



Consumer Interpretations of Kia's 2021 Rebranding Among Baby Boomers and Millennials

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ABSTRACT

Title: Consumer Interpretations of Kia's 2021 Rebranding Among Baby Boomers and Millennials

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This dissertation explores how consumers interpret Kia's 2021 logo redesign and wider brand relaunch, and whether these interpretations differ between Baby Boomers and Millennials. The study focuses on how the way they make meaning around the new visual identity connects to key customer-based brand equity dimensions, using generational cohort theory as a comparative basis. An exploratory interpretivist qualitative design was chosen, combining two focus groups (one with each generation; 6 participants each), complemented with semi-structured interviews. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

Three cross-cohort themes emerged. First, nostalgia for Kia is weak in both cohorts, and the brand is considered to have limited visual heritage to protect, however, Baby Boomers define tradition mainly as reliability and integrity. Millennials describe heritage as something earned through current performance and compare Kia's practical heritage to prestige brands. Second, the redesign is considered a credible sign of innovation, but acceptance is. Baby Boomers stress about readability and inclusiveness, and Millennials are more excited about tech improvements. Third, trust and loyalty are conditional for both cohorts: Baby Boomers require long-term proof of reliability and service behavior and Millennials' loyalty is more driven by value and ecosystem.

Overall, the logo redesign can support repositioning, but only when the new look is matched consistently with product quality, service, and ecosystem performance, and when communication matches the cohorts' expectations.

Keywords: Logo Redesign, Brand Relaunch, Customer-Based Brand Equity, Generational Cohort Theory, Automotive Industry

SUMÁRIO

Título: Interpretações dos consumidores sobre a reformulação da marca Kia em 2021 entre os baby boomers e a geração Y

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Esta dissertação explora como os consumidores interpretam o redesenho do logótipo da Kia em 2021 e o relançamento mais amplo da marca, e se essas interpretações diferem entre Baby Boomers e Millennials. O estudo analisa como o significado atribuído à nova identidade visual se relaciona com dimensões-chave do brand equity baseado no cliente, usando a teoria das coortes geracionais como base comparativa. Foi adotado um desenho qualitativo exploratório e interpretativista, combinando dois focus groups (um por geração; 6 participantes cada) e entrevistas semiestruturadas. Os dados foram analisados através de análise temática.

Emergiram três temas transversais às coortes. Primeiro, a nostalgia em relação à Kia é fraca e a marca é vista como tendo pouco património visual a proteger; ainda assim, os Baby Boomers associam “tradição” sobretudo a fiabilidade e integridade, enquanto os Millennials entendem “herança” como algo conquistado pelo desempenho atual e comparam a herança prática da Kia a marcas de prestígio. Segundo, o redesenho é considerado um sinal credível de inovação, mas a aceitação é condicionada: os Baby Boomers enfatizam legibilidade e inclusividade, enquanto os Millennials mostram maior entusiasmo por avanços tecnológicos. Terceiro, confiança e lealdade são condicionais: os Baby Boomers exigem provas de longo prazo de fiabilidade e comportamento do serviço, e os Millennials tendem a basear a lealdade em valor e ecossistema.

No geral, o redesenho pode apoiar o reposicionamento, desde que o novo visual seja acompanhado de forma consistente por qualidade do produto, serviço e desempenho do ecossistema, com comunicação alinhada às expectativas de cada coorte.

Palavras-chave: Redesenho do logótipo, relançamento da marca, valor da marca baseado no cliente, teoria da coorte geracional, indústria automóvel

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AI DISCLAIMER

This thesis was refined by using AI tools: Gemini by Google and ChatGPT by OpenAI. The AI usage was restricted to limited usage which can be found in detail in chapter 3.10. All content, analysis, and conclusions are my own work, with AI support only taken to a certain level.

PREFACE / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In memory of my Father.

This dissertation is dedicated to you. You always believed in me no matter what, and although you cannot see me completing this degree, I always have you with me and I carry your strength. Your faith in me became my courage on the days I did not have any, and I hope this work makes you proud.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge **myself**, for not giving up, for continuing to show up, for staying committed to this goal, and for putting in the hard work even when it was difficult. This dissertation is proof that persistence, belief, and effort do not just fade away.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, many companies have redesigned their logos as a part of a broader repositioning. From a brand equity perspective, these changes are not just cosmetic, as a logo is a central point that stimulates associations, so a redesign can strengthen but also weaken customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991; Müller, Kocher, & Crettaz, 2013; Walsh, Winterich, & Mittal, 2010). In the automotive sector, where buying cycles are long and trust is essential, understanding how consumers understand these changes is especially important.

This dissertation focuses on Kia's 2021 global brand relaunch. With a new logo, slogan, updated design language and a sharp shift towards innovation and EVs, Kia's goal is to move away from its budget image and ask consumers to look at the brand with fresh eyes (Kia Global Media Center, 2021; Kia.com, New Brand Strategy, 2025). Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model and Aaker's (1991) brand equity dimensions served as the main framework for exploring how this relaunch translates into brand associations, perceived quality, trust and loyalty.

Generational cohort theory suggests that people who grew up in different historical periods may not respond in the same way to the same branding stimulus (Mannheim, 1952; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Earlier work shows that Baby Boomers often prioritize reliability, quality and established symbols, however, Millennials value more innovation, modern aesthetics, authenticity and social legitimacy (Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Williams & Page, 2011; Moore & Carpenter, 2008b).

With this background, the goal of this dissertation is to understand how two generational cohorts (Baby Boomers and Millennials) make sense of Kia's 2021 logo redesign and brand relaunch, and how their interpretations affect the key elements of brand equity. This research analyses how each group remembers Kia's past image and tradition, how they react to the new logo and design language, and how these reactions relate to brand equity.

Generation is not used as a simple age label but as a "cohort lens": Baby Boomers and Millennials are considered as groups shaped by different experiences, which may lead them to value tradition, innovation and brand change differently (Mannheim, 1952; Parment, 2013). This study uses generational cohort theory as a framework to compare how each group talks about Kia's logo

redesign and how they connect it to brand associations, perceived quality, trust and loyalty (Keller, 1993; Moore & Carpenter, 2008a). With the help of focus groups, interviews and thematic analysis, this study explores how Kia's logo change can have different brand equity implications for different generations.

1.1. Significance of the Study

This dissertation is relevant for brand theory and for practice as well. Theoretically, it brings together customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991), logo-change research (e.g. Müller et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2010) and generational cohort theory (Mannheim, 1952; Parment, 2013) in one case, which shows that the same logo redesign can shape brand equity for Baby Boomers and Millennials.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Brand and Brand Relaunch

A brand is more than a name or logo: it embodies a company's identity and value proposition in the marketplace. Anholt (2010, p. 20) defines a brand as “reputation observed, reputation valued and reputation managed”, highlighting that brands shape how consumers perceive and evaluate options. Also Aaker (1991) describes brand as a combination of tangible and intangible elements (e.g. name, symbol, design, associations), which differentiate a product from its competitors. Branding can strengthen consumers' confidence, trust, and loyalty if it increases familiarity. If a brand is strong, it can reduce search costs and simplify the decision-making process by being a sign of quality and reliability (Erdem & Swait, 1998; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003).

Therefore, branding is a growing strategic process rather, than a fixed asset. As markets and consumer expectations change, companies need to adjust how they present themselves and what they offer, they must stay flexible and innovate in order to stay relevant (Kapferer, 2012). One strong format of this adaptation is a brand relaunch, which involves strategic changes in a brand's identity, positioning or communication to respond to new competitive conditions, target groups or strategic goals (Keller, 2008; Devi, 2020). Relaunches can be triggered by big changes in a company's structure or strategy (e.g. mergers and acquisitions), or can reflect declining performance (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006).

A relaunch works best when it keeps what is already positive about the brand, and also builds new sources of brand equity to fit the new context (Keller, 1999; Keller, 2008). The relaunch process usually involves changes to brand strategy, name, logo, or design to adapt to market dynamics. Aaker (2014) states that repeated reinvention is necessary to maintain competitive advantage and consumer engagement, but it must be based on a strong brand strategy.

2.2. Brand Equity

Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) define brand equity as the additional value a brand adds to a product besides the functional features it has. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as a basket of assets and liabilities:

- **Brand Awareness:** to what extent can consumers recognize and recall a brand.
- **Brand Associations:** the meanings and the attributes consumers connect to a brand.
- **Perceived Quality:** the perception of consumers of a brand's quality.
- **Brand Loyalty:** the strength of consumers' attachment and repeated purchasing behavior.

These dimensions influence how easy it is for consumers to recognize the brand, what it stands for in their minds, how the quality is judged, and also how likely they are to stick with it over time.

Keller (1993)'s consumer-centered view defines Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) which in his perspective is the effect of brand knowledge on consumers' response to marketing. In his model, brand equity is built by two main parts:

- **Brand Awareness:** consumers' ability to recognize and recall a brand.
- **Brand Image:** the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand associations.

Later studies build on these fundamental models by adding brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), brand personality (Aaker, 1997) and brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998), but most research still builds on Aaker's asset-based model and Keller's perception-based framework.

Keller's (1993) CBBE model is used to see how Kia's logo redesign shapes brand equity and how these effects differ by generational cohort as a moderator (Keller, 1993; Moore & Carpenter, 2008a).

2.3. Brand Awareness

Brand awareness determines the extent to which consumers can recognize and recall a brand, and if a brand is considered in a decision at all, therefore playing a crucial role in shaping brand equity (Keller, 1993). Awareness includes both recognition and recall.

Brand awareness is the base for customer-based brand equity and it also helps a brand come to mind and to be chosen in buying situations (Keller, 2008). Consistently, Huang and Sarigöllü

(2012) show that higher brand awareness is connected with stronger market results, like sales and market share. High awareness increases brand trust, brand salience and the likelihood that a brand will be chosen, and is connected to being more resilient to competitive pressure (Keller, 2008; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012).

In the context of a logo redesign, brand awareness can be strengthened or weakened. A well-managed redesign keeps recognizability while refreshing the identity, however, a poorly executed one can destroy recognition and create confusion (Walsh, Winterich, & Mittal, 2010). For a brand like Kia, therefore changing the logo has direct effects for how easily consumers identify the brand on the streets, in media or at dealerships.

2.4. Brand Image

Awareness ensures that a brand is noticed, and brand image shapes its meaning. Keller (1993) describes brand image as a collection of associations people attach to a brand, and these associations need to be strong, favorable and unique for the brand to stand out. A positive and consistent image supports trust, perception of value and loyalty in the long term. This means, that when a logo is redesigned, it should connect to these already existing associations and also strengthen them.

2.5. The Role of Logos

A logo is a core part of brand identity, as it is the visual representation of a brand's values, personality, and market positioning (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Logos contribute to a brand's recognition, help distinguish it from competitors, and also influence consumer perceptions (Keller, 2008). Well-designed logos can improve brand recognition and memory, and can also positively affect (liking), and this recognition is especially efficient when the logo is consistent with the other elements of the brand's identity (Kohli, Suri, & Thakor, 2002).

In the context of brand equity, a logo plays a key role in shaping brand awareness and brand image (Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model). Strong logos support higher recall rates, which increase brand awareness, and also strengthen positive brand associations together with the overall brand image (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013). Logo redesign can affect perceived

brand modernity and logo evaluations, which can then influence brand attitude and brand loyalty (Müller et al., 2013). Reactions can be different based on brand commitment, and when they are strongly committed, consumers respond more negatively to bigger changes (Walsh, Winterich, & Mittal, 2010).

Therefore, any change to a brand's logo has strong strategic consequences, as it can change consumer perceptions, affect emotional attachment and impact brand equity (Müller, Kocher, & Crettaz, 2013).

2.6. Logo Redesign and Consumer Response

Companies may update their logos as part of a wider rebranding, in order to refresh the visual style, or to support repositioning as a response to changing market conditions (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). A redesign can strengthen brand equity if it clearly communicates positioning and matches consumers' expectations, but it can also damage it if it breaks consistency or appears as not authentic (Walsh et al., 2010).

Consumers' reactions depend on the characteristics of the redesign (e.g. logo type and similarity) and the relationship between consumer and brand (brand commitment) (Müller et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2010). Consumers with strong attachment tend to be more resistant to logo change, because they connect strong emotional value to the existing brand identity (Walsh et al., 2010).

2.7. Logo Redesign and Brand Equity

A logo redesign influences many dimensions of brand equity, especially brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993). According to Müller et al. (2013), logo redesign can increase the perceptions of brand modernity, however, based on Walsh et al. (2010), bigger changes can decrease evaluations among strongly committed consumers, who prefer keeping it as is.

Research highlights multiple key factors that determine the success of a logo redesign:

1. **Consistency with Brand Identity:** For strongly committed consumers, bigger logo changes are usually evaluated more negatively, continuity in key visual elements can matter for loyal customers (Walsh et al., 2010).
2. **Consumer Involvement:** Involving customers in the redesign process, just like through surveys or gradual changes, may increase acceptance (Walsh et al., 2010).
3. **Market Trends and Industry Relevance:** Logos should align with the latest design trends and also stay authentic to the brand's core identity (Henderson & Cote, 1998).

In the context of this study, Kia's logo redesign presents an opportunity to evaluate how consumers perceive a brand transformation across different generations, from a qualitative point of view.

