brand salience and brand differentiation of the Florida Forest Service (FFS). Six focus groups were conducted at different locations in Florida. FFS suffered from a lack of brand salience and differentiation. Brand salience is the extent to which a brand comes to mind for the public. Brand differentiation is the extent to which a brand separates itself from competitors in the public's perceptions. Three themes emerged that affected brand salience: the importance of forests, brand identifiers, and external communications. Two themes emerged for affecting brand differentiation: forest and natural resources organizations and communications. The following recommendations were made for public organizations: ensure the organization's brand is present in the public's external environment, create salient messages and brand identifiers, test messages and brand identifiers prior to implementation, and consistently use messages and brand identifiers. The following recommendations were made for future research: replicate the research to other settings to address the transferability of the findings, conduct quantitative research to address brand salience and differentiation for public organizations in a generalizable manner, and research perceptions of public organizations' communications.

Keywords

brand, salience, differentiation, organizations, forestry

Introduction and Literature Review

"A brand is a complex, interrelated system of management decisions and consumer reactions that identifies a product (goods, services, or ideas), builds awareness of it, and creates meaning for it" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 6). While a brand is not a tangible entity that can be discerned through any of the five senses, it still exists as a socially constructed entity (Loken et al., 2010). Branding has value to the organizations and the public. From the organizational perspective, a positive brand can protect an organization in the event of a crisis like Tylenol had in 1982 (de Chernatony, 2001). The brand also aids the organization by serving as a guarantee for the public by reducing uncertainty associated with the product or service, as well as simplifying the public's choices (de Chernatony, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

Walvis (2008) used neuroscientific findings to develop branding laws. The logic was that a brand is perceived by individuals and, as such, is dependent upon neural processing. The first law states brands are more likely to be chosen if they are relevant and distinct from competing brands. The second law states brands are more likely to be chosen when they repeat a specific message. The third law states brands whose messages garner more active participation will create a richer host of neural connections to the brand and will more likely be chosen.

Branding applies to how agriculture and natural resources organizations, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) in this instance, are perceived by the general public. While brands are a complex notion that includes components that are internal and external to the company, the external component is essentially the relationship that exists between the organization and the public (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). While it is not plausible to affect the public's perceptions of agriculture and natural resources as a whole through any one action, it is plausible to affect the public's perceptions of individual organizations one study at a time.

Brand Differentiation and Salience

Brand differentiation is the extent a brand separates itself from other brands (Ehrenburg, Barnard, & Scriven, 1997). Brand differentiation is a type perceptual brand positioning, which is the mental location of a brand relative to competitors (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Brands seek to be perceived differently from other brands in the product category based on attributes relevant to consumers. While differentiation is usually thought of in terms of the product, Aaker (1996) stated that the organization itself can be used as a means of differentiation. The organization can do this through its values and culture, its people by exemplifying the values and culture to provide credibility, its programs, and its assets and skills. Brand differentiation is not concerned with whether or not a brand is better than its competitor but is instead concerned with having an original product or service to separate it from competitors (Tybout & Calkins, 2005).

Salience is the extent to which a brand is accessible in the mind of a consumer (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). This can occur internally through presence in the consumer's memory or externally through presence in the consumer's social surroundings. The more memory retrieval cues that are attached to the brand, the more likely it becomes that the brand will be purchased (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2006). The increased salience also "provides a sense of assurance that the brand will be appropriate for the situation" (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2006, p. 335), which fits into the functions of the brand that reduce uncertainty for consumers (de Chernatony, 2001; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Tybout & Cornelius, 2006). For external presence, brands that are more present in the media will be more successful because they will be more salient to the public (Anschuetz, 1997; Ehrenberg et al., 1997; Miller & Berry, 1998). This notion is similar to agenda setting, which is the transfer of topic salience from the media to the public based on the amount of coverage the media gives the topic (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Salience and differentiation are related. "Brands become salient because they somehow distinguish themselves from their surroundings. They are noticed because they are simply different, a quality that can manifest itself, for example, in a special visual identity or a charismatic, unique brand personality" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 173). Another link between differentiation and salience is that a brand will be differentiated by what the public perceives as the most salient characteristics (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Franzen and Moriarty suggested for well-differentiated brands to be more successful with advertising efforts, they cannot change the public's evaluations of important

characteristics, but these important characteristics can be made more salient to the public. While not explicitly stated as such, Franzen and Moriarty were essentially recommending organizations use advertising efforts to engage in agenda setting, which has been suggested for businesses (Carroll & McCombs, 2003).

