

Brand Salience and Brand Differentiation of the Florida Forest Service

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Abstract

Focus groups were conducted with members of the Florida public in four cities to determine what factors affected brand saliency and differentiation for the Florida Forest Service (FFS). Participants also evaluated the name and logo of the organization. For factors affecting brand saliency and differentiation, there were three themes: forests and natural resources, brand identifiers, and external communications. Focusing on forests was an area that could improve saliency and differentiation, but there was a lack of differentiation between FFS and similar natural resources organizations. The name and logo of FFS were the brand identifiers and received mixed reactions from participants. For external communications, the participants lacked awareness of FFS, which hurt saliency and differentiation. For the aspects of being a public organization that affected the FFS brand, there were two themes: financial responsibility and protection and aid. Participants did not want public money going to an organization unnecessarily or to be misspent by the organization. The participants valued public organizations that protect people and resources, as well as organizations whose services aid people. FFS needs to increase brand salience and differentiation. One recommendation was to focus on the message of protecting forests, which was valued and could improve saliency and differentiation. Another recommendation was to increase the presence of the FFS brand in the public's external environment. It was also recommended that research be conducted to address perceptions of communications by public organizations and the transferability of the current study's findings to other public organizations.

Key Words: branding, brand salience, brand differentiation, public organizations, natural resources, forestry