

Adaptation of Global Wordmark Logos to Sinhala Script

VIMUKTHI. S.^{1*} and SAMARAWICKRAMA. S.²

^{1,2} Department of Integrated Design, Faculty of Architecture, University of Moratuwa, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

¹sajithavimukthi4@gmail.com²sumanthris@uom.lk

Abstract – Global brands increasingly engage diverse audiences through bilingual branding, yet adaptation of wordmark logos into non-Latin scripts remains limited in Sri Lanka. Examine how multinational companies use bilingual wordmarks as a brand. In the international context, especially China and Middle East countries using bilingual wordmarks is a common site yet, in Sri Lanka it shows a void in numbers and is limited to selected brands. Nevertheless, this research was conducted to understand the visual adaptation of multilingual logos (Latin) to the native scripts of Sri Lanka (special focus to Sinhala script). This study was conducted using the visual survey method by comparing the visual content of multinational logos (Latin representation) with its locally adopted Sinhala logo. Using a visual survey methodology, logos were documented through photography, scanning, and digital recreation, then examined comparatively across Latin and Sinhala versions. Results indicate that while typographic adaptations vary, consistent use of color, layout, and structural elements ensures recognition and cultural relevance. The selection of logotypes is limited to wordmarks, to analyze their visual elements and anatomy of letterforms as the main parameter in both scripts. This is discussed through three case studies: Signal, Marmite and Sunlight, owned by Unilever PLC to identify how selected visual elements are incorporated in the Sinhala wordmarks to communicate visual harmony and uniformity. The survey revealed that certain wordmarks incorporate both the typographic and visual elements as one unit yet, most wordmarks do not. In conclusion, it was evident that the visual adaptation process of wordmarks requires visual harmony to gain uniformity. This research was conducted to explore and document the application of the visual elements within a wordmark in multi script required to adapt multinational wordmark logos into bilingual formats by incorporating Sinhala script, ensuring consistency with the brand's global visual identity while addressing the cultural and linguistic needs of the Sri Lankan market.

Keywords: Bilingual Branding; Wordmark Adaptation; Sinhala Typography; Visual Harmony; Brand Identity; Cross-Cultural Design.

*Contact: Phone +94-715372223

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31705/IDR.2025.10>

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I. Introduction

Logos are a cornerstone of brand identity, acting as a visual representation that bridges the connection between brands and consumers. As a fundamental element in branding, logos combine colors, shapes, and typography to create a unique and memorable identity. Their simplicity and distinctiveness are critical for effective communication, delivering messages and evoking emotional responses in a way that resonates with the human brain. In competitive markets where numerous brands offer similar products, a well-designed, visually impactful logo becomes a powerful tool to differentiate and establish a strong presence. Moreover, as global brands increasingly engage with diverse audiences, the integration of subcultures through design has gained prominence. Bilingual logos, which incorporate native scripts and cultural elements, are a prime example of how brands adapt to regional contexts. By embracing cultural and linguistic diversity, such logos foster deeper connections and loyalty between brands and their consumers, enhancing both recognition and relevance. This study aims to explore the visual adaptation of global wordmarks into Sinhala script within the Sri Lankan market, focusing on maintaining typographic harmony and cultural relevance. To explore and document the application of the visual elements within a wordmark in multi script required to adapt multinational wordmark logos into bilingual formats by incorporating Sinhala script, ensuring consistency with the brand's global visual identity while addressing the cultural and linguistic needs of the Sri Lankan market.

II. Research Problem

The research problem centers on the challenges multinational brands face when adapting their global wordmark logos to Sinhala script in the Sri Lankan market. While bilingual branding is essential for engaging diverse linguistic audiences, many brands struggle to maintain visual consistency, brand identity retention, and typographic harmony when transitioning from Latin to Sinhala script. Differences in letterforms, proportions, and design aesthetics often lead to incoherent adaptations that weaken brand recognition and consumer trust. Unlike global markets where bilingual wordmarks are common, Sri Lanka has limited examples of effective Sinhala adaptations, making it difficult for brands to establish a strong localized presence. This study aims to identify the key visual and typographic challenges in this adaptation process that ensure a cohesive and culturally relevant brand identity while preserving the integrity of the original wordmark.