Public Organizations and Branding

Keller and Lehmann (2006) stated that there was a lack of branding research that assessed the broader impacts of brands. One area where branding can be applied is public organizations. While research has focused on marketing activities of public organizations, there is a general absence of branding literature for public organizations like FFS (Wæraas, 2008), and there is also discussion relating to the appropriateness of applying private-sector marketing strategies to public organizations (Butler & Collins, 1995; Laing, 2003; Walsh, 1994).

Public organizations' legitimacy depends on public value, which occurs when a public organization provides a product or service that cannot be reasonably met by private organizations and satisfies those receiving the services and the general citizenry paying for the service (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995). Due to increases in consumerism and competition, public organizations are increasingly using marketing techniques, leading to more public relations and marketing staff in public organizations (Walsh, 1994). Wæraas (2008) stated public organizations are increasingly using corporate branding, but the application of private-sector strategies to public organizations is not understood (Moore, 1995), including marketing (Butler & Collins, 1995; Laing, 2003; Walsh, 1994). Whelan, Davies, Walsh, and Bourke (2010) stated that public organizations need to go beyond only providing public value to a point of also fostering relationships with the public, which effective branding can aid.

The application of private-sector strategies is difficult because public organizations are typically more complicated than private organizations. First, public organizations must have approval from not only those they immediately serve but also the general public (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995). Second, public organizations have multiple roles and identities that need to be represented (Hoggett, 2006; Wæraas, 2008, 2010). Third, public organizations' roles and purposes differ from private organizations (Laing, 2003; Walsh, 1994; Wæraas, 2008).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand what influences the brand saliency and differentiation of a public organization, as perceived by members of the public. The research questions guiding this study are:

1) What constitutes the public's perceptions of brand salience for the Florida Forest Service?
2) What constitutes the public's perceptions of brand differentiation for the Florida Forest Service?

Methods

Qualitative methodology was used for this study. The purpose of qualitative research lies in the pluralistic nature of life, with broad explanations of life being replaced by explanations grounded in individual situations (Flick, 2006). This study sought to improve understanding of the factors affecting brand salience and differentiation for a public organization. The research was funded by a grant received from FFS. The research occurred after a name and logo change.

The brand of FFS was explored using focus groups. Templeton (1994) defined focus groups as "small, temporary communit[ies], formed for the purpose of the collaborative enterprise of discovery" (p. 4). The guided group discussion allows participants to contrast their beliefs and experiences with each other (Morgan, 1998). It is common for the group to act on and provide perspective on opinions that differ from that of the majority in order to validate the viewpoints (Flick, 2006). Focus groups allow the discussion to remain relevant to the research questions through the efforts of a moderator (Morgan, 1998).

As a public organization, FFS is accountable to all Florida residents (Moore, 1995; Vandlik, 1995). Therefore, the target population consisted of Florida citizens of both urban rural areas, with an external marketing firm recruiting participants using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Four focus groups were conducted with urban residents, and two were conducted with rural residents. The focus groups were conducted in four cities – Orlando, Tallahassee, Gainesville, and Ft. Myers – throughout the state, providing environmental triangulation (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald 2009). There were 54 participants, with 7 to 10 participating in each group, meeting Krueger's (1998a) recommendation of 6 to 12 participants. Participants were provided with a $50 incentive.

A moderator's guide was used for each focus group to guide discussions. The moderator's guide was created using recommendations from Krueger (1998b). The topics addressed forests, forest management by public organizations, and FFS's communications. A summary was confirmed by the participants for validation after each focus group to provide member checking (Creswell, 2007). The moderator's guide was reviewed by a panel of researchers and FFS staff to ensure credibility (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006).