2.8. Generational Cohort Theory

Generational cohort theory suggests that people born around the same period ("cohort") share similar social and historical experiences, and as they experience big events at similar life stages, they can develop shared values and also attitudes (Mannheim, 1952; Strauss & Howe, 1991). This theory suggests that age alone does not explain differences well, because people in the same cohort are shaped by shared experiences during late teenage years and early adulthood. These experiences can influence values and preferences which usually remain the same over time (Schewe & Noble, 2000; Parment, 2013).

In this study, cohorts (Baby Boomers and Millennials) are treated as distinct consumer groups whose shared experiences shape how they evaluate products, brands and marketing communication (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Williams & Page, 2011; Parment, 2013).

This dissertation is written from that perspective and considers generations not as age brackets, but as shared-experience groups whose attitudes towards innovation, change and tradition might differ. It focuses on Baby Boomers and Millennials (or Generation Y), as earlier research suggests that these two cohorts often strongly differ on important brand-related aspects. Studies suggest that Baby Boomers tend to emphasize stability, quality, reliability and personal service, often showing quite strong loyalty to familiar brands and retailers (Parment, 2013). In contrast, Millennials are often described as valuing innovation, modern aesthetics and social responsibility, and also as

prioritizing authenticity and value alignment in their brand choices (Valentine & Powers, 2013; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Parment, 2013).

This study uses the generational cohort theory to compare the two groups and analyze how their different life experiences influence how they perceive Kia and respond to its logo redesign.

2.9. Generational Differences in Brand Engagement and Change

Research on generational marketing suggests that cohorts are different both in their values and in how they engage with brands and what their expectations are. Parment's (2013) study of Baby Boomers and Millennials shows, for example, that Boomers place more importance on quality, in-store service and retailer relationships, and tend to be more loyal to specific stores and service providers. However, Millennials are more focused on the product itself, image and social profiling, and are more flexible in store choice and are less loyal to retailers (Parment, 2013).

Other research on Millennials shows that they value brands that are authentic, innovative and aligned with their lifestyle and values, and that they rely strongly on digital information and peer reviews when evaluating brands (Valentine & Powers, 2013; Williams & Page, 2011). In the meantime, Baby Boomers are more likely to focus on reliability, product performance and personal service interactions (Parment, 2013; Williams & Page, 2011).

These differences show in attitudes towards brand change. Generational studies suggest that "younger" cohorts are typically more open to modern design and product innovation, however, "older" cohorts usually show stronger attachment to established brand symbols and they are more cautious with radical changes (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Parment, 2013). In Parment's (2013) work, for example, Millennial consumers are more attracted to innovative products and earlier adoption, however, Baby Boomers prefer more mature offerings and later adoption, especially when there is a high financial and physical perceived risk.

Overall, the literature suggests that generational cohort membership can moderate how they understand and respond to a logo change, which is the core assumption of this dissertation.

In this study, generational group is used as a “comparative lens” and not simply as an age variable, because shared experiences can shape values and consumer preferences (Parment, 2013). Earlier research also shows that cohorts are different in how they understand market events, which suggests that generational cohort membership can influence consumers’ evaluations (Moore & Carpenter, 2008b).

2.10. Kia and the 2021 Brand Relaunch

Kia is a South Korean car maker founded in 1944 (Kia Corporation, 2021). Over the decades, Kia became a global brand, which has been positioned mostly as affordable, practical and good value for money, especially in Europe, where it was perceived more as a budget choice.

In January 2021, Kia announced a major global brand relaunch, changing its corporate name from “Kia Motors” to “Kia”, introducing a new logo and the new brand slogan “Movement that inspires” (Kia Europe, 2025a). This relaunch created the company’s broader “Plan S” strategy, which focuses on shifting from a traditional carmaker towards electrified vehicles (EVs) and mobility services (Kia Corporation, 2021). The new visual identity is connected to the “Opposites United” design philosophy, which highlights progressive, tech-oriented design and is much more visible in recent EV models (Kia Europe, 2025b).

For Kia, the 2021 redesign was therefore not just a “logo update”, but rather a signal of a revolutionary transformation in product, technology and brand purpose. Kia’s communications highlight that the new logo and slogan are both expressing a positioning which is more ambitious, design- and innovation-led, with a focus on electric vehicles, user-centric technology and connected services (Kia Europe, 2025a, 2025b).

This makes Kia a relevant case for this dissertation. Firstly, the brand historically had a moderate, value-oriented image and not a strong prestige heritage, which is important when considering consumer nostalgia and resistance to change in logo redesigns. Second, the 2021 relaunch combines visual change (new logo and design language) with a promised change in product

strategy and brand meaning (EV focus, “Movement that inspires”). Analyzing how Baby Boomers and Millennials respond to this specific relaunch, gives a concrete way to analyze how logo change can reshape brand equity, in a context where the brand is actively trying to move from “budget” to a more modern, innovation-led positioning.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Philosophy and Approach

This research is based on an interpretivist paradigm, aiming to understand how people build up meanings around the logo redesign of Kia, and how these meanings affect brand perception and loyalty in the long term. The theory of interpretivism is based on the idea that reality is not objective and fixed, but rather built up socially and experientially. In the context of branding and generational differences, this view allows the researcher to explore how participants understand, interpret and emotionally respond to Kia's logo redesign, shaped by their unique personal and social backgrounds and identities (Bryman, 2016).

A qualitative approach is therefore chosen because it lets the researcher explore how brand-related meanings are created and negotiated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study focuses on the language participants use when they describe Kia's past image, the new logo and their trust or loyalty, and not on measuring attitudes on standardized scales. This matches Braun and Clarke's (2022) perspective of qualitative research: finding patterns of meaning across the data while staying in line with the research questions and theoretical framework. Particularly, studying Kia's logo change several years after the introduction lets us explore how unique perceptions evolved, which could not be measured easily with quantitative research.

3.2. Research Design

This research design is exploratory, comparative and qualitative. It is exploratory as there is limited existing research on how different generational groups interpret the same logo redesign in the automotive industry. It is comparative because it directly compares patterns about Baby Boomers and Millennials, considering generational groups as a possible element that shapes brand equity outcomes (Moore & Carpenter, 2008a; Parment, 2013). And it is qualitative as it relies on detailed verbal data from focus groups and in-depth interviews.

This study focuses on how Kia's 2021 logo redesign and brand relaunch are understood by the two generational groups, which according to generational research, are supposed to be different in attitudes to brands, innovation and tradition (Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013;

Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). The main goal is to understand how the same visual and strategic change is translated into brand associations, perceived quality, trust, and loyalty in each group, rather than measuring how many consumers respond in a certain way.

3.3. Rationale for Methodological Choices

A quantitative survey could have given information on the frequency of certain opinions about Kia's redesign, but it would be less able to explain how and why consumers form these opinions (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative methods like focus groups and interviews are better for exploring complex, context-dependent topics, just like trust, openness to innovation, or nostalgia, as they can catch spontaneous associations, personal stories, and also group discussions which would be missed in multiple-choice or standardized survey questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2022).

For this research, this dual qualitative approach has been chosen, as it offers both breadth (through the focus group interactions) and depth (through personal in-depth interviews) in understanding how Baby Boomers and Millennials perceive and emotionally process Kia's rebranding, and therefore its logo redesign. Furthermore, as the research is conducted several years after the relaunch (and therefore the logo re-design), it is able to capture not only the *initial* consumer responses, but also the *long-term, lasting* impacts, and how these attitudes may have developed or shifted.

3.4. Data Collection Methods #1: Focus Groups (Appendix D)

Focus groups were conducted in this study to explore how consumers co-construct meanings around Kia's logo redesign in a social setting. The group setting helps people stimulate memories and remember them, share opinions and discover what they agree or disagree on. This supports the idea that consumers often create, strengthen, or question their opinions within a social setup (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1997). By sharing stories with each other and reflecting together, participants can recall certain details or emotions.

During the focus groups, logo stimuli were shown (**Appendix F**).

For this research, two focus groups were conducted:

- One with **Baby Boomers**, and
- One with **Millennials**.

Each group included 6 participants from purposive sampling to ensure they had enough familiarity with the Kia brand and the 2021 logo redesign (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were recruited through LinkedIn groups, car owner forums, and social media platforms that target the relevant generational groups.

A semi-structured guide supported the open discussion regarding: (1) initial reactions and emotions, (2) current perceptions several years later, (3) views on heritage, innovation, and change, and (4) loyalty, trust, and long-term relationships.

Focus groups also observe peer influence, consensus building and disagreement, which helps reveal the shared cultural dimension of brand perception (Wilkinson, 1998).

3.5. Data Collection Methods #1: In-Depth Interviews (Appendix E)

To complement the focus groups, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 participants from each group. Interviews allow more personal conversations and deeper exploration, where participants might feel more comfortable sharing complex feelings, sensitive experiences or unique views which they might not express in a group setup (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Seidman, 2019).

During the interviews, logo stimuli were shown (**Appendix F**).

Interview participants were recruited using the same purposive sampling criteria and the same channels as focus groups. The aim was to talk with individuals who were familiar with Kia and aware of the 2021 logo redesign, but outside the group setting.

The interview guide followed the same structure and core questions as the focus group guide, but the one-to-one setup allowed for more personal depth.

By combining focus groups and interviews, the research reaches both breadth and depth: focus groups provide insights into social norms and shared meanings, ideas, while interviews can give a deeper look into personal stories and the unique thoughts.

3.6. Procedures for Transcription and Ethics

All sessions were transcribed with the help of the built-in AI transcription assistant in Microsoft Teams, to ensure accuracy for the analysis. Participation was completely voluntary, and everyone was given informed consent before the research which they had to sign. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and codes were used in all transcripts and reports. Participants could withdraw at any stage of the study.

3.7. Sampling and Recruitment

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who are most likely to provide useful and relevant insights. This non-probability approach is common in qualitative research, where the goal is to understand the underlying thought patterns of consumers, rather than generalizability (Palinkas et al., 2015). Within each group, diversity was reached by a mix of genders, professional backgrounds and levels of familiarity with Kia.

3.8. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2022) and as described further in Willig and Stainton-Rogers' (2017) SAGE Handbook. Thematic analysis was chosen for this study as it offers the possibility for a flexible and precise way of identifying and interpreting patterns and meanings in qualitative datasets, and at the same time keeping the research questions and theoretical framework in focus. In this study, the analysis focused on what participants explicitly said, but interpreted through the lens of brand equity and generational cohort theory.

The anonymous transcripts were uploaded to an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool, which I used as a neutral language software support to organize the raw data. Based on my pre-defined deductive codebook (**Appendix A**) (developed from the brand equity and generational constructs in the literature review), I asked the tool to analyze the text, segment it based on the codes and export the

material into an Excel spreadsheet. Like this, the first structuring of the dataset already reflected the main theoretical dimensions (perceived quality, trust, loyalty, etc.). All coded segments and patterns were then checked, corrected and interpreted by me, and the final themes were developed based on Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis approach and its six phases.

Step 1 & 2: Familiarization with the Data and Generating Initial Codes

In line with Braun and Clarke's (2022) first two phases, I began by reading and re-reading all focus group and interview transcripts to gain a better understanding of them. During this stage, I corrected minor transcription errors, cleaned verbal fillers and also made notes.

The coding process followed a deductive approach. Before analyzing the data, I developed a codebook based on the brand equity and generational research from the literature review. This deductive codebook can be reviewed in **Appendix A**. The anonymous transcripts were then uploaded to an AI tool, which I used as a neutral language software to analyze the data and apply these pre-defined codes, and link them to relevant quotes. The coded output was exported into an Excel spreadsheet, where each extract was organized by code, cohort and topic, which I manually checked and adjusted if needed.

Step 3: Searching for Themes

After the deductive coding was completed, I moved to Braun and Clarke's (2022) third phase: searching for themes. At this stage, the goal was to move beyond individual codes and to identify broader patterns that could capture how each generational group made sense of the redesign.

First, I reviewed the coded spreadsheet and then asked AI to create written summaries of each code (topic) for each cohort. These AI-generated analyses (**Appendix C**) were based on the coded extracts and they helped me see how ideas clustered together. They were not treated as final themes, but as a starting point for my own thematic decisions.

Working with the coded data and these summaries, I identified three overarching themes for each generational cohort based on the deductive codes and how they naturally grouped together:

- **Theme 1:** combination of Brand Nostalgia and Attachment to Tradition.

- **Theme 2:** combination of Perceived Innovation, Openness to New Design, Resistance to Change and Emotional Response to the Logo.
- **Theme 3:** combination of Trust and Brand Loyalty.

These three higher-level themes emerged for both Baby Boomers and Millennials, even though the actual content is different for each theme. This parallel structure of each group made it possible later on to conduct a cross-cohort comparison of how the two generations are different in their brand equity elements. All final decisions regarding what was considered a theme, how topics were merged and how they were labelled were made by me, drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2022) guidelines and the goals of my research, and AI was used only as a supportive function (chapter 3.9).

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

Afterwards I reviewed the candidate themes at two levels: first, I checked if the coded data within each theme created a consistent pattern. Second, I analyzed the themes in relation to the whole dataset for each generational group to see if the high-level themes captured the main stories. This, in the end made me merge overlapping areas and clarify the boundaries between themes so that each of them could make a unique contribution to the analysis.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes were finalized, I focused on refining what each theme was about and how it related to the other themes. For each theme, I added a short summary which clarified the key meaning, structure (subthemes) and connections to the brand equity framework and generational cohort theory (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Theme names were chosen to show this more analytical angle and not simply repeat the topic label. For example, the Baby Boomer theme on nostalgia and heritage was named "From budget past to future-focused tradition" and not simply "heritage", so that it shows the weak attachment to Kia's past and the forward-looking direction.

