

I or We: The Persuasive Effects of Typeface Shapes: An Abstract



Yi-Fen Liu

Abstract When designing communication materials, practitioners consider not only what words will be used but also how the words will be presented. It is because a word conveys meanings in terms of what it speaks as well as in terms of how it speaks through color, layout, typeface, etc. Although much academic attention has been paid on several physical properties of typeface, understandings about typeface shapes are scarce. In contrast, it is a common practice to merely change typeface shapes in renewing brand logos. To close the gap between academic and practice world, this research aims to investigate how typeface shapes affect persuasion of different types of communication messages. In addition, this research further compares the above effects across English, traditional Chinese, and simplified Chinese. Based on social identity theory (Turner 1985), shape literature (e.g., Jiang et al. 2015), and writing system literature (e.g., Pan and Schmitt 1996), this research suggests consumers will perceive group-oriented (individual-oriented) information presented in circular (angular) typefaces more persuasive than in angular (circular) typefaces. Moreover, these effects will be strongest in traditional Chinese, followed by simplified Chinese, and weakest in English.

Two experimental studies were conducted to testify these hypotheses in the contexts of brand names, name cards, and advertising. Results show that typeface shape indeed influences consumers' perceptions toward messages. Study 1 reveals both in the contexts of brand name and name card, when natural-meaning names are presented with circular typefaces, consumers perceive these names as more group-oriented; but when the names are presented with angular typefaces, they are perceived as more individual-oriented. In addition, these effects are more salient in traditional Chinese than in English. Study 2 demonstrates group-oriented appeals

Y.-F. Liu (✉)

National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
e-mail: yifenliu@nkfust.edu.tw

induce higher persuasion when presented in circular than in angular typefaces, while individual-oriented appeals are more persuasive when presented in angular than in circular typefaces. Further, the effects are stronger in traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese than in English.

References Available Upon Request