Each focus group lasted approximately two hours. A moderator trained in focus groups methodology moderated all of the focus groups to ensure consistency. The moderator was a young, adult female with a background in agriculture and natural resources. An assistant moderator and note taker were also present. The focus groups were audio and video recorded for verbatim transcripts. Peer debriefing occurred between the researchers present after each focus group location. This allowed the researchers to understand each other's viewpoints, observations, and interpretations of the focus groups, adding validity to the study (Krueger, 1998a). The transcripts were completed by a third party. Transcript-based analysis was used because it is considered the most rigorous means of analyzing focus groups (Krueger, 1998a) and maintains the richness of the data (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). The data were analyzed and separated into dominant themes according to Glaser's (1965) constant comparative method through a qualitative data analysis program. The method consists of creating categories for each new incident, solidifying category boundaries as analysis progresses, ending in the creation of themes. This analysis was conducted by the assistant moderator, who was a young, adult male with a background in agriculture and natural resources.

Results
RQ 1: What Constitutes the Public's Perceptions of Brand Salience for the Florida Forest Service?

A major issue facing FFS was a lack of brand saliency for the participants. Prior to being told of the name change, participants were asked if they had heard of DOF. The majority of participants said they had heard of DOF. But when participants were asked earlier what state agency was responsible for forests in Florida, only the rural Tallahassee group had a participant mention the Division of Forestry by name, though the other five groups had participants who said Department of Forestry.

Participants also attributed the care of forests in Florida to other state organizations. These other organizations also tended to lack salience with participants. While the brand of FFS lacked salience, there were aspects of FFS and its purpose that were salient, as well as themes affecting the general saliency of FFS. The themes addressing the first research question were the importance of forests, brand identifiers, and external communications.

Importance of forests.

The first theme addressing the brand salience of FFS was the participants' perception of the importance of forests. This perceived importance was multifaceted, including subthemes of nature, uses, and need to be protected.

One of the aspects of the nature subtheme was the positive benefit forests had on air quality. One Ft. Myers participant said forests were "the lungs of the Earth." Participants also viewed forests as important for flora and fauna. Some participants viewed forests as untouched by man. A Gainesville participant said "Usually in an ecosystem that has been there for a while, especially things that are like a state forest or a national forest, you have got areas that have not really been [trampled] on so much by man."

The second subtheme included the various uses for forests. One type of use was recreation. A Ft. Myers participant said, "I used to do a lot of hunting and fishing. My biggest thing up in New Jersey was hiking and fishing up there." Another type of use that was salient with participants was business. A Gainesville participant said, "Well, I need to just to talk about the money part. There is a lot of lumber. It has to be done, unless we come up with some better materials." The business use, specifically development, was also perceived by participants as a threat to forests. A participant in the second Orlando focus group said

> I lived in Boca for a while, and there was this forest that was relatively near our development. It was beautiful because it had wild orchids all through it. And one day, the bulldozers showed up, and it just became this vast...as far as you can see of wasteland. I don't know if they ever did build the development. They just tore it all out and put it for sale. It was sad.

The third subtheme was the perception that forests need to be protected. The participants perceived that people through individual actions and development, which was discussed in the preceding subtheme, were threats to forests. In regard to individual actions, a Gainesville participant said, "Everybody loves to make a fire, but then there is a difference between a bonfire and just a moderate fire that you can enjoy and cook with and sit around and enjoy. There is no need to be wasteful." Participants also perceived wildfires as threats to forests. Some of the participants talked about the importance of prescribed burns for protecting forests from larger fires. A Ft. Myers participant said, "I think of the controlled burns as management, so if there was a fire it wouldn't take it all down." Another aspect of this subtheme was protecting forests from natural threats. Another Gainesville participant said, "I think some of those diseases, beetles and stuff, can take over if it is not caught in time."

Brand identifiers.

Participants used the brand identifiers to identify the organization's context, as well as the brand identifiers eliciting different responses from the participants. In particular, the participants were

reacting to specific elements of the brand identifiers. The theme of brand identifiers had two subthemes: the name of the organization and the logo of the organization.

The name "Florida Forest Service" was the first subtheme of brand identifiers. While the name was more of a point of differentiation that will be discussed in the second research question, the name also affected salience. A positive aspect was that it sounded helpful to some of the participants because the word "service" was included. One Ft. Myers participant said, "Yeah, if I own a forest, would they come in and help me? They probably would." While salient for some participants, the name also led to uncertainty for others. A participant in the second Orlando focus group said, "It's not enough, not enough to explain what it is."