Step 6: Creating the Report

Finally, I created a report based on the emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2017). This included selective work as well just like choosing representative quotes and data for each subtheme and analyzing them together with interpretation, while also linking them back to the literature review on brand equity and generational differences.

A separate section was dedicated to the cross-cohort comparison between the cohorts, which analyzed how the same three higher-level themes were different across generations. Here the focus was on showing how participants talk about Kia's logo redesign and brand relaunch, as it reflects and reshapes key components of brand equity.

3.9. Researcher Position and Reflexivity

This study is shaped by my own background and interests. I am a Millennial consumer with professional experience in automotive marketing and I previously worked for Kia during its global brand relaunch. This made me particularly interested in concepts like brand image, perceived quality and generational differences, and it also inspired me to focus on Kia's 2021 relaunch for my dissertation.

At the same time, this familiarity created a risk so that I could easily assume that consumers would see the relaunch in a similar way to how I do as a marketing professional and Millennial. To reduce this risk, I did my best to keep my assumptions open to challenge. During coding and theme development, I noticed that when participants' views did not fit brand equity or generational marketing literature, I went back to the transcripts to check if my interpretations were really supported by the data.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2022) approach to thematic analysis, I consider the themes in this dissertation as the result of an active interpretive process and not as "neutral discoveries". The brand equity framework and generational cohort theory guided me during the process, but the final themes were shaped by the mix between these concepts, my own position as a researcher, and also what participants actually said in focus groups and interviews.

3.10. Use of AI Tools

Generative AI tools (mainly Gemini by Google and ChatGPT by OpenAI) were used in a supporting role at some stages of this dissertation. In all cases, I stayed responsible for the research design, the development of the deductive codebook, the interpretation of the data and the final wording of the text. AI results were never copied and pasted without a critical review, and everything was edited, checked and integrated by me.

Generative AI drafted the first version of the English abstract, which I finalized with my own words and the Portuguese version was fully AI-translated due to language barriers.

In the literature review, AI was used in two ways. First, it helped me brainstorm keywords and suggest potentially relevant books and articles on the topics that I already defined. Second, AI supported me in clarifying concepts from the academic texts I already selected and read, and in suggesting possible ways of structuring the subsections. All references were checked directly in the original articles and books.

For the data collection, I used Microsoft Teams' built-in transcription feature, which is AI-based and uses automatic speech recognition (ASR). For the data analysis, AI was used as an independent language software/tool within a deductive thematic analysis. After I developed the deductive codebook from the literature review (**Appendix A**), I uploaded the anonymous transcripts and asked AI to:

- segment and categorize the data based on my pre-defined (deductive) codes,
- connect coded data to the relevant quotes, cohorts and topics, and
- export the results into an Excel spreadsheet (**Appendix B**)

AI was also used to generate initial analyses for each code/topic and generational group (**Appendix C**). In this step, AI helped identify some recurring emergent topics (e.g. logo misreading as “KN”, social acceptability and signature lighting as identity indicators), which I then evaluated and compared to the full dataset (chapter 4.3.5). Then I manually checked, corrected and refined all AI-created codings and summaries, and identified, merged and named the final themes, following Braun and Clarke's (2022) guidelines.

In the writing and revision of the dissertation, I used AI to support language polishing, just like improving clarity and flow in the research analysis and cross-cohort comparison, suggesting alternative phrases and help to shorten very long sentences. All suggestions were revised, rewritten and integrated by me, and I made sure that the arguments, structure and interpretations reflect my own academic judgement.

Overall, AI tools were used for brainstorming, act as an independent language software to analyze a huge set of qualitative data, wording in some cases, but not to replace academic work. All analytical decisions, interpretations and final phrases in this dissertation are my own.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ANALYSIS

4.1. Themes Development: Baby Boomers

4.1.1. Theme 1: From Budget Past to Future-Focused Tradition

During the reviewing-themes phase, the initial topic-based themes “Brand Nostalgia” and “Attachment to Tradition” were combined into this single high-level theme. As mentioned above, participants talk about Kia’s past image and about tradition in a way that forms one coherent pattern rather than two clearly different ones. Both topics showed they remember Kia’s past as “budget” or “basic”, show little emotional attachment to the old logo, and redefine tradition like reliability, integrity and consistency. To maintain internal consistency within the themes and external contrast, these two topics were therefore treated as subthemes of a broader pattern: moving from a budget past towards a more future-oriented approach.

Across the Baby Boomer data, Kia’s past is not something participants want to hold on to. Brand nostalgia is generally weak or even negative: earlier images of Kia are described as “budget box” or “nothing fancy”, which do not inspire emotional attachment. Instead, they are comfortable with the brand reinventing its visual identity as long as the core qualities remain stable. The past is tolerated, but it is the future where they expect the brand to build its heritage.

Low or negative nostalgia as a baseline: the past as “budget”.

When Baby Boomers look back, Kia’s older image is often described as low-status and functional. Multiple participants remember Kia as “just a cheap car” or “the budget option” and not as something that they would have proudly chosen. They remember the brand as practical and affordable rather than aspirational. This creates a low nostalgia baseline: there are very few elements that feel like it is worth remembering from an emotional perspective. Instead of a warm memory, the old image rather represents a phase that the brand needed to grow out of. The old red oval logo fits into this picture. Emotional attachment to this old logo is minimal, it is seen as outdated, like it belongs to another era, and is linked to the time when Kia was perceived as cheap and basic. Keeping that badge would risk staying stuck in the old budget image, so there is low motivation to protect it.

Limited legacy as space for reinvention.

Because Kia is not seen as having a long, prestigious heritage in their market, participants feel that the brand has more freedom to change. Some openly compare Kia with European brands which carry a “heavy history” and therefore they must be more careful regarding their identity. The short and moderate legacy becomes a permission for reinvention: Baby Boomers are not protecting decades of tradition, but are curious to see whether the new identity indicates a credible next chapter. In this sense, the lack of a strong heritage works in favor of change. A bolder redesign is accepted as long as it refers to a more serious, modern brand.

Tradition as reliability and integrity, not old symbols.

When Baby Boomers talk about tradition, they usually connect it to how the brand behaves over time in terms of reliability, fair dealing, or standing behind the product. Tradition is “what holds up over time”, not what the badge used to look like. For them, keeping tradition means keeping the integrity and consistency in quality and service, and at the same time progressing on the surface. Design can always change, but the car should remain dependable and the company should stay honest.

The interview data confirms this future-oriented perspective of tradition. Car owners highlight that heritage will be built if Kia continues to deliver modern, reliable products in the long term. What really matters is if, in ten years, people feel that Kia has kept making good quality cars. Baby Boomers therefore care more about what Kia creates now and in the future than about protecting its past. The new logo and the design language are generally welcomed, when they match the overall level of experience. In this perspective, the rebranding is not a break from a strong past tradition, but rather a way of starting a new kind of tradition based on current performance.

4.1.2. Theme 2: Conditional Openness to Meaningful Innovation

During the reviewing phase, the topic-based themes “Perceived Innovation”, “Openness to New Design”, “Resistance to Change” and “Emotional Response to the Logo” were merged into one higher-level theme. Re-reading the coded data showed that they all described different parts of the same pattern: how Baby Boomers react to the new logo and design changes, how initial confusion

or resistance changes over time, and which conditions need to be met for them to accept innovation. To increase internal consistency and reduce overlap in the Baby Boomer dataset, these topics are considered as subthemes of a higher-level pattern of conditional openness to meaningful innovation. Overall, the data shows that this cohort is not closed to change, but actually they are willing to welcome a more bold and modern Kia if those changes feel purposeful, readable and supported by real improvements in the quality.

Emotional journey: from confusion to clarity and pride.

Across the focus group and interviews, the first reactions to the new logo design are often mixed. Participants describe surprise or confusion when they first see the badge, occasionally misreading it, and worrying that it might be too futuristic or “trying too hard”. At this early stage, there is a real but not fixed resistance: the change feels off for them until they understand what Kia is trying to actually express. As they see the logo on actual cars, in showrooms or in advertising, the emotional tone changes. The badge, exterior and interior start to feel more consistent, and participants start to feel a quiet confidence, even pride. The emotional curve is therefore not simply a like or dislike judgment, but a movement from confusion to clarity and pride once the change makes sense for them.

Modern design is a signal of innovation.

The new logo and design language are read as clear signals of innovation. Participants talk about being able to recognize a Kia more easily and describe a sharper, more confident identity, and that the headlights, shapes and the badge feel part of one modern language. They see this as a move away from “budget option” towards a more serious, design-focused position. At the same time, they state that innovation cannot be reduced to a new look only. Comments like “it is not just a logo change” communicate an expectation that this visual shift should signal bigger changes in technology, quality and service. For this group, modern design is a front door to innovation, but not the innovation itself.

Readability, inclusiveness and purposeful change are key conditions.

A repeated concern is readability and clarity. Some participants worry that the stylish badge might be hard to read or even misread, this concern fades away as they start seeing it more often in everyday situations. Besides clarity, they highlight the inclusive, approachable tone: they appreciate that Kia still “speaks to everyone” regardless of the bold changes and does not seem to speak only to younger people. Readability and tone together are considered as entry conditions: if the new look is clear and inclusive, they are willing to give it a chance.

Baby Boomers also differentiate meaningful and empty change. They say they like innovation, but only if there is a clear purpose behind it. Cosmetic updates without a connection to product, service or brand story are quickly ignored. They complement redesigns which simplify and clarify but still keep what matters, and criticize changes that feel random or just attention-seeking. For them, a good redesign keeps the core and improves how the brand is understood and experienced.

Owners’ lens: visual promises must be supported by everyday experience

For owners, the new badge and design create specific expectations. The modern look makes them expect better service, processes and overall standard. When those expectations are met through reliable performance, proper warranty handling and respectful treatment, innovation actually feels credible and improves satisfaction. If delivery does not meet expectations, the modern design might be experienced as a “broken promise”. Firstly, participants may question the redesign, but daily use can turn doubt into comfort and pride. Change is only fully accepted if the visual story is aligned with the everyday reality.

4.1.3. Theme 3: From Cautious Trust to Conditional Loyalty

During the reviewing phase, the topic-based themes “Trust” and “Brand Loyalty” were combined into one higher-level theme. When I re-read the coded data for Baby Boomers, participants talk about trusting Kia and their words about loyalty (shortlisting, recommending, repurchasing) created one pattern rather than two separate ones. Trust was not a standalone attitude on its own, but it showed in concrete behaviors such as adding Kia to the shortlist, recommending it to others and for owners, considering a repeated purchase. To keep these themes internally consistent and to avoid overlap, these two topics were considered as subthemes of a higher-level pattern that discovers how Baby Boomers move from cautious trust to conditional loyalty.

Overall, this data shows that trust in Kia is earned through delivery of quality, not assumed, and that loyalty is conditional and quite recent, rather than deep and identity-based. The modern design and branding raise expectations, and when the product and service meet those expectations, trust becomes more solid and loyalty appears in the form of test-drive intention, recommendation and potential repurchase. However, always with the sense that this commitment can be withdrawn if the brand stops performing.

Trust as something that must be proved, not just promised.

Baby Boomers describe trust as something that Kia has to demonstrate over time. They do not automatically trust claims or visuals, but they want to see evidence in real-world performance, services and how the brand behaves if something goes wrong. Trust is connected to reliability, warranty support, transparent communication and fair treatment. Reputation and word-of-mouth are very important: positive experiences mentioned by friends, family and colleagues, as well as awards and reviews, are all used as external confirmation that Kia has become more trustworthy than in the past. Trust is therefore a careful conclusion taken from multiple sources.

The new logo and design language are trust signals, but they also raise the bar. Participants perceive this more confident, modern look as a statement that Kia sees itself now differently and wants to compete with more established brands. This creates higher expectations: if the brand presents itself as a more premium and design-focused one, the car and the service must match that promise. When the “inside” (product and service) and the “outside” (logo and design) feel aligned, trust increases. Modernization helps Kia signal a new chapter, but also makes trust more demanding.

From off-radar to shortlist, test-drive and recommendation.

A strong sign for participants that their trust level for Kia is growing, is that they have started to consider it at all, while before that it was completely off their radar. They mention that now they would even put Kia on their shortlist or test-drive it if considering a new car. This is a sign of early loyalty and that Kia is now a credible option, but they are not yet committed.

Willingness to recommend Kia to others seems to be a stronger loyalty signal. Some participants say they have recommended Kia and that people they know were positively surprised by the car.

Others mention that they now feel comfortable recommending it, but not before. Recommendation is described as something you only do when it feels safe for your own reputation, which suggests that trust has moved beyond personal curiosity. This kind of social endorsement is still conditional, as they would withdraw it if Kia started disappointing people, however, it indicates a higher level of confidence than simply considering the brand for themselves.

Loyalty is under constant review.

Even when speaking positively, Baby Boomers hesitate to call themselves loyal in a strong, identity-based way. They prefer phrases like being “more open-minded” towards Kia. This shows that loyalty is conditional and monitored in this group. They are willing to stay with the brand, if it continues to create quality that matches their expectations, but they are also ready to switch if another brand can give better value or reliability.

For owners, this dynamic is even more visible. The interview data show how higher expectations created by the new design can translate into repurchase intentions, if experience and image match. One owner explains that the redesign made her expect more from Kia, and that both the car and the service have mostly met those expectations. Because the visual identity and everyday experience feel aligned, now she would happily replace her current model with another Kia, if the balance between practicality, style and reliability is kept. Repurchase is not automatic, but it emerges when the modern signals raise expectations and those expectations are then met over time.