III. Literature Review

The literature review explores key concepts related to branding, wordmark logos, and bilingual branding, focusing on their role in brand identity and consumer engagement. Branding is examined as a strategic tool for differentiation, emphasizing the importance of visual identity elements such as logos, typography, and color schemes in shaping brand perception by Wheeler (2009). Wordmark logos, which rely entirely on typography, are analyzed in terms of their structural components, readability, and emotional impact, by Melewar & Saunders (1999) with examples from major global brands like Google, Coca-Cola, and FedEx.

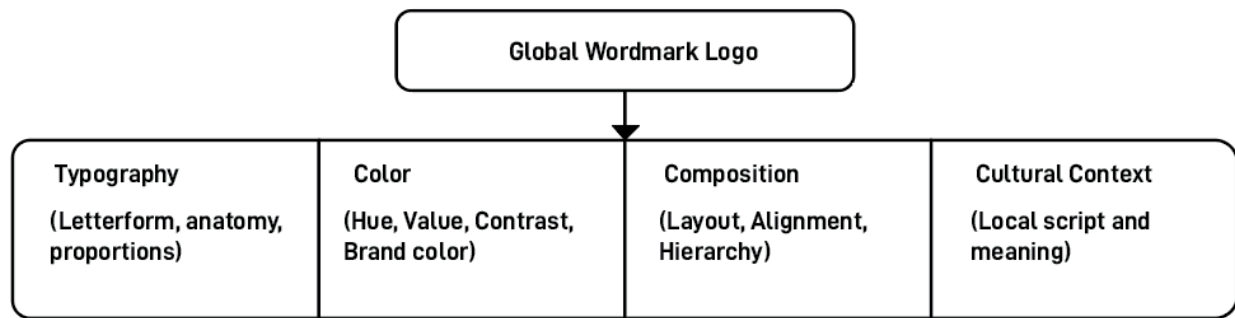
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The discussion on bilingual branding highlights its growing importance in multicultural and multilingual markets, where brands must integrate native scripts while maintaining global recognition. Studies emphasize the design challenges of bilingual wordmarks, particularly in ensuring visual harmony, typographic balance, and cultural appropriateness when transitioning between scripts (Airey, 2010). In the Sri Lankan context, Sinhala typography presents unique challenges due to its rounded letterforms, varying baseline heights, and script complexity, making direct adaptations from Latin script difficult.

Figure 1
Elements of Wordmark Logs



The review also explores how multinational brands like Unilever, HSBC, and Coca-Cola have approached bilingual branding in various regions, providing insights into successful strategies and design shortcomings. It concludes that while bilingual logos are essential for cultural inclusivity and market penetration, their effectiveness depends on typographic consistency, proportional adjustments, and brand-specific visual identity elements (Bigman, 2014). This research builds upon these findings to evaluate the adaptation of global wordmark logos to Sinhala script, aiming to bridge the gap between global branding strategies and local linguistic needs. Although global brands increasingly adopt bilingual wordmarks, research on typographic adaptation to non-Latin scripts – especially Sinhala – remains scarce. This gap highlights the need to evaluate visual consistency and harmony across scripts.

IV. Methodology

This research investigates the role of wordmarks in branding, with a particular focus on their adaptation in multilingual contexts through bilingual logos. The study begins with a literature review to define the concept of wordmarks, highlighting their significance in brand recognition, differentiation, and emotional resonance. It explores the importance of bilingual branding in fostering cultural inclusivity and linguistic diversity. By examining academic literature and industry reports, the study establishes the foundational principles of wordmark design and their relevance in multilingual markets.