The second subtheme for brand identifiers was the logo (Figure 1). This included the trees in the logo, the shape of the logo, and how the logo would look on uniforms, signs, and so forth. The trees in the logo elicited mixed reactions from the participants. The positive comments were nonspecific. As one rural Tallahassee participant said, "I like the trees." Negative reactions centered on the specific trees used in the logo, including where the trees were from. One Ft. Myers participants said, "I am still trying to puzzle over those trees. I wish that they were trees that are native to Florida, and those might be." The trees illustrated the lack of brand salience. One Gainesville participant who was under the impression that other activities were under FFS's purview said, "If they had maybe a lake in the background, with water and maybe a fish there and animals along the side, it would be a little bit more representative of everything that they do." The next aspect of the logo was its shape, which many participants believed was shaped like a law enforcement badge. A participant in the first Orlando group said, "I think when you see it, you will think about the trees, but you will also think about law enforcement too. You will feel secure." The other shape that came to mind for some participants was a highway sign. A participant in the second Orlando group said, "I would say it looked like a highway sign when I first saw it." The last aspect of the logo was how it would look on signs, uniforms, and pamphlets. A second Tallahassee participant said "Don't they usually wear brown or green uniforms? So, if that is on a green or a brown uniform, it is going to get lost."

Figure 1. Logo for the Florida Forest Service.

External communications.

This theme consisted of external communications or lack thereof that affected the brand salience of the organization. The theme included three subthemes: the FFS brand lacking salience, choice of

communication media, and mascots. The three subthemes address the communication practices that participants believed FFS should or should not be engaging in.

The FFS brand lacked salience for participants, leading to the first subtheme. When directly asked what state agency was responsible for forests, only the rural Tallahassee group had a participant say "Division of Forestry," the old name of FFS. This occurred despite the fact that the majority of participants saying they had heard of DOF when asked later in the discussion. None of the participants were aware of the name change from DOF to FFS that had occurred in the preceding months. Many participants wanted FFS to be more visible to the public. One Ft. Myers participant said, "Let the community or public know exactly what your services are because obviously we didn't know all that they did for us." This desire for the organization to communicate more was not unopposed, though. As one participant in the first Orlando focus group said, "Isn't their money better spent managing forests than educating us about what they do? I mean, we see the results of what they do, so we don't have to know everything."

The second subtheme for external communications was the choice of communication media. Participants' responses differed, illustrating the variety of channels needed to reach a broad group. Communication channels mentioned by the majority of the groups were Internet-based communications, billboards/highway signs, broadcast communications, and paper-based communications. For reaching the individual participants directly, results again varied. The two most prominent responses were Internet-based communications and mail. For Internet-based communications, an urban Tallahassee participant said "We are going to stop having mail in about a year or two. Let's just get over it. I really do think electronic communication and in a way that is non-obtrusive." Participants without Internet access preferred traditional mail. One participant in the first Orlando focus group said, "I don't have e-mail. You are going to have to send me a letter or call me." Other participants did not believe that e-mail or direct mail communications would be effective. Another urban Tallahassee participant said "I would feel that most people are going to throw the mail in the can. That e-mail, they are going to delete it…. I think you should just save the money and do something else besides try to communicate."

The last subtheme that emerged was mascots. There were repeated mentions of Smokey Bear and Yogi Bear, even though participants were not asked about bears or mascots. Yogi Bear was mentioned in four of the focus groups, with two of the groups mentioning Yogi Bear when they saw the new FFS logo. A participant in the second Orlando group said, "I can see [the logo] with Yogi Bear and a picnic basket." Smokey Bear was mentioned in five of the focus groups, with many participants wanting FFS to have a mascot. A participant in the first Orlando focus group said, "Everyone knows who Smokey the Bear is." While Smokey Bear and the message of preventing forest fires were salient, salience did not transfer to FFS, which along with the United States Forest Service and other state forest services can use Smokey Bear as a mascot. Participants did not know what organization was responsible for Smokey Bear. In regards to Smokey Bear's focus on forests fires, a Gainesville participant said, "Maybe Smokey the Bear isn't a good thing because it is really focusing on fires, not everything that the Forest Service really does. We talked about conservation, the parks, recreation."

RQ 2: What Constitutes the Public's Perceptions of Brand Differentiation for the Florida Forest Service?

The FFS brand lacked differentiation from similar organizations, which was related to the brand's lack of salience. Because participants were not fully aware of what FFS and the similar organizations'

purposes were, they were not always able to distinguish between the organizations. The themes that affected the differentiation of the FFS brand were forests and natural resources organizations and communications. There is overlap with themes from the first research question because there is a relationship between salience and differentiation.