4.2. Themes Development: Millennials

4.2.1. Theme 1: Little to Protect: Selective Tradition and Weak Nostalgia

The topic-based themes “Brand Nostalgia” and “Attachment to Tradition” were combined into one higher-level theme for the Millennial cohort. When re-reading the coded data, participants’ early memories of Kia and their opinions on tradition created a single homogeneous pattern. Both topics highlight that Kia’s past image was practical and generic rather than prestigious, and that heritage is something the brand might earn in the future, not something that should hold it back now. To keep internal consistency and have clearer boundaries between themes, these two topics are

therefore considered as subthemes of a broader pattern: little heritage to protect, and a selective, context-dependent attachment to tradition.

For Millennials in this study, Kia's past is remembered as low-key and functional. Earlier experiences are related to cheap, anonymous cars and a corporate-looking red oval logo, not with something emotionally meaningful or iconic. Tradition is not a reason to keep Kia's old visual identity, but it is something that matters more for other legacy brands, and even there only when it still fits who the brand is now. In Kia's case, participants see more value in reinvention than in protecting the old image.

Practical memories, weak emotional attachment

Millennial participants connect Kia to their earlier life phases like university, first jobs or parents' cars, but these memories are mainly practical. They remember basic family vehicles which were a solution to get from A to B, sometimes with constant technical issues, and in general seen as "nothing special". Therefore nostalgia is weak and functional: Kia appears in their life story, but does not play a strong emotional role. The brand is remembered as a means of affordable transport and not as something to be proud of.

The old logo fits this pattern. It is described as corporate, generic and "very 2005", usually connected with rental fleets or anonymous airport cars. The logo is remembered, but not missed. It communicates low status, low excitement and no heritage. Therefore, it is not treated as a heritage item to protect, but as a visual reminder of the period when Kia was seen as entry-level and anonymous.

Little design heritage to protect: reinvention as the right move

For Millennials, Kia does not have a strong, iconic design heritage, and because of that, they do not consider great visual changes risky. They differentiate Kia from prestige brands, as for those long-term visual identity is essential to maintain their value. While the histories of brands like Kia are connected more with practicality, value and reliability instead of any specific or outstanding design language. In their view, Kia has a practical rather than prestige heritage.

Because of this, they do not see the old logo or previous visual identity as something that must be protected for heritage reasons. Instead, this weak design legacy gives Kia permission to reinvent itself. As long as the brand continues to deliver on its core values, a bold redesign is considered not only acceptable but actually appropriate for a brand that is still in the process of building its real legacy.

Attachment to tradition is therefore brand-specific and context-dependent. For long-established luxury names like Rolex or Mercedes, Millennials feel that strong heritage is important and that big changes should be made carefully. Kia, however, is not considered to be a part of that category. It is considered a brand whose identity is still being shaped and which does not carry the same “heritage backpack” to protect. In a fast-moving environment, holding on too much to tradition is considered a risk: brands that do not grow can quickly become irrelevant. Heritage is appreciated by them, but not as an absolute rule. It matters when it fits the brand’s role and history. For Kia, participants see more upside in change than in staying in the past.

Continuity of identity and earned heritage

Millennials want brands to focus on preserving their meaning and recognizability, rather than on keeping the logo or design the same. Heritage can feel comforting, but they do not like brands that hide behind their history and never change, as this makes them seem like they are stuck or afraid to grow. What they ask for is continuation of identity: brands should grow in ways that stay true to who they are but still keep them recognizable. History matters only if it supports a clear, credible current identity.

They also see heritage as something that is earned through current performance. The redesign is appreciated because it invites people to look at Kia with fresh eyes, and not anymore based on old associations. For them, what really matters now is execution: good product quality, a consistent brand experience and honest communication. If Kia delivers well over time, heritage will be built. Therefore, for Millennials, Kia is building its heritage right now.

4.2.2. Theme 2: Enthusiastic but Critical Openness to Tech-Led Change

For the Millennial cohort, the topic-based themes “Perceived Innovation”, “Openness to New Design”, “Resistance to Change” and “Emotional Response to the Logo” were merged into one higher-level theme. Re-reading the data made it clear that these four topics all describe how Millennials understand Kia’s new logo and design language as signs of innovation, how they react emotionally, when they resist, and what conditions need to be met for them to accept change. Overall, they welcome Kia’s move towards a more modern, EV- and tech-focused identity, but they have a critical and conditional openness: innovation has to be earned, not only demanded through visuals.

From “basic transport” to a more legitimate EV and tech brand

Millennials describe a clear change from considering Kia as basic, low-tech transport to seeing it as a more legitimate EV- and tech-oriented brand. In the past, they connected Kia with small, simple city cars and simple interiors, but now they associate it with EVs, digital features and participating in the global “EV race”. The new logo and design language are understood as part of this shift, as they are cleaner and confident, matching the impression that Kia has “grown up” and competes with more established, classic brands players.

This also creates an emotional upgrade. The new badge for them feels less corporate and embarrassing than the old red oval and also supports a quiet pride in owning a Kia, especially an EV. Participants feel more comfortable about imagining themselves being seen with the car, even posting it on social media or recommending it to others. The badge turns Kia from “just transport” into an actual lifestyle choice that fits better with how they want to present themselves in front of others.

Initial resistance and “careful openness”

Regardless of the overall positive evaluation, many Millennials have a skeptical first reaction. Initially, they found it hard to read, way too edgy, or felt like it was simply trying too hard to look high-tech. Some reach strongly against what they consider a sudden status jump, questioning if a brand that used to be so basic has earned that premium, tech-forward position at all. This resistance is not about disliking change itself, but about fit and credibility: a modern and bold look is

acceptable only if it is supported by clear improvements in the car and ecosystem, not just a new badge and campaign.

This leads to a pattern of careful openness. Millennials consider themselves open to modern design and innovation, but with a “wait-and-see” approach. They rely on reviews, early user experiences, and evidence that the whole system is moving in the same direction before they fully embrace the change itself. Visuals can create interest, but they need proof for long-term acceptance.

Principles for “good” redesigns and the need for real innovation

Participants mention other rebrands to show what they consider a “good” redesign. They appreciate updates that have intention and are practical, keeping what is meaningful, but also improving fit with the brand’s role. On the other hand, they criticize changes that feel random for them, only trend-driven or trying to reach a higher status without earning it. From these comparisons, some principles emerge: redesigns should simplify, reduce confusion and respect the existing relationship between users and the brand.

For Millennials, it is essential that innovation is supported by reality. The new logo and design language are accepted as credible signs of progress only if product quality, technology and everyday experience align with them. Participants mention improvements in materials, screens, interfaces and driving feel, and highlight the importance of software updates, charging infrastructure and digital tools, especially for EVs. The new identity feels earned and consistent when these elements work well together, however, when they do not, it feels like the brand is demanding more than what it delivers. For Millennial EV owners loyalty and trust are allocated in the whole ecosystem, and not only in the badge.

4.2.3. Theme 3: Experience-Based Trust and Value-Driven Loyalty

The topic-based themes “Trust” and “Brand Loyalty” for Millennials were combined into one higher-level theme. When re-reading the data, participants talked about trusting Kia and about staying with or recommending the brand created one single theme rather than two separate ones. Trust appears in behaviors like adding Kia to a shortlist, test-driving or recommending it to others. To keep these themes consistent internally and avoid overlap, Trust and Brand Loyalty are treated

as subthemes of a higher-level pattern where trust built on real experience leads to a practical, value-driven kind of loyalty.

Overall, Millennials in this study move from seeing Kia as “good for the price” or irrelevant to treating it as a serious option that can compete with their usual brands. Trust increases when the new identity is supported by product quality, technology and after-sales. Loyalty then appears in shortlist inclusion, recommendation and, for some, attachment to the ecosystem. However, this loyalty is conditional and value-driven: they are willing to stay with Kia until the brand keeps offering a “premium-enough” experience without charging only for the badge.

From “good for the price” to a credible option

Millennials describe a “before and after” in how they see Kia. Previously, for them it belonged in a “cheap but fine” category. After the redesign and new models, Kia has become a credible option that can stand beside the brands they usually consider. The new logo helps them reconsider the brand, but trust level grows only when design, perceived quality and technology improve altogether. Trust, in this case, begins when Kia leaves the “budget only” box and enters the participants’ set of mainstream, competitive alternatives.

The redesigned identity is also considered a signal that Kia is serious and committed, not just chasing a quick image improvement. Participants consider a well-executed redesign and received awards as evidence that the company is also investing in products and technology. However, visuals alone are not enough: Millennials emphasize that identity only supports trust when it matches what they experience in the car and the ecosystem as well.

Trust built through everyday experience and ecosystem

When they explain what builds trust for them, Millennials focus on everyday use rather than on the badge. They talk about interiors, materials, screens and driving feel which no longer fit the old “cheap Kia” stereotype and notice more attention to detail in design and interaction. Trust grows from repeated, good performance.

The wider ecosystem reinforces this. Transparent service processes, usable charging planning, software updates that work and consistent handling of problems, all contribute to a feeling that the

brand is competent and cares. For EV owners, trust becomes connected to ecosystem familiarity: once they are used to Kia's charging tools, service and interfaces, switching to another brand would mean giving up a system that they already know.

Clear limits and value-focused, performance-based loyalty

Millennials set clear boundaries for their trust and loyalty. They do not require a long heritage story, but they expect capability and stability in the moment. Too much reinvention or constant repositioning makes them doubt the seriousness of the brand. They appreciate modern, clean aesthetics, but only if these are matched with equally modern behavior in products and services.

On the loyalty topic, they describe Kia moving from a “definitely no” to “on the list” category. The key change is that Kia now entered its consideration list. Recommendation is a stronger sign: multiple participants say they actively suggest Kia, especially EVs, because they believe others will also be positively surprised. This endorsement is practical and not emotional and is based on current performance.

Across the Millennial data, loyalty stays value-focused and performance-based. Participants appreciate that Kia offers something that feels “premium enough” without having to pay a premium price only for a badge. They are willing to stay with or recommend the brand if design, technology, quality and price feel fair altogether. Therefore, loyalty is earned and constantly evaluated: if Kia stops improving, reduces quality or relies too heavily on its new image, they would reconsider their commitment.

4.3. Cross-Cohort Comparison: Generational Patterns in Brand Equity

4.3.1. Introduction

This chapter compares Baby Boomer and Millennial research findings using Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity model and Aaker's (1991) brand equity dimensions as a base. The Kia logo redesign is considered a key branding stimulus that can influence brand associations, perceived quality, trust and loyalty.

For both generational groups, the three themes follow the same structure (Aaker, 1991; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001):

- **Theme 1** focuses on past image, associations and “heritage”;
- **Theme 2** connects design change to perceived innovation and quality; and
- **Theme 3** analyses how trust and different forms of loyalty are built.

The following subsections compare the themes one by one across the two generations.

4.3.2. Theme 1: Past Image, Nostalgia and Tradition: Weak Nostalgia, Different Meanings of Heritage

For both generational groups, Kia’s past image is not a strong source of brand equity. The “old” Kia is remembered as budget, basic, practical and low-status. Baby Boomers remember it as cheap and functional, with little emotional value attached, and they consider the old logo as outdated and tied to this budget phase, not as something they want to protect. Millennials’ early memories are also practical and low-key, for them Kia appears as a student car, parents’ car or anonymous transport from A to B, without pride or strong attachment. The old logo is described as corporate, generic and from “another era”, which is remembered but not missed. Therefore, in Keller’s (1993) CBBE terms, past brand associations are weak and not very positive, so the baseline for nostalgia is low and does not really support existing brand equity.

The two cohorts are different in defining tradition. Baby Boomers feel Kia does not have a “big past” to protect, which creates room for reinvention, but they connect tradition to behavior and values and not to design. They connect it with reliability, integrity and consistency over time. Logos and colors can change as long as the brand continues delivering reliable products and fair treatment. Tradition is therefore understood as consistent performance, and future heritage is something to be built through what Kia does now and in the future.

Millennials also see little visual heritage to protect, and they express this by comparing Kia to other brands. They differentiate “prestige heritage” from Kia’s more “practical” heritage. Strong visual heritage is considered as something that belongs to long-established prestige brands whose identity and history are central to their value, however, Kia is connected to affordability, practicality and not distinctive design. As a result, they see “little to protect” in terms of visual identity and consider a bold reinvention as the right move for the brand’s current state. Attachment to tradition is brand-

specific and context-dependent: tradition matters for some brands and categories, but for Kia it is mainly something that can be earned in the future with strong performance.

These patterns help explain why both groups are generally open to the logo redesign. Earlier research suggests that strong emotional attachment and rich heritage can increase resistance to change (Müller et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2010). In Kia's case, as there is no strong, positive nostalgia around the old identity, this decreases the risk of harming existing brand equity. Instead, the relaunch can create new associations and refresh brand image (Keller, 1993).

From a generational perspective, the findings both support and refine the literature. Earlier studies suggest that Baby Boomers tend to be more loyal to established symbols and traditions, valuing stability, quality and reliability, and Millennials are more open to innovation, modern design and brand evolution (Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). In this study, both groups show low nostalgia specifically for Kia's past, which seems to be connected to the brand's moderate, functional history, rather than to generation alone. However, what they think should continue still follows the expectations: Baby Boomers root "tradition" in reliability and consistency, while Millennials focus more on the legitimacy of reinvention and on aligning visual identity with who the brand is now. In brand equity phrases, both cohorts are willing to let the logo change transform Kia's brand image, but they do this through different generational logics about what "heritage" and "continuity" should mean for this particular brand.