Case Selection - Three global brands – Signal, Marmite, and Sunlight – were selected for comparative analysis. All three are under Unilever Sri Lanka, ensuring a shared corporate design philosophy while representing distinct brand personalities: Signal – functional and clinical (oral

*Contact: Phone +94-715372223

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care), Marmite – bold and cultural (food condiment), Sunlight – domestic and emotional (household detergent). This variation allowed the study to examine how typography, color, and layout adaptation strategies vary within a single multinational framework. To analyze the visual application of bilingual wordmarks, three logos from Unilever brand, Signal, Marmite, and Sunlight were selected. Each logo is studied in both its original Latin-based form and its bilingual Sinhala adaptation. Logos were sourced directly from product packaging. The study employs photography, scanning, and digital recreation to document the logos, ensuring accuracy for detailed analysis. The visual elements of each logo, including typography, color schemes, alignment, and script integration, are meticulously examined to assess their contribution to brand identity and communication.

The findings are summarized through comparative analysis of the multi-script logos. This includes an evaluation of the logos in both original brand colors and grayscale formats to assess their effectiveness in conveying consistent brand identity across languages. By combining insights from the literature, observational analysis, and comparative evaluation, the study provides an understanding of the design elements in bilingual wordmarks. It offers valuable insights for branding practices in multilingual contexts, demonstrating how thoughtful design can strengthen brand identity and cultural resonance.

Table 1

Framework of the visual analysis (research methodology)

	Objectives	Method	Details
01	Explain wordmark within Brand	Literature review	What a word mark is
02	Discuss the bilingual branding and logo adaptations	Literature review	Importance of wordmarks in bilingual branding
03	Analysis of the application	Selection of the cases.	Literature, Observation
		Observation of the design elements within wordmark.	Photography recording; Documentation through photography
		Recreating digitally to sum up the design elements of the three cases.	Visual exploration of both script logos
		Analyzing based on each element.	Comparative analysis of multi script logos

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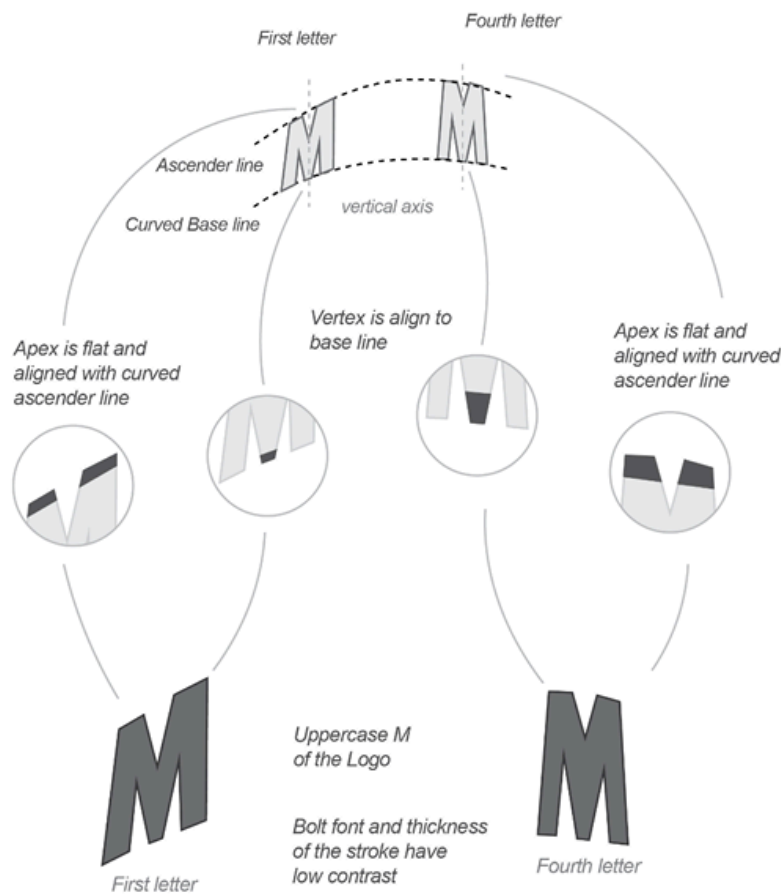
V. Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of the Signal, Marmite, and Sunlight logos in their Latin and Sinhala-scripted versions reveals how global brands effectively integrate cultural and linguistic diversity into their visual branding. Each logo maintains its global identity while adapting to local contexts, showcasing the importance of consistency, cultural relevance, and functionality in bilingual branding strategies.