Forests and natural resources organizations.

The scope of the organizations, specifically forestry and natural resources, was one of the themes affecting the differentiation of FFS from similar organizations. There were two subthemes: overlap of natural resources organizations and forestry as a point of differentiation. An issue facing FFS was the lack of differentiation that was occurring. When looking at a list of DOF/FFS and similar organizations, a participant in the first Orlando group said, "A lot of duplication…. Swallow them all up [into one organization]." Participants perceived there was overlap because the different organizations operated in forests and natural resources areas. In some cases, activities of other organizations were being attributed to FFS by participants, though this was often corrected by other participants. A Gainesville participant said:

> I would imagine that they [DOF/FFS] are the ones that do the training for park rangers, so that they, in turn, can manage the parks that they are in charge of, as well as educate those that come to enjoy it.

> In response a second Gainesville participant said

> I don't think that Division of Forestry trains park rangers…. I could be mistaken. And that may have changed. Because for a while I was looking into trying to get on as park staff because I thought that would just be the perfect job, as far as I could see.

Not all participants believed that there should be a lot of differentiation between the organizations. A rural Tallahassee participant said, "They shouldn't want to be distant from them because they can all help each other. I mean, like major catastrophes or like big fires, you know. They should all work together." FFS's focus on forestry was a point that helped create differentiation for some participants, which constituted the second subtheme. A participant in the second Orlando focus group said, "It seems to, just by the name 'Forestry,' I would think their main focus would be the botanicals as opposed to, necessarily, the wildlife population."

Communications.

The communications theme includes subthemes of brand identifiers and external communications. These communications-related concepts affected the differentiation of the FFS brand from similar organizations.

There were two aspects for the brand identifiers subtheme as points of differentiation: the name and the logo. Participants were using components of the names to figure out what the organizations' activities were and where the organizations operated, which relates to the use of forestry in the name as a point of differentiation from the preceding theme. In regards to the new FFS name, one Gainesville participant said:

I think it well defines what they are doing as the service. What you have got up there is the Florida Forest Service, U.S. Forest Service, then you go into the Park Services, and then you go into Wildlife and Fish; two different organizations.

Other participants saw the new name being less differentiating than the name "Division of Forestry." A different Gainesville participant said, "Now it looks the same as a bunch of them because it has 'service' in it." For the aspect of the logo relating to differentiation, the misattribution of activities to FFS from the first research question reemerged, affecting the evaluation of the logo. A third Gainesville participant said, "I don't know. That logo leads one to believe that it is just about forests."

The subtheme of external communications affecting brand differentiation relates to the lack of salience. When speaking about how DOF fit in the state organizational hierarchy, an urban Tallahassee participant said "See, I can't tell you, just like… I couldn't tell you for a million dollars the differences between all three of those U.S. departments [listed on the screen]." Participants wanted to know the purposes of the different organizations and why they should each be receiving money. A participant in the second Orlando focus group said, "Make it clear as to what they are up to and why money should keep going there because as they talk about budget cuts and whatnot, I get angrier and angrier about the cuts in education."

Conclusions

RQ 1: What Constitutes the Public's Perceptions of Brand Salience for the Florida Forest Service?

FFS suffered from a lack of brand salience, which can be more important than brand image for success (Anscheutz, 1997; Ehrenberg et al., 1997; Miller & Berry, 1998). Without this salience, there is not the automatic selection of FFS in the minds of the public for the protection of Florida forests and becomes especially important considering public organizations' need for public support, especially in political environment that seeks to cut public spending (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995; Pillow, 2011). Three themes emerged for the first research question: the importance of forests, brand identifiers, and external communications.

Forests were salient and valued, similar to results by Schmithüsen and Wild-Eck (2000). Organizations that ensured the long-term health of forests were also valued, but a positive brand image may not be as important for success as brand salience (Miller & Berry, 1998). Protecting Florida forests could be a message for FFS to improve brand salience. This basic message encompasses the various duties of FFS, which is important for public organizations (Hoggett, 2006; Wæraas, 2008, 2010). Focusing on a specific message will improve the likelihood of brand and marketing success (Thorson & Moore, 1996; Walvis, 2008; Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994).