4.3.3. Theme 2: Openness to Innovation and Design Change: Shared Conditions, Different Emphases

For both cohorts, Kia's logo and design change are not rejected on principle. They are not "anti-change", but they show conditional openness: they accept and even welcome a more modern Kia if the redesign feels meaningful, readable and supported by real improvements in product and service. In brand equity phrases, this theme mainly discusses how the logo change transforms brand image and perceived quality within Keller's (1993) CBBE model and Aaker's (1991) dimensions.

Across both groups, the new logo and design language are understood as signs of wider innovation. Participants describe Kia as more recognizable, confident and serious than before, but they clearly

differentiate between meaningful and empty change. Redesigns are judged positively when brands keep what matters and improve the experience, and negatively when they feel random, confusing or “for attention only”. This reflects the logo-change research in the literature review, which shows that perceived fit, clarity and authenticity are key for a redesign to strengthen, rather than weaken, brand equity (e.g. Müller et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2010).

In this pattern, Baby Boomers focus on readability, inclusiveness and everyday usability. Initial reactions are a mix of surprise, curiosity and confusion and concerns about looking “too futuristic” or trying too hard. These doubts fade away as they often see the badge on cars, in showrooms and in advertising, and as exterior and interior start to feel consistent. Innovation is acceptable when the identity is easy to read and the tone stays approachable and inclusive, not only targeting younger people. They also refer to other brands: a good redesign simplifies and clarifies and also keeps the essence, a bad one feels noisy or disconnected from real experience. This focus on clarity, reliability and reassurance is consistent with literature discussing Baby Boomers as more cautious, quality-oriented consumers who appreciate stability and service (Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013).

Millennials share these basic conditions, but express them more in terms like tech-led transformation and social signaling. They mention a shift from “basic transport” and low-tech interiors to an EV- and software-focused brand. The new logo is considered part of this repositioning: visually cleaner and more confident, consistent with their impression that Kia has “grown up” and now competes with more established brands. Emotionally, the redesign turns Kia from tolerated to something they can feel comfortable, even proud, to show or recommend. This aligns with research that connects Millennials to stronger orientations towards innovation, modern aesthetics and expressive brand identities (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Parment, 2013).

However, Millennials are often skeptical at first. Some find the badge hard to read, too edgy, or like a sudden status jump that might not be earned. Their resistance is less about conservatism, and more about fit and credibility. They adopt a “careful openness”: positive about innovation, but with a strong “wait-and-see” attitude. Visual change is accepted only when product, technology and the whole ecosystem show that the new identity reflects real progress. When these elements work well together, the redesign feels earned. This fits with research that connects Millennials’ loyalty more

strongly to perceived authenticity, performance and value, rather than to symbols alone (Moore & Carpenter, 2008a; Valentine & Powers, 2013).

In summary, Theme 2 shows that both groups are open to the logo change, but only when it fits the brand and is backed up by real improvements. Baby Boomers mainly look for clarity, inclusiveness and reliability, and see modern design as an “entry door” to real innovation. Millennials focus more on tech-led change, social approval and how good the ecosystem works. Their enthusiasm is conditional and based on evidence, fitting with generational research on how innovation and brand change are accepted (Parment, 2013; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Valentine & Powers, 2013).

4.3.4. Theme 3: Trust and Loyalty: Evidence-Based Commitment and Generational Logics of Staying

The third cross-cohort theme compares how Baby Boomers and Millennials talk about trust and loyalty after the logo change. In Keller’s (1993) CBBE model and Aaker’s (1991) framework, these are on the “top” of brand equity, showing if positive associations and perceived quality turn into lasting relationships. In both groups, trust is built on concrete experience, and loyalty appears in behaviors like adding Kia to the shortlist, test-driving, recommending the brand, or considering repurchase. The main difference is what each group needs in order to stay loyal and how they justify that decision.

For Baby Boomers, trust is not given, Kia has to prove itself over time. Participants do not just accept the new logo or messaging, but they look for evidence in product reliability, warranty handling, service quality and how the company behaves if something goes wrong. Reputation and word-of-mouth act as extra proof that Kia has moved on from its “budget” position. In brand equity phrases, perceived quality and brand associations must lower risk and ensure message reliability performance in order to maintain trust (Aaker, 1991; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

The new identity works as a trust signal that raises the bar. Baby Boomers see the new logo and design language as a statement that Kia wants to compete with more established brands, which increases expectations: if the brand presents itself as more premium and design-focused, the car and service must match. Trust gets stronger when the “outside” (logo, styling) and the “inside”

(product and service) feel aligned, and weakens if the experience feels cheap while the visuals appear premium.

Loyalty for Baby Boomers develops in small steps and not as a strong identity-based attachment. Kia moves from “off-radar” to being included on shortlists and considered for test-drives. A stronger sign is the willingness to recommend Kia to others, which they describe as something they do only when it feels safe for their own reputation. However, loyalty stays under review: they describe themselves as “open-minded”, compare Kia both to its past and to competitors, and connect repurchase intentions to whether Kia keeps the balance between modern design, practicality and reliable support. This shows rational, conditional loyalty, which is in line with research that connects trust and loyalty to consistent performance, and not to emotional attachment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

For Millennials, trust is also grounded in real experience, but their reference points are different. They describe a change from seeing Kia as “good for the price” or irrelevant to seeing it as a credible alternative to the brands they usually consider. The new identity helps them take Kia more seriously, but trust grows only when they see consistent improvements in design, perceived quality and technology. Kia moves from the “cheap but fine” box into their category of mainstream options.

The redesigned logo and new product line-up are understood as signs that Kia is investing in products, technology and infrastructure, and not just doing a cosmetic change. Awards, media coverage and visible EV progress support this impression. However, an updated logo alone is not enough: trust is connected to the full ownership journey, including driving feel, charging tools, service and problem handling. Trust becomes the total of multiple touchpoints, referring to Chaudhuri and Holbrook’s (2001) work which connects brand trust to reliable performance.

Loyalty in the Millennial group is clearly value- and performance-based. Participants describe Kia moving from “definitely no” to “100% on the list” for leases or purchases. Shortlist inclusion and test-drives are the first steps, recommendations to friends and family are even stronger ones. Word-of-mouth is practical, not emotional. They recommend Kia because it currently performs well and offers a “premium enough” experience without paying mainly for the badge. For EV owners, loyalty can become ecosystem-based: once they are used to Kia’s charging tools, interfaces and

service, switching would mean leaving a system that works on a daily basis. They also set clear boundaries by saying that Kia must keep improving and maintain a balance between price, design, technology and experience. If the brand relied only on image without delivering high-quality solutions, they would think twice about its commitment. This pattern fits literature that considers younger consumers as loyal when brands demonstrate authenticity, performance and value compared to long histories alone (Moore & Carpenter, 2008a; Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013).

To sum up, Theme 3 shows that for both cohorts trust and loyalty are earned, conditional and monitored, not automatic. From a behavioral perspective, both groups have similar steps: considering, testing, recommending and sometimes repurchasing, but they justify these steps differently. Baby Boomers highlight proven reliability, fair treatment and alignment between modern image and performance. Millennials focus more on the ecosystem experience and receiving a “premium enough” offer at a good price. These findings match the literature: Baby Boomers value stability, quality and service, Millennials highlight innovation, authenticity and value (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013). Both groups show evidence-based forms of loyalty which Kia can strengthen (or weaken), depending on how good it continues to deliver on the promises of the new identity.

4.3.5. Data-Theory Challenges and Emergent Patterns

Overall, the findings strongly support the literature which describes Baby Boomers as more focused on stability, reliability and service, and Millennials as more focused on innovation, design and value (Parment, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Moore & Carpenter, 2008b). At the same time, some patterns did not fully match this initial, deductive framework.

First, the “KN” confusion regarding the new logo unexpectedly acted as a trigger for awareness. Misreading the logo made some participants search online and talk about Kia, which is not captured by the default brand equity codes. Second, they mentioned a change in social terms. Millennials highlighted that Kia is “no longer embarrassing” and more shareable, and some Baby Boomers mentioned how positive comments from family members reconfirmed their acceptance of the redesign. Third, participants highlighted signature lighting and exterior design as important identity markers, sometimes as strong as the logo itself. Finally, the data softened the generational contrasts:

Baby Boomers were more open than expected to bold visual change and Millennials often highlighted reliability and fair treatment, not only innovation.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1. Main Findings and Conclusions

This dissertation's goal is to understand how Kia's 2021 logo redesign and brand relaunch affect brand equity for Baby Boomers and Millennials, using Keller's customer-based brand equity model and Aaker's brand equity dimensions. The timing allowed to analyze how brand associations, perceived quality, trust and loyalty have developed over time for the two different generational cohorts from a qualitative perspective.

For neither group does Kia have a strong positive nostalgia. Earlier associations are mostly functional, and they remember the old logo as generic and outdated. This weak heritage decreases the risk that the logo change will damage existing brand equity. Also, Baby Boomers and Millennials define "tradition" differently. Baby Boomers connect it mostly to reliability, integrity and consistency in behavior over time, and Millennials highlight the difference between "prestige heritage" (for luxury brands) and Kia's more practical legacy, and see heritage for Kia as something which should be earned through current performance and not protected visually.

On innovation and design change, both groups are open to the new logo and design language, but only under certain conditions. Baby Boomers have conditional openness to "meaningful innovation", meaning they accept bold changes when the logo stays readable, tone stays inclusive and visual update is supported by tangible improvements in product and service quality. Millennials have an "enthusiastic but critical openness" to tech-led change, they welcome Kia's move towards an EV- and software-focused identity, but they react negatively when the design feels unreadable or like a status jump that is not yet earned. For them, the redesign is credible only when the whole ecosystem supports the promise of the new identity.

Regarding trust and loyalty, both generations move from seeing Kia as a budget option to treating it as a serious alternative, but their loyalty stays conditional. For Baby Boomers, trust must be proved by long-term reliability, fair treatment and alignment between the modern image and everyday experience. Loyalty appears as adding Kia to the shortlist, test-driving, recommending or repurchasing. If quality dropped, they would reconsider. Millennials also build trust through experience, but focus more on tech performance, user experience and value for money. They have

value-driven and ecosystem-based loyalty. For them staying with Kia makes sense until it offers a “premium enough” experience without paying mainly for the badge and until the EV ecosystem works well every day.

Therefore, the findings suggest that generational group membership, from a qualitative perspective, moderates how a logo redesign translates into brand equity outcomes. Both cohorts are willing to let the new logo reshape brand image, but they have different criteria when judging whether the change is authentic and credible. For managers, this shows that visual identity changes can support “premiumization” and innovation if the existing nostalgia is weak, but only if they are supported by consistent improvements that satisfy both cohorts’ unique expectations.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This dissertation has several limitations to be acknowledged. First, it is based on a single-brand event, with participants taken from a specific European context, for a qualitative study. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized statistically to all markets, brands or generations, but should be considered as an in-depth exploration of how two generations in this context make sense of one specific rebranding. Using the same framework for other brands would most probably give different results.

Second, the study has a relatively small, purposive sample of Baby Boomers and Millennials recruited via digital channels such as LinkedIn, social media and car-related forums. This approach was appropriate for qualitative work, but it might select participants who are more digitally engaged and more interested in brands. Therefore, diversity within the cohort (e.g. in income, country) is only partially taken into account. Future research could use larger, mixed-method designs to see if it works across borders.

Third, the analysis contains self-reported perceptions and memories some years after the logo change, so recall and “post-rationalization” may influence how participants describe their past attitudes. The study does not track any measured behavior (e.g. actual purchase data), but focuses on how people describe their trust and loyalty. Behavioral data could complement this study by showing how the mentioned intentions translate into long-term choices.

Fourth, while AI tools were used as a supporting role, all coding decisions and final themes were developed and checked by me. Still, AI usage means having a layer between raw data and interpretation and other researchers might have grouped or labelled themes differently. Therefore, this study shows one “coherent reading” and not a summary of all possible meanings.

Finally, the focus of the research is quite narrow: it focuses on Kia’s logo as the main visible sign of the relaunch and on consumer perceptions of brand equity. Other important aspects (e.g. internal organizational change, dealer networks) were not considered. Future studies could involve multiple stakeholder views or combine consumer perspective with company and market data, to build a more complete picture of how wider rebranding influences brand equity in the long run.

Despite these limitations, this dissertation offers a clear picture of how a bold logo redesign can help a historically budget brand reposition itself in consumers’ minds.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Deductive Codebook for Focus Groups and In-Depth Interview

Code Name	Definition	When to Use
Brand Loyalty	Expressions of ongoing attachment, repeat purchase, or intention to stick with the Kia brand	Use when: participants mention loyalty, sticking with Kia, or likelihood of remaining a customer
Brand Nostalgia	Reference to past experiences, memories or attachment to Kia or its old logo	Use when: someone expresses missing the old logo or talks in an affectionate way about 'how it used to be'
Perceived Innovation	Comments about the new logo (or Kia in general) feeling modern, innovative, or forward-looking	Use when: someone says Kia / the logo is modern, fresh, new, techy, or mentions innovation positively / negatively
Resistance to Change	Expressions of discomfort, uncertainty, disbelief or dislike regarding the logo or brand changes	Use when: participants express resistance, discomfort, disbelief or negative reactions to changes related to the logo and / or the brand
Emotional Response to Logo	Obvious emotional reactions to the logo redesign (positive, negative or mixed)	Use when: emotions are mentioned: for example “excited”, “disappointed”, “surprised”, “confused”
Trust	References to trust or distrust in Kia as a brand, which is possibly influenced by the logo/branding changes	Use when: participants state increased / decreased trust or discuss credibility / reliability
Attachment to Tradition	Valuing Kia’s history, heritage or the continuity of the brand/logo	Use when: someone values tradition, heritage or expresses preference for the old ways

Openness to New Design	Positive, open-minded comments about the new logo / design and willingness to accept change	Use when: participants express enthusiasm, openness or positivity about the redesign or other changes
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APPENDIX C:

AI-generated analyses based on the coded extracts, in order to serve as a base for my thematic decisions and further analysis.