In terms of typography, all three logos emphasize designs to ensure clarity and legibility. The Signal logo incorporates italicized Latin characters in its original design and rounded, Italic Sinhala letters in its bilingual version, maintaining consistency and readability. The Marmite logo reflects a bold, square shape uppercase sans-serif typeface in the Latin version and adapts to Sinhala's bold, rounded and mono-linear characteristics in the local version. Similarly, the Sunlight logo aligns with characters like pointed ends and omitted from characters like iris eye, the brand's vibrant identity is the same in both logos.

Figure 2

Typographic analysis of Letter "M" in Marmite logo



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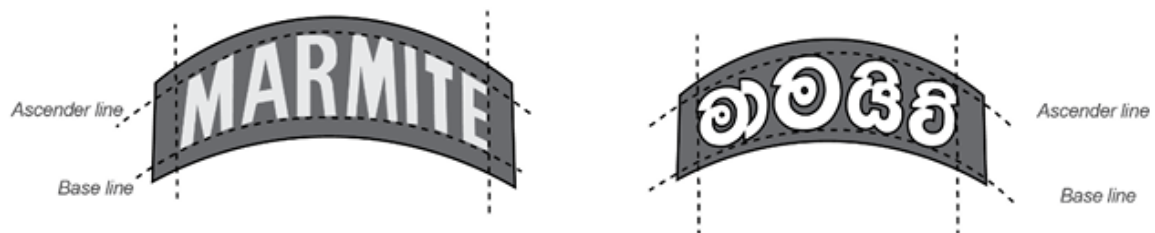
The shape and layout of the logos further demonstrate adaptability. The horizontal design of the Signal logo aligns seamlessly with the rectangular packaging, ensuring uniformity across both versions. Marmite's curved wordmark and banner design mirror the rounded shape of the product jar, maintaining harmony in both Latin and Sinhala adaptations. The Sunlight logo integrates curved and symmetrical elements in both versions, reinforcing themes of energy and cleanliness while ensuring balance and visual appeal.

Color and supportive graphics play a crucial role in creating cohesive visual identities. The Signal logo consistently uses blue, white, and red, emphasizing trust and hygiene across both versions. Marmite features a bold red banner against a yellow background, symbolizing boldness and vibrancy, with black outlines for enhanced contrast. Sunlight incorporates bright yellow and sunburst graphics, symbolizing energy and freshness, ensuring consistency across its Latin and Sinhala-scripted versions. Designers have used the same color palettes in both logos.

The bilingual adaptations of these logos demonstrate cultural adaptation and inclusivity. By incorporating Sinhala script into their designs, the logos establish deeper connections with local audiences while maintaining their global identity. This ensures the logos resonate with Sri Lankan consumers while maintaining visual harmony.

Figure 3

Layout of the marmite latin logo and Sinhala scripted logo



The analysis highlights the importance of visuals in bilingual branding. The consistent use of typography, colors, and layouts across both versions ensures recognition and functionality. Bilingual adaptations enhance accessibility, trust, and emotional connections with local audiences, affirming the effectiveness of culturally inclusive branding in strengthening consumer relationships in multicultural markets.

Future research can explore how Sinhala logo adaptations affect how people see and recognize global brands in Sri Lanka. It can also compare other local languages such as Tamil to understand how different scripts influence design harmony. Further studies could test how people visually

*Contact: Phone +94-715372223

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31705/IDR.2025.10>

respond to these bilingual logos and develop practical design guidelines to help global companies create more effective and culturally balanced wordmarks.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31705/IDR.2025.10>