The second theme was FFS's brand identifiers affecting salience. The name "Florida Forest Service" was used to identify the context (i.e., forests) and location (i.e., Florida) of FFS's work, though this was not enough for all participants. The logo also affected salience of the FFS brand. Like the inclusion of "Forest" in the organization's name, the inclusion of trees helped identify the context of FFS's work, though the chosen trees were not always perceived positively. The logo being shaped like a badge also evoked feelings of authority from many of the participants. Other public organizations should be aware that the public's perceptions of the organizations' purposes and activities can be affected by elements included in brand identifiers.

The third theme of external communications of FFS was an important aspect of the brand salience problem. The lack of awareness prevents salience because it is necessary to be in the public's

environment for salience to occur (Ehrenberg et al., 1997; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Miller & Berry, 1998; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Part of this process of improving brand salience through external communications was the choice of communication media, which need to be chosen appropriately for effective communication campaigns (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). Internet-based communications were preferred to reach the public directly by many, but not all members of the public will have access to the Internet.

Another avenue of improving brand salience through external communications was mascots. The success of Smokey Bear as an advertising campaign has been documented (Capello, 1999; Donovan & Brown, 2007), and was exhibited with Smokey Bear being salient with participants when discussing forests, as was Yogi Bear. FFS did not have a clear mascot. FFS can use Smokey Bear, but Smokey Bear is also associated with the United States Forest Service, as well as other state forest services (Smokey Bear, n.d.). Along with the risk of blurred lines of differentiation of sharing a mascot, there is another downside of using Smokey Bear as a mascot. Like those who have questioned whether the success of the Smokey Bear advertising campaign was beneficial to forests (Brown, 1999; Dods, 2002; Donovan & Brown, 2007; Jacobson, Monroe, & Marynowski, 2001), a Gainesville participant questioned the unintended outcomes of Smokey Bear's success. Smokey Bear also has a significant amount of brand equity, which is basically the strength of the brand with stakeholders (Franzen & Moriarty, 2007), because of the success of Smokey Bear campaign (Capello, 1999; Donovan & Brown, 2007). It is likely that it will be difficult for any developed mascot to out-compete Smokey Bear in terms of garnering brand salience because of this pre-existing brand equity.

RQ 2: What Constitutes the Public's Perceptions of Brand Differentiation for the Florida Forest Service?

Like brand salience, FFS also suffered from a lack of brand differentiation. A lack of differentiation could decrease FFS's brand success because brands are more likely to be chosen if they are relevant and distinct from competing brands (Walvis, 2008). The lack of brand salience hurt brand differentiation (Carpenter, Glazer, & Nakamoto, 1994; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Because awareness was low for FFS and its activities, it hurt FFS's ability to differentiate its brand from similar organizations. The themes that emerged were forests and natural resources organizations and communications.

The first theme was FFS's activities relating to forests and natural resources, which could aid and hurt brand differentiation. While viewing the organizations in a broader natural resources context hurt the differentiation of FFS's brand from the other organizations, concentrating on the care of forests helped differentiate FFS's brand from the other organizations. By focusing on a message of protecting forests to increase salience, FFS can also use that salient brand characteristic to improve brand differentiation and generate more favorable evaluations by the public through communications (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Thorson & Moore, 1996).

The second theme of communications, or lack thereof, also affected differentiation. As with brand salience, a lack of external communications hurt brand differentiation because of low awareness of FFS and its activities. The new name also affected differentiation, though the valence of the effect varied. It aided differentiation by identifying the context and location of FFS's work, but it hindered differentiation because many of the similar organizations were also included "Service" in the title. This could be beneficial. While brands need to stand apart from competitors to be successful, they also have to be similar enough to be considered part of the same brand category when the public

makes decisions (Kornberger, 2010). For the logo, the trees helped give context to the organization, which could aid differentiation, but the inclusion of "Agriculture & Consumer Services" could hurt differentiation. The inclusion of FDACS caused confusion for some participants, though it helped others understand the organizational structure if they knew that FDACS was the parent organization. In cases of organizational hierarchy, the inclusion of the parent brand can cause confusion.