1. Data Analysis

1.1. Baby Boomers

1.1.1. Brand Loyalty

For Baby Boomer generation, brand loyalty towards Kia has grown only recently.

1.1.1.1. From indifference to consideration (loyalty as entry into the shortlist).

Key evidence: “Honestly, yes. I wouldn’t have said that five years ago, but now I would definitely test-drive one” (FG1-079, P1); “Yeah, I’d add Kia to my shortlist now... Before, it wasn’t even a consideration” (FG1-080, P3).

1.1.1.2. Recommending as a loyalty indicator (social endorsement).

Key evidence: “I’ve recommended Kia to people...”; “truly surprised”; “I feel comfortable recommending them now. I didn’t before” (FG1-097, P5).

1.1.1.3. Loyalty framed as openness, not identity.

Key evidence: “I wouldn’t use the word loyal, but definitely more open-minded”; “if they keep this balance”.

1.1.1.4. Heritage vs. Modernity: keep trust without feeling “stuck in the past”.

One participant sums up the balance: “If I’ve trusted a brand for years, heritage matters... But if a brand is stuck in the past, it definitely loses me” (FG1-127, P1).

1.1.1.5. Alignment of design and substance as a loyalty engine (owner perspective)

Key evidence: “Now inside and outside it is aligned... now the Niro and the badge feel completely aligned” (BB04_011); “The design 100% made me expect more and the service has mostly met that” (BB04_012); “I’d happily replace my Niro with another Kia if they keep this balance of practicality and stylishness” (BB04_013). For Baby Boomers in the focus group and interviews, loyalty works as conditional trust that builds up as the modernization of the Kia brand matches their real-world experience with it.

1.1.2. Brand Nostalgia

For the Baby Boomer generation, brand nostalgia for Kia is weak or mixed. this group prefers visible progress as long as reliability, as a core focus, remains (Interviews BB03_016; BB04_005; BB04_016).

1.1.2.1. Thin or negative nostalgia baseline (past = “budget”).

Key evidence: “Known Kia for a long time... they were sort of... budget cars. Nothing fancy...” (FG1-003, P1); “For me transformation. I used to think of Kia as not stylish, and now they reinvented themselves...” (FG1-010, P1).

1.1.2.2. Modern signs overwrite the old image.

Key evidence: “Rented a Kia... thought: this doesn’t feel like the Kia I used to know” (FG1-028, P4); “I showed it to my brother: ‘that doesn’t look like Kia anymore’, ‘yes, exactly, that’s the point’” (FG1-051, P6).

1.1.2.3. The old badge is rather considered as outdated, not admired.

Key evidence: “When I see the old logo on older cars, it looks ancient. Like from another century” (FG1-058, P2); “Agree, the red oval feels out of place now completely” (FG1-059, P4).

1.1.2.4. Change resistance exists, but fades away with fit.

Key evidence: “People get used to things, and when it changes, it feels off” (FG1-165, P2); “Oh well, I remember that! And then they went back to the old one after a week” (FG1-178, P6).

1.1.2.5. From “deal messaging” to aspiration; emotion shifts to pride (owner perspective).

Key evidence: “Used to advertise super cheap... now it’s ‘movement, innovation, design’” (FG1-021, P2); “Kia’s new badge also feels like simple, minimalistic Scandinavian design” (FG1-149, P3); “My first feeling was maybe pride... from part of the crowd to bigger leagues” (FG1-050, P1); “I’m sentimental about my mom’s recipes, not car badges” (BB03_016).

1.1.3. Perceived Innovation

For the Baby Boomer generation, perceived innovation of Kia is credible when modern signals match product and service quality.

1.1.3.1. Modern design language as a clear sign of innovation.

Key evidence: “Now you can tell if it’s a Kia simply by the shape... a very strong signature design language” (FG1-019, P1); “The headlights especially make it feel futuristic... that new light signature... unique” (FG1-031, P5); “To me it says ‘modern’, ‘clean’ and ‘smart’” (FG1-139, P1); “The new... makes the cars look more serious and modern. The old red oval felt budget” (FG1-143, P2).

1.1.3.2. From “budget” to confident/creative (branding and communications).

Key evidence: “They’ve improved their branding... black, minimal, bold text” (FG1-020, P4); “They used to advertise super cheap... now it’s ‘movement,’ ‘innovation,’ ‘design’” (FG1-022, P2); “The old Kia was humble... the new one feels confident and creative” (FG1-085, P6); “Advertising, interiors, and how dealers present information... more confident and organized” (BB04_003).

1.1.3.3. “Not just a logo”: signals must be backed by experience.

Key evidence: “It’s not just a logo change... it represents a total transformation” (FG1-069, P1); “I like innovation, but it needs to be meaningful... we get a bad reputation for being resistant, but honestly...” (FG1-181, P2); “The badge sets the expectation, but then the service proves it” (BB03_012); “Design 100% made me expect more and the service has mostly met that” (BB04_012).

1.1.3.4. Initial confusion becomes clarity; modern look “ages well”.

Key evidence: “A bit of confusion... maybe trying too hard. But once I saw the logo on an actual car, it was clear” (FG1-053, P3); “It looks modern but not trendy” (FG1-057, P1); “At first confusing, now bold and iconic” (FG1-145, P3); “timeless modern”.

1.1.3.5. Openness to innovation is ageless (as long as it fits).

Key evidence: “I’m 60, and I find it very refreshing. Not just for youngsters” (FG1-155, P6); “Yeah, we’re not scared of innovation!” (FG1-156, P2); “I like the modern look... if there is real change behind it” (FG1-206, P2); “Timeless modern... looks right five or ten years onwards” (FG1-207, P4).

1.1.3.6. Owner perspective: badge as entry point.

Key evidence: “First time I saw the new badge on a car, it looked very fresh, composed” (BB04_008); “It suits the newer cars... a quiet statement” (BB04_009); “Over time... I’ve come to associate that Kia expects to be compared with the usual European names” (BB04_010); “Now inside and outside it is aligned... the Niro and the badge feel completely aligned” (BB04_011).

1.1.4. Resistance to Change

For the Baby Boomer generation, resistance to change is real but temporary.

1.1.4.1. Initial confusion and skepticism (at first glance, it feels “off”).

Key evidence: “I’ll admit... when I first saw it, I was so confused, I thought it was saying ‘KN’” (FG1-017, P3); “A bit of confusion, honestly... maybe too futuristic, trying too hard. But once I

saw the logo on an actual car, it was clear” (FG1-054, P3); “I do feel a little skeptical... you can change the logo but whether the experience changes takes time” (FG1-039, P5); “too much, too soon”.

1.1.4.2. Readability and clarity matter, and confusion can be managed.

Key evidence: “My hesitation was actually about if it would confuse people... And it did for a while, as I heard, but that actually worked out for them” (FG1-055, P4); “I saw it online first... was honestly quite confused... But then I thought ‘wow, that is bold’. It made me curious” (FG1-044, P3).

1.1.4.3. People resist until the purpose is clear.

Key evidence: “I work in design and I’ve seen both sides... people usually hate change until they realize the reasoning behind it” (FG1-167, P5); “My personal gut reaction is like ‘why are you doing this?’... we get used to things easily and when it changes, it feels off somehow” (FG1-164, P2); “why”.

1.1.4.4. The changing speed depends on the brand’s narrative.

Key evidence: “It depends on the brand’s story. Some brands should evolve slowly, while others are better off with a bolder approach” (FG1-212, P3); “Starbucks... removed the text... now you can just spot it anywhere... super iconic” (FG1-172, P5); “The one I hated was Gap. It felt nonsense, like they were just trying to modernize for no reason” (FG1-176, P2).

1.1.4.5. “Not just a logo”: change must show up in experience (owner lens).

Key evidence: “I like innovation, but it needs to be meaningful... We get a bad reputation for being resistant, but honestly...” (FG1-182, P2); “The badge sets the expectation, but then the service proves it” (BB03_018); “I am a Nokia person... Nokia’s recent angular logo... maybe helps designers recognize the brand faster, but it felt like design for designers” (BB03_020); “I look whether anything else has changed too or is it just like green-washing?” (BB04_018).

1.1.5. Emotional Response to Logo

For this generation, the logo change triggers mixed but mostly positive feelings once it is seen in context, so on the car, with the new design language, and together with the service experience.

1.1.5.1. First-look feelings: surprise and curiosity vs. confusion.

Key evidence: “Same here. My first reaction was respect, actually” (FG1-045, P5); “I’ll admit... when I first saw it, I was so confused, I thought it was saying ‘KN’” (FG1-018, P3); “I saw it online first... was honestly quite confused... But then I thought ‘wow, that is bold’. It made me curious” (FG1-042, P3).

1.1.5.2. Pride and status lift once it all fits.

Key evidence: “My first feeling was maybe pride... from part of the crowd to bigger leagues” (FG1-049, P1); “It looks like the brand believes in itself: confident and creative” (FG1-085, P6); “At my local dealer... I was pleasantly surprised. It looks composed” (BB04_008); “It suits the newer cars, 100%... a quiet statement” (BB04_009).

1.1.5.3. Less “old warmth,” but more modern and serious.

Key evidence: “The old red oval felt budget... this looks more serious and modern” (FG1-143, P2); “out of place now completely” FG1-146, P3).

1.1.5.4. Readability related concerns fade away with actual use.

Key evidence: “A bit of confusion... maybe too futuristic... But once I saw the logo on an actual car, it was clear” (FG1-054, P3); “I had to ask if that was Kia. Afterwards I was thinking that okay, that is confident and very tidy” (BB03_008).

1.1.5.5. Owner perspective: feelings settle with proof.

Key evidence: “The badge sets the expectation, but then the service proves it” (BB03_012); “Over time... I’ve come to associate that Kia expects to be compared with the usual European names” (BB04_010).

1.1.6. Trust

For the Baby Boomer generation group, trust is built by proof.

1.1.6.1. Proof before promise (service, warranty, experience).

Participants' trust level grows when the brand actually delivers through repairs, keeping timelines and if occasional problems are handled properly. "Trust comes from how you're treated. The badge sets the expectation, but then the service proves it" (BB03_012).

1.1.6.2. Design signals credibility, but quality has to match.

Key evidence: "I think the design itself gives it credibility. It's not just 'good for the price' anymore, but it's genuinely good" (FG1-084, P4); "You can tell when a brand invests in design, they're usually investing in quality too" (FG1-091, P3); "The design definitely gave it credibility. It looks like a brand that takes itself seriously" (FG1-116, P2).

1.1.6.3. Reputation and recognition add weight.

External signals, such as awards, word of mouth, what people see on the road, reinforce (or weaken) trust: "And they've got the reputation to back it up, they're many winning awards. That tells me they're serious" (FG1-092, P4).

1.1.6.4. Clarity and honesty (readability, information).

Key evidence: "Clarity and honesty. Make it readable at a one-second glance from a moving van and make sure the service behind it matches the promise" (BB03_016); "Yes, the tone of advertising, the interiors and how dealers present information. It all feels more confident and organized" (BB04_003).

1.1.6.5. Keep reliability while moving forward.

Participants appreciate visible progress, but reliability remains the anchor: "It depends. But if a brand is stuck in the past, it definitely loses me" (FG1-127, P1).

1.1.6.6. From caution to confidence.

Key evidence: “It says ‘confidence’ and it’s assertive but not arrogant in my opinion” (FG1-136, P6); “I think that’s what makes it attractive for different age groups. It’s confidence without arrogance” (FG1-186, P1); “Yeah, they did it without losing credibility and that’s rare” (FG1-187, P2).

1.1.7. Attachment to Tradition

When it comes to Kia for the Baby Boomers group, attachment to tradition is limited and pragmatic.

1.1.7.1. Limited legacy gives permission to reinvent.

Key evidence: “Kia didn’t really have a strong heritage to begin with, so they could actually afford to reinvent” (FG1-113, P3); “Old-fashioned, something you would expect from a car company in the early 2000s” (FG1-035, P3); “Yeah, they had reliability as a heritage from the past, but definitely not prestige. So it was time for a fresh start” (FG1-115, P5); “It’s more like they’re building their heritage now and the logo is part of their story moving forward and focusing on the future” (FG1-117, P2).

1.1.7.2. Tradition should mean reliability and integrity, not holding on to old symbols.

When Boomers talk about tradition, they mean things that hold up over time, just like clear standards, reliability and honest presentation of the brand, rather than keeping older graphics or visual elements.

1.1.7.3. Low sentiment for the old oval logo, progress preferred.

Key evidence: “No, because the old one kept Kia in a low budget box. It is not anymore” (BB04_016); “I’m not sentimental about an oval” (BB04_017).

1.1.7.4. Preserve the right things, which are integrity and intention.

Key evidence: “Integrity. A logo should be easy to read and true to the experience I’ll have as an owner” (BB04_023); “It really depends. Updates with intention make sense to me” (BB04_021).