Recommendations
For Public Organizations' Branding Efforts

The first recommendation is to ensure that the organization's brand is present in the public's external environment to increase salience, which is necessary for brand success and differentiation (Anscheutz, 1997; Ehrenberg et al., 1997; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Miller & Berry, 1998). By being present in the public's environment, the transfer of salience to the public's agenda can occur for public organizations (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; McCombs, 2005). This is complicated, though, because external communications could be perceived as financial mismanagement, which affects perceptions of the brand's integrity (Whelan et al., 2010). One opportunity is during wildfires when FFS's activities are more public. Efforts can be made to increase FFS's presence in the media. This is not as direct as other options, but it may not be perceived as a mismanagement of money. Another option may be public service announcements. They could increase the presence of public organizations' brands in the public environment without being perceived negatively because the campaigns would be supporting the mission of the organizations, not just promoting the organization (Whelan et al., 2010). A variety of communication media are needed to reach different audience segments.

Because of the financial climate of Florida and the risk for negative perceptions of certain external communications by public organizations (Pillow, 2011; Whelan et al., 2010), public organizations like FFS need to effectively leverage the resources they already have to promote the brand, which is addressed by the rest of the recommendations. The second recommendation is to create a salient message and brand identifiers. A salient message will create a network of perceptual connections to the brand for members of the public, which increases the likelihood of being remembered when the public makes decisions on which organizations to support and which receive budget cuts (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995; Pillow, 2011; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2006). Improving the salience of the organization can also help differentiate the organization (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Messages should use specific words that will create connections reflective of the organization's actions, creating message salience (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2006; Wæraas, 2010). It is also important for brand identifiers to include salient elements. When participants described their opinions of the brand identifiers, they focused on specific elements. For DOF/FFS, the names elicited different types of reactions, including helpfulness because of "Service" in FFS and authoritarianism because of "Division" in DOF. Organizations should be mindful of word choice when making the decision to change or develop an organization's name because of potential associations. For logos and visual identifiers, other public organizations should be aware the public's knowledge or lack thereof can affect perceptions of what should be included in the logo and other visual identifiers. State public organizations should try to include state-specific elements in logos to help build a connection with members of the state's public to improve brand salience.

The third recommendation is to test messages and brand identifiers before implementation because they affect brand perceptions through their included or excluded elements. Testing can reduce the risk of unwanted perceptions being associated with the messages or brand identifiers. Short-term

costs are outweighed by the long-term risks of implementing the wrong messages or brand identifiers.

The fourth recommendation is for public organizations to consistently use messages and brand identifiers. Focusing on a specific, consistent message could improve success because it is more likely to be remembered by the public (Thorson & Moore, 1996; Walvis, 2008; Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). The message must also encompass the scope of the organizations' activities (Hoggett, 2006; Wæraas, 2008, 2010). Similar to the message, consistent use of the brand identifiers is more likely to be remembered (Walvis, 2008). The use of separate logos for individual campaigns and programs could dilute the brand because it distracts from main brand identifiers (Loken et al., 2010). It is important for there to be communications personnel to monitor the use of brand identifiers and messages to prevent brand dilution.

For Future Research

The first recommendation for future research is to address the transferability of the findings to other settings, including other public organizations, context of work (e.g.s, wildlife conservation, park service, etc.), and locations (i.e., other states). The study addressed only one organization, and while other organizations were brought up in the discussions, more in-depth discussions of other organizations are necessary to understand the transferability of the findings. Not all public organizations are the same (Laing, 2003; Scrivens, 1991; Wettenhall, 2003), and as such, multiple organizations need to be addressed to better understanding branding of public organizations.

Along the same lines, the second recommendation is to conduct quantitative research to address themes of brand salience and differentiation of public organizations to further the area of research through generalizable findings. Future research should expand to larger samples and populations. The results from this study indicate a lack of presence in the participants' external environment adversely affected FFS's brand salience and differentiation. Future research can address the interaction between brand presence (or lack thereof) and the salience and differentiation for public organizations' brands.

The third recommendation is to address perceptions of public organizations' communications. FFS lacked brand salience and differentiation, which could be improved by increasing communications, but communications that solely promote the organization could be perceived negatively (Whelan et al., 2010). On the other hand, participants wanted to know public organizations' purposes. These are conflicting desires. It needs to be determined on a larger scale what the public's perceptions are for public organizations' external communications. Because public organizations depend on public support, these public perceptions are necessary for the continued vitality of public organizations (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995).

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