1.1.7.5. Building the heritage of tomorrow through the performance of today.

For Boomers, heritage is built by consistent modern performance. This new identity is considered as a sign that Kia has moved beyond the ‘value-only’ image and it is ready to enter the group of higher-quality players: “Innovative as a signal.

1.1.8. Openness to New Design

For the Baby Boomer group, openness to new design is there, it is real, but it is conditional.

1.1.8.1. They are open-minded, not blindly loyal.

“I wouldn’t use the word loyal, but definitely more open-minded” (FG1-103, P2).

1.1.8.2. Inclusive tone keeps the door open.

“And the tone of the brand stayed very approachable. Like it stayed inclusive, still speaking for everyone” (FG1-161, P5).

1.1.8.3. Conditions for openness: intention and integrity.

Key evidence: “It really depends. Updates with intention make sense to me.” (BB04_021); “Integrity. A logo should be easy to read and true to the experience I’ll have as an owner” (BB04_023).

1.1.8.4. Skeptical first look, but quick acceptance with better experience.

“First I’m suspicious. I ask, is the experience better or is it just surface? ... If the product and service improve, I come around quite quickly” (BB03_018).

1.1.8.5. What counts as a “good” redesign vs a “bad” one.

“I am a coffee lover and Starbucks’ logo remake made me love it even more... going down to two circles with minimal text made it more reachable and calm” (BB04_019). “Yahoo’s experiment years ago was a disaster. It felt nonsense, without purpose” (BB04_020).

1.1.8.6. Adaptability helps them stay open to change.

“I moved from paper planners to a calendar app in my late fifties... I thought I would miss the smells, but I embraced the tool and it actually made my life easier” (BB04_022).

1.2. Millennials

1.2.1. Brand Loyalty

For the Millennials group, loyalty towards Kia appears to be new, active and clearly conditional.

1.2.1.1. From “good enough if someone needs something cheap” to “100% on the list”

Key evidence: “Five years ago I would’ve said that Kia is fine if you need something cheap... Now I’d definitely consider it, because I feel like the brand has grown so much” (FG2-111, P1); “no”; “For me the biggest change is that Kia now actually makes the list. Today, Kia is 100% on the list. Before, honestly, definitely no” (FG2-118, P3).

1.2.1.2. Recommendation and advocacy as a proof of their trust

Key evidence: “And I would add that I have literally told people to consider Kia. One friend was super surprised like ‘Really? A Kia?’ and then after she sat in ...” (FG2-129, P5); “I’m comfortable recommending them now, which I definitely wasn’t before. It feels more like I’m suggesting something that’s really, really good” (FG2-151, P5); “I already recommend it. I’ve told friends to try the EV models and they were surprised in a good way, so I’ll keep doing that” (FG2-331, P5). In this generational group, word-of-mouth is a strong signal of loyalty. They are willing to recommend Kia, but it is for practical reasons (“it’s really good now”) rather than emotional loyalty.

1.2.1.3. Redesign is a trigger, but consistency is the real driver for loyalty

Key evidence: “The logo lets me reconsider them without the old backpack they used to have. It raised the expectations” (ML01_011); “Trust isn’t from a badge, but from consistency. But the new identity didn’t hurt... It made me more open to believe the reviews I have been reading” (ML01_012); “They’re on my list for the next lease. The brand now feels competitive with the names I usually check” (ML01_013).

the logo redesign does not create loyalty on its own, but it definitely make Millennials look again and expect more from the brand.

1.2.1.4. Owner perspective: EV9 experience and “ecosystem” loyalty

Key evidence: “It has put them in comparison now with premium big SUVs like Volvo or BMW. The experience in the EV9 mostly delivers on that promise” (ML02_011); “Trust came from the ownership: very easy-to-use charging planning... transparent service scheduling” (ML02_012); “ecosystem-based loyalty”; “Yes, as I am here with an EV9, I did consider it, haven’t I? And now I’m kind of used to their system as well and I wouldn’t really want to be forced to switch” (ML02_013).

Millennial owner perspective, loyalty is not just about the car itself but about the whole experience around it, such as charging, digital tools, service, and how well these elements fit into their everyday lives.

1.2.1.5. Value-focused loyalty: premium feel without the premium badge

Key evidence: “I’d recommend it to someone who wants something that feels premium without paying extra only for the badge” (FG2-336, P4); “Depends on the brand. If I’ve used a brand for years and I see they are genuinely improving, I’m loyal” (FG2-211, P1); “knows what it’s doing”; “I don’t miss the old one. I can only repeat what was said already: this feels current, like a brand that knows exactly what it’s doing” (FG2-194, P1).

loyalty for these Millennials is value-driven and performance-based. Millennials are willing to stick with Kia if it keeps delivering a modern, trustworthy product that feels “premium enough” without charging extra for the badge.

1.2.2. Brand Nostalgia

For Millennials, when it comes to nostalgia regarding Kia, it is weak and mostly practical.

1.2.2.1. Early memories express poor image.

Key evidence: “I still kind of connect Kia with my uni days because... breaking down, had issues non-stop” (FG2-007, P5); “My parents had a Kia Picanto when I was in high school... just to get

from point A to B” (FG2-009, P6); “Back then during my university times, Kia was the typical car everyone had. Practical, anonymous, nothing special” (ML01_004). Nostalgia here is low-key and functional. Kia is a part of their everyday lives, but is not a brand which they feel attached to.

1.2.2.2. Old logo and past image: corporate and “zero identity”.

Key evidence: “I remember honestly not paying attention.... rental parking lots, airport cars, whatever. Zero identity” (FG2-039, P1); “It felt so corporate. Like an old car company brochure. Red oval, white letters, very safe, very 2005” (FG2-045, P4); “It made me expect plastic interiors and low quality. It wasn’t aspirational at all” (ML01_006). The old logo is remembered, but not missed, and it communicates low excitement and low status.

1.2.2.3. The old logo as a poor fit now.

Key evidence: “I don’t miss the old one. I can only repeat what was said...” (FG2-195, P1); “New, definitely! It makes the car look serious. The old made everything look a bit entry level, even if the car wasn’t” (FG2-198, P2); “No, not at all. The old logo would be a total non-fit for the new EV9, complete mismatch” (ML02_016). Rather than nostalgia, they see the old symbol as something that would hold the brand back.

1.2.2.4. Preferring confident modern over nostalgia.

Key evidence: “I like what I’d call confident modern. Not trendy for six months, not retro for nostalgia points” (FG2-281, P4); “Yes! Very reduced and confident, like good product UX.... It doesn’t rely on nostalgia. Complete shift from the old one” (ML01_014); “You can have some signals back to the old logo, but I always prefer modern” (ML01_017). For these Millennials, good branding is clear, modern and practical.

1.2.3. Perceived Innovation

For Millennials, Kia now appears more as an EV- and tech-focused brand that has obviously moved on from its earlier image which was considered way less innovative.

1.2.3.1. From “not innovative” to EV and tech brand.

Key evidence: “For me now it’s an EV brand, like I don’t even think ‘small city car’ anymore. I think ‘Kia = electric crossover with super-fast charging’” (FG2-011, P2); “I think ‘tech-y’. Not engine performance, but software, screens, the whole interface. The vibe is that this is more like a device than an old-school car” (FG2-012, P3); “I would add also that they feel way more global now... it feels more now like an international player in the EV race” (FG2-032, P3); “basic car maker”.

1.2.3.2. New identity as a clear level up.

Key evidence: “My first thought is that they have leveled up, it’s like they decided they don’t want to be the cheap and uncool option anymore” (FG2-016, P6); “Innovative in how it reframes the brand. It pushes you to see the car fully fresh, which is rare for legacy carmakers and OEMs” (ML01_015).

1.2.3.3. Innovation must be backed up by product and experience as proof.

Key evidence: “The quality jump is obvious. The seats, the screens, the materials... You can tell they’re not trying to win by being the cheapest lease. They’re trying to win by the message of ‘you’ll get more for what you pay’” (FG2-025, P2); “At first I was not really understanding what is this... but it grew on me as the product earned it, the cars I’ve sat in backed up the communicated quality” (ML01_010); “Very clean. It looks like a company that develops software updates, not just cars” (ML02_008); “I’m very pro-innovation, but only when it’s real... If you really changed who you are, then yeah, just show it. That’s how I felt with Kia” (FG2-258, P5). For this group, innovation is only credible when identity, quality and technology go hand in hand, together.

1.2.3.4. The type of customer.

When they think about who Kia is speaking to now, Millennials describe a tech-oriented person: “People who want tech and that futuristic EV feeling, but who don’t necessarily want the loud luxury personality. Innovation for them is not about shouting out loud that you are different and want something next level, but more about calm, clear progress: modern, self-aware and practical.

1.2.4. Resistance to Change

For Millennials, resistance to change around Kia's logo and the brand itself is dependent on the situation, and it is definitely not automatic.

1.2.4.1. First reaction: confusion and annoyance.

Key evidence: "tech-y"; "I'll be honest, I didn't like that I couldn't read it. ...felt like they cared way more about looking edgy and cool..." (FG2-075, P6); "My first reaction was, as I said before, like 'Calm down!'" (FG2-180, P6). the initial resistance is mainly about readability and first impressions.

1.2.4.2. Pushing back when a brand seems to jump too fast.

Key evidence: "I'll say it, at first I indeed thought they were trying too hard... that was before I actually sat in the car" (FG2-102, P6); "I hate when a brand tries to jump three steps of prestige overnight. That instant jump makes me resist ..." (FG2-251, P1); "trying too hard,"; "I would not use the words trying too hard. I thought they were finally catching up. Like, the rest of the market already went futuristic with their show rooms and pop-up stores, while Kia was still on this generic dealership" (FG2-106, P1). Millennials show some resistance to sudden status jumps that do not yet match what they know about the brand, even if they agree that the moving up is necessary.

1.2.4.3. "Wait and see": careful adoption and risk management.

Key evidence: "I wait usually. It depends also on the type of product....In this case, I was more proactive" (ML01_018); "If the ecosystem moves with the mark, I'm in. But I usually wait for others to try" (ML02_018); "I like updates but as I said I almost always wait until others... Same happened with my EV9, I did not buy immediately" (ML02_021). This shows a "wait and see" approach for this group: they are not against change, but they prefer to let others test it first and check if the whole ecosystem (cars, apps, services) really follows this new direction.

1.2.4.4. Rejecting change that feels empty or destroys meaning.

Key evidence: "Yes heritage is comforting, it feels safe, but it can also trap you. Some brands use history as an excuse to never grow. That turns me off" (FG2-215, P5); "My first instinct is always kind of like why are you doing that?... You're used to seeing something in a certain way and

suddenly it feels just, off” (FG2-228, P2); “Twitter turning into X. That one is just off for me” (FG2-247, P2); “Twitter changing to X, big time no. It threw away everything, heritage, meaning and community symbol. Was a very bad decision in my opinion” (ML02_020). In these examples, resistance is related to authenticity and usability.

1.2.5. Emotional Response to the Logo

Key evidence: “just transport”; “cheap, generic”.

1.2.5.1. Clean, modern, confident, and a different “energy”.

Key evidence: “I get the impression of clean, modern, kind of confident. The brand feels very self-aware now. It feels like they’re saying, ‘we know we belong here’.” (FG2-014, P4); “The energy. Before, Kia felt like transportation, now it feels like something you’d want in your life. It’s like the difference between ‘I need a phone’ and ‘I’m getting an iPhone because I like how it looks’” (FG2-024, P1); “For me it’s honestly surprisingly nice inside. I was expecting plastic and rental-car energy and it wasn’t that at all” (FG2-015, P5); “The quality jump is obvious. The seats, the screens, the driving... it all doesn’t feel rookie-level anymore...They’re trying to win by the message of ‘you’ll get more for what you pay’” (FG2-026, P2). Overall, the new logo is not just nice, but it changes how the car feels: it went from a basic transport to something that feels modern and desirable.

1.2.5.2. Status, pride and social perception.

Key evidence: “For me the biggest change is status. When my parents bought the Kia Picanto back in the day, nobody bragged about it. It was chosen for the practicality. Nobody bragged about owning a Kia. Now if someone says, like yeah, I’ve got an EV6, it actually sounds kind of cool” (FG2-029, P1); “I think that’s the biggest change that social media made for brands like Kia. Before, it was something you’d hide or joke about. Now, you wouldn’t make jokes about it anymore but you’d actually proudly post it” (FG2-030, P6); “My personal surprise is that I actually want to go sit in one now and drive it” (FG2-349, P2); “My surprise is that I’m kind of proud of them” (FG2-350, P3). Here, the logo becomes a symbol of status and earned pride, and it no longer feels embarrassing, but rather something that you can show and share.

1.2.5.3. Old badge emotions: corporate, generic, low expectations.

Key evidence: “I didn’t have a personal memory about driving it, but visually the old one felt very mass-market, very generic. Like the brand equivalent of supermarket packaging” (FG2-043, P3); “It felt so corporate. Like an old car company brochure. Red oval, white letters, very safe, very 2005” (FG2-046, P2); “For me it kind of set expectations low. If I saw that badge, I assumed everything inside would be hard plastic and that nothing inside would feel premium, like at all” (FG2-047, P4); “It didn’t match what younger buyers want now, which is, we want to feel like the brand also says something about us. That old badge wasn’t something you’d want to take pictures of” (FG2-048, P6). In other words, the old logo represented low expectations and no emotional connection, so the new identity stands out for them strongly in contrast to the old one.

1.2.5.4. Surprise at how much the logo matters.

Key evidence: “I always thought that nice rebranding, from a professional-design point of view. So I’m definitely leaving with more respect than I had before” (FG2-321, P4); “...I think I underestimated how much the badge changes how you feel about the car. I didn’t think that mattered that much before, but actually it really does” (FG2-322, P1); “If I wanna be completely honest, before this conversation, Kia was not something I thought about at all. Now I actually want to sit in one just to check if this all feels like it looks” (FG2-325, P2); “For me, it’s how much the logo on the front changes how you feel about yourself in the car. I didn’t expect that to matter so much, but it really does” (FG2-348, P5). These reflections show that for Millennials group, the logo is not just decoration, but it shapes how they feel about the car, about the brand and about themselves too as drivers.

1.2.6. Trust

For Millennials, trust in the Kia brand is earned and conditional. They focus less on heritage and more on whether Kia proves it “knows what it’s doing right now”.

1.2.6.1. From “good for the price” to credible.

Key evidence: “I’ll add Kia to that list. I wasn’t considering Kia before. After the identity shift, I actually took them seriously” (FG2-242, P3); “I would say credibility. The redesign gives them

credibility. Before, Kia was good for the price. Now it just looks good, period” (FG2-117, P4); “Yes. The logo let me reconsider them without the old backpack they used to have. It raised the expectations” (ML01_011). Trust begins when Kia moves out of the “cheap but fine” category into a space where it feels like a serious option.

1.2.6.2. Design as a signal they are “in it for real”.

Key evidence: “...When a brand invests in design that seriously, it usually means they’re investing in the product too. It tells me that they are not just trying to sell you something cheap and then disappear” (FG2-132, P3); “I feel that too and they are getting recognition now. You can hear all the time about them winning awards for design and EV stuff. That tells me this is not just a marketing hype...” (FG2-133, P4); “Trust isn’t from a badge, but from consistency. But the new identity signals they are investing properly. It made me more open to believe the reviews I have been reading” (ML01_012). Here, design is as a trust signal that Kia is seriously building the brand and product.

1.2.6.3. Trust built in the car, details and aftersales.

Key evidence: “My EV6 doesn’t feel like entry-level electric at all. It feels like they care. So that builds trust for me way more than how much only a slogan would” (FG2-138, P2); “I also connect trust to attention to detail. And right now it feels like they are paying attention, the badge, the headlights, the inside, even how you interact with the tech” (FG2-143, P5); “I would say for me it’s not just the logo itself, but the fact that the logo matches the product now, that’s what builds trust” (FG2-145, P1); “Trust came from the ownership: very easy-to-use charging planner, OTA updates that actually work, sometimes a bit too often pop-up bit it is okay, transparent service scheduling” (ML02_012). trust is dependent on the full journey and every aspect: how the car feels, how the tech behaves and how the brand treats them in aftersales phase.

1.2.6.4. Conditions and limits.

Key evidence: “I don’t need a brand to be 100 years old. I need it to feel like it knows what it’s doing right now. That’s what makes me trust it, that simple. Not the story in the museum” (FG2-217, P2); “I’m in-between. I like updates, but I also like familiarity. Familiarity builds trust for me.

If a brand reinvents itself every six months, I definitely stop believing it. So I'm open to change, but..." (FG2-261, P3); "I lean modern. Clean, sharp, minimal signals to me that the company is still moving, still investing. But it only works if the actual product and experience also feel modern, without that, no" (FG2-279, P2); "Don't drop the quality now that you've got attention" (FG2-339, P2). So their trust is real but clearly conditional, as it depends on constant quality, consistent behavior, and a "smart confident" approach rather than arrogance or non-stop reinvention.

1.2.7. Attachment to Tradition

For the Millennials group, attachment to tradition is selective and dependent on the context.

1.2.7.1. "No Ferrari-level heritage to protect".

Key evidence: "My first reaction to it wasn't heritage, it was new chapter. With my parents' old Picanto, Kia didn't really have design heritage to protect, like at all. Zero design language, sorry. So they could afford to just move forward..." (FG2-167, P6); "I agree. They didn't have that typical iconic heritage in the prestige sense. They had practical heritage: value, reliability. So they weren't throwing away a Ferrari-level legacy. They are building their real legacy now" (FG2-207, P3); "And with Kia specifically, I actually respect them more for changing. Their old heritage, for me, was just affordable little hatchback. That's not a heritage I'm emotionally attached to, or can be attached to" (FG2-222, P6); "This one aligns with where they're going. The old one was outdated" (ML01_016). Overall, the Millennials group sees little heritage to "protect" and consider reinvention as the right move for Kia.

1.2.7.2. Different rules for different brands: some should protect, others should reinvent

Key evidence: "For me it depends on who you are. A brand like Rolex or Mercedes? You don't want to mess with that identity too much, because tradition is literally part of the value. A brand like Kia? Reinvention is your identity" (FG2-268, P6); "Definitely, context matters. Not everyone has the same kind of heritage to protect" (FG2-271, P2); "I lean way more towards change. Things are moving fast in our world and if you freeze or get stuck just because of tradition, you become no one so quickly. I respect brands that are going forward" (FG2-266, P4); "I care about heritage,

I like to see it, but not essential. Depends case by case” (ML02_017). Therefore, attachment to tradition is truly conditional: they value it for some legacy brands, but not as a barrier for Kia.

1.2.7.3. Continuity without getting stuck: meaning first, then history.

Key evidence: “Yes heritage is comforting, it feels safe, but it can also trap you. Some brands use history as an excuse to never grow. That turns me off” (FG2-213, P5); “I like continuity. Not like the ‘never touch it’ type, but don’t erase yourself so much that I don’t know who you are anymore” (FG2-276, P1); “For me it’s meaning. I don’t care if it’s a classic graphic or a futuristic monogram. I care if it matches with who the brand is right now. If the logo lies, that does not work” (FG2-283, P6); “My favorite is when brands modernize but keep it recognizable through the shapes, angles, attitude. You can evolve the language without deleting the whole alphabet” (FG2-286, P5). Meaning and recognizability matter more than simply keeping the old look exactly as it was.

1.2.7.4. Earned heritage and “fresh eyes”.

Key evidence: “Very reduced and confident, like good product UI. It doesn’t rely on nostalgia. Complete shift from the old one” (ML01_014); “Innovative in how it reframes the brand. It pushes you to evaluate the car fully fresh, which is rare for legacy carmakers and OEMs” (ML01_015); “I care more about execution than heritage. If the product is good, the heritage can come later. You can earn heritage” (FG2-218, P3); “Both. Keep some history, but modernize” (ML02_022). For this cohort, heritage is not a fixed aspect but something that a brand earns through good, honest execution over time, on the long run.

1.2.8. Openness to New Design

the Millennials group is positive and open towards new design, including Kia’s logo change, but their openness is conditional, similarly to other topics.

1.2.8.1. From “airport rental” to socially acceptable.

Key evidence: “rental car”; “Yes, my memory is airport rental too. ‘Here’s your Kia, sir.’ You just accept it. It wasn’t like ‘oh how cool’” (FG2-042, P3); “Socially acceptable. You’re not apologizing for it” (FG2-060, P5); “If the old red oval had still been on the hood, I would’ve had a

certain expectation. With this new one, it felt like, okay, maybe this is actually a nice car, which I'm allowed to consider now" (FG2-083, P2). Here, openness means willingness to look again at the brand that was previously ignored or even only tolerated.

1.2.8.2. Open, but with a “wait and see” approach.

Key evidence: “I didn't feel proud at first. I felt a little like, okay, calm down, you're still Kia. But then I sat in one and I was like, oh, okay, you're allowed to act like this. Then it made sense” (FG2-093, P6); “I'll say it, at first I indeed thought they were trying too hard. I was thinking, you're not a spaceship company, you are not Tesla. But that was before I actually sat in the car” (FG2-104, P6); “I wait usually. It depends also on the type of product. In this case, as I like cars, I check video reviews usually. But most of the time I wait until innovators try it out and reviews reach me. In this case, I was more proactive” (ML01_018); “If the ecosystem moves with the mark, I'm in. But I usually wait for others to try” (ML02_018). So even when they like modern design, openness is often “careful openness”: they want proof that the new look is backed up by a real product change.

1.2.8.3. Welcoming some changes, rejecting others.

Key evidence: “good”; “I use Slack every day and their evolution a few years bac, was controversial at first, I remember, but the new system scaled better across different devices and surfaces. It looked very much considered, not trendy” (ML01_019); “Tropicana's carton redesign back in the day, this is personal for me I guess. Very nice in a deck, but confusing on a shelf” (ML01_020); These comparisons show that Millennials are open to change when it feels considered, practical and respectful, but push back when it feels random or obsessed around gaining status.

1.2.8.4. Principles for being open to redesign.

Key evidence: “Update with an intention, a goal. Keep what is meaningful and improve what creates confusion” (ML01_021); “Truthfulness. “I like updates but as I said I almost always wait until others try and then I hear back either good or bad stuff. Same happened with my EV9, I did not buy immediately” (ML02_021); “Both. Keep some history, but modernize” (ML02_022). For Millennials, openness to new design is strongest when change feels actually intentional, honest and appropriate to the brand's role and history.

APPENDIX D:

Focus Group Guide

Introduction:

Thank you for joining this focus group discussion. We're here to have an open conversation about your thoughts and feelings around the Kia brand, focusing on its logo redesign. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to react to each other, agree, disagree, or build on others' comments, everyone's unique experience is highly valuable. Everything you share will be kept strictly confidential. You can choose not to answer any question or leave the study at any time.

To help spark discussion, I have printed images of the old and new Kia logos, as visual prompts. Please take a look and refer to them whenever you like as we talk.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns before we begin or during the session, please feel free to let me know. Otherwise, let's get started!

Guide:

Section	Group Discussion Prompts
Brand Awareness & Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What comes to mind when you think of the Kia brand?• How familiar are you with the Kia brand?• Have you noticed any change in the brand in the recent years?• Does anyone have a specific memory or feeling about it?• What do you remember about the old logo?• What is your perception of the old logo?
Emotional Reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When the new Kia logo was launched, where did you noticed first?• What was your first reaction?• How do your feelings compare now?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have they changed over the years?
Brand Perception & Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the new logo changed how you see Kia as a brand? • Do you think the redesign influences your trust on Kia? • Do you think the redesign influences your likelihood of considering Kia? (Would anyone like to share a different opinion?)
Heritage vs. Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you see the new logo as modern? • Do you see the new logo as innovative? • Do you miss the old design? • Let's discuss: who prefers which, and why? • How important do you think a brand's heritage is?
Attitudes Toward Innovation & Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When brands you know change their logo, what's your usual reaction? • Can you recall times you welcomed a logo change? • Can you recall times you resisted a logo change? • Do you tend to appreciate brands that try new things, or do you prefer tradition? (Does anyone have a different preference or example?) • What do you value more, a modern logo or a sense of history?
Wrap-Up	Is there anything else anyone would like to add or discuss about Kia, its logo (old or new), or your feelings?

Closing:

Thank you all so much for your time and for sharing your thoughts and experiences today. Your unique perspectives are truly valuable for understanding how people feel about Kia's logo change and what it means for consumers, just like you.

If you have any other comments or thoughts you couldn't/didn't share, please feel free to reach out anytime.

Thank you again for your time and openness.

APPENDIX E:

Interview Guide

Introduction:

Thank you again for your time and taking part. In this interview, I'd like to go deeper into your experiences, thoughts and feelings about Kia's logo change, especially after our group conversation. As mentioned before, there are no right or wrong answers, I would just like to deep-dive into your unique perspective. I may also follow up on something you mentioned in the focus group.

Again, if you have any questions, comments or concerns before we begin or during the interview, please feel free to let me know. Otherwise, let's get started!

Guide:

Section	Personal Probing Prompts
Brand Awareness & Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What comes to mind for you personally when you think of the Kia brand When you think of the Kia brand, what comes to mind for you personally?• How would you describe your own familiarity with the Kia brand?• Have you personally noticed any changes in the Kia brand in recent years?• Do you have any specific personal memories or feelings about the Kia brand you'd like to share?• What do you personally remember about the old Kia logo?• How would you describe your own perception of the old Kia logo?
Emotional Reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where did you first notice the new Kia logo?• What was your very first reaction to seeing it?• How do you feel about the logo now?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your feelings about the logo changed over the years? If so, how?
Brand Perception & Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the new logo changed how you see Kia as a brand? • Do you feel the redesign has influenced your trust in Kia? If so, how? • Has the redesign affected how likely you are to consider Kia in the future? Why or why not?
Heritage vs. Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you see the new Kia logo as modern? Why? • Do you see the new Kia logo as innovative? Why? • Do you miss the old design? Why yes / not? • How important is a brand's heritage or history in its logo for you personally?
Attitudes Toward Innovation & Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a brand you like changes its logo, what's your personal reaction? • Can you remember a time you welcomed a logo change? • Can you remember a time you resisted a logo change? • Do you generally prefer brands that update and innovate, or ones that stick to tradition? • Can you share a personal example? • For you, what matters more in a logo: modern design, or continuity and history?
Wrap-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else about your feelings toward Kia or its logo you'd like to discuss?

Closing:

Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your honest views and personal experiences. Everything you've shared is important for my research and is truly appreciated.

If you remember anything else later or have more to add, you're always very welcome to contact me.

Thank you again for your openness and participation!

APPENDIX F:

Old and New Kia Logo Stimuli, shown during focus groups and interviews

Old Logo:



New Logo:

