

## Brain Gap: NeuroFocus Study Reveals What Went Wrong With the Gap's New Brand Logo

World's Largest Neuromarketing Company Applied Neuroscience Knowledge to Discover the  
Subconscious Reasons Beneath the Consumer Backlash

For Immediate Release

BERKELEY, Calif. – October 18, 2010 – On the spectrum of corporate rolls of the dice, altering an iconic logo representing a brand that has been a consumer favorite for generations is a high-risk proposition. The Gap is the latest company to confront that fact.



What went awry with the Gap's recently-introduced logo? NeuroFocus, the world's leading neuromarketing company, went looking for the most accurate and reliable answers in the best place to find them: the deep subconscious level of the brain. The company conducted neurological testing of Gap customers to discover why the new execution failed to attract them—and in some cases earned negative reactions.



In addition to the EEG-based brainwave activity measurements and eye tracking data it captured and analyzed in its study, NeuroFocus cited six principal Neurological Best Practices that the new logo violated. These Best Practices have been extracted from the thousands of neurological tests that the company has conducted worldwide.

### TOPLINE STUDY FINDINGS:

#### Subconscious Response Testing: The Key Role That 'Stylish' and 'Novelty' Played

NeuroFocus' study captured consumers' subconscious responses and evaluated them to reveal the effectiveness of both the original and the new logo. NeuroFocus scores responses across seven core categories: three primary NeuroMetrics of Attention, Emotional Engagement, and Memory Retention. Those are combined to arrive at an Overall Effectiveness score.

From the three primary NeuroMetrics, the company derives three more Marketplace Performance Indicators (MPIs) of Purchase Intent, Novelty, and Awareness.

#### Novelty:

This MPI is an especially critical metric for the studies that NeuroFocus conducts for branding projects, new product introductions, packaging designs, and logos. Neuroscientific research shows that the human brain craves and seeks what is new.

**EEG recordings revealed that the new logo did not register any scientifically significant increase in the Novelty metric.**

“Our counsel to companies is: when there is a **redesign** of a brand, an identity, a logo, a proposition, a tagline, a package or a product feature, such a design must deliver a scientifically significant and substantive change in the Novelty metric,” said Dr. A. K. Pradeep, Chief

Executive Officer of NeuroFocus. “In this instance, the Gap’s new logo failed to do that. Our recommendation would have been: without a significant increase in Novelty, this redesign will not succeed.”

### **Stylish:**

NeuroFocus utilized its Deep Subconscious Response methodology to tease out consumers’ precognitive perceptions of core brand attributes associated with the Gap brand. In this study, three attributes were tested to determine if the new logo produced any neurologically significant “brand lift” over the original design.

The three attributes tested were: **active**, **stylish**, and **authentic**.

**For ‘active’ and ‘authentic’, the results showed no scientifically significant increase between the original logo and the new logo.**

“This is a red flag, because it reveals that the new design is not contributing to heightened consumer perceptions of core brand attributes,” Dr. Pradeep said.

**Moreover, for the ‘stylish’ attribute, the study results showed that while the original logo scored at an exceptional level, the new logo failed to register at all for this critical attribute.**

“When we saw this specific result from our testing, we were not surprised by the consumer backlash,” Dr. Pradeep said. “With the new design, the Gap lost critical ground at the deep subconscious level for this essential brand attribute. For a retail apparel marketer seeking to reach and motivate their target audience, this loss of brand value in the ‘stylish’ category marks a major cause for concern.”

### **Neurological Best Practices:**

In addition to its brainwave activity measurements, as the NeuroFocus scientific team reviewed the new logo, they recognized that the design violated six basic Neurological Best Practices.

Dr. Pradeep outlined these six Neurological Best Practices that the Gap missed:

- **Overlays Equal Overlooked:** Neuroscience research reveals that when words overlay images, the brain tends to ignore or overlook the word in favor of focusing on the image. “In the new logo, the ‘p’ superimposed over the blue square is essentially bypassed by the brain; the brain tends to ignore the word in favor of the image. Not a good thing when that’s your brand name.”
- **Sharp Edges Unsettle the Subconscious:** “Forcing the brain to view a sharply-angled box behind the letter ‘p’ provokes what neuroscience calls an ‘avoidance response’. The hard line cuts into the rounded shape of the letter. We are hard-wired to avoid sharp edges—in nature, they can present a threat. Our so-called modern brains are actually 100,000 years old, and they retain this primordial reaction.”
- **Interesting Fonts Work:** Neuroscience research has shown that the subconscious prefers fonts that are a little unusual. The Gap’s original typeface was just different enough that it

tended to stand out to the brain amidst the clutter of other corporate IDs. “Being a little bit ‘funky’ appeals to the brain, and the Gap’s original design accomplished that by employing an interesting font. Our study confirms that, and shows why ‘boring’ is bad for business when it comes to type.”

- **High/Low Contrast:** “The original logo presented the brand name in sharp, strong contrast—white letters ‘pop’ against the blue background, and the brain loves pop-outs. Conversely, the new logo has the ‘p’ losing that contrast against the blue box. Again, the brain simply tends not to register the letter well as a result.”
- **Stronger Semantic Content:** “In the new version, the capitalized ‘G’ followed by the lower case ‘a’ and ‘p’ cause the brain to read the three letters as part of a word, and therefore seek semantic content. In the original execution, all three letters are capitalized, making them more logo-like than word-like, which is what you want for a logo.”
- **Lost Legacy:** “The Gap sells a lot more than just blue jeans today, but relegating the blue of the original logo to minor ‘legacy’ status in the new version loses that essential connection in the consumer’s subconscious to the brand’s core origins. We always emphasize to companies: depict your source. When it comes to products, the brain seeks to know from whence you came. Instead of honoring their past, unfortunately the Gap relegated that past to lower relevance.”

“The Gap’s experience simply reinforces the critical importance of the two questions that brand marketers should ask before moving ahead with something as central as a logo redesign,” Dr. Pradeep added. “They are: does the new design violate any Neurological Best Practices? And does the new design build upon the existing brand attributes that are identified through the Brand Essence Framework? For companies seeking to avoid costly and all-too-public mistakes that can erode brand image and brand loyalty and impact purchase intent, measuring consumers’ responses at the subconscious level of the brain is the best means to ensure success. Neuroscience proves that attempting to divine accurate and reliable answers to these questions through articulated responses is prone to failure. ‘The brain makes behavior’, and we applaud the Gap for recognizing their error and correcting it so that consumers will once again respond to this iconic brand in a positive way.”

Dr. Pradeep is the author of the new best-seller [The Buying Brain: Secrets for Selling to the Subconscious Mind](#), available through [Amazon.com](#), [Barnes&noble.com](#), [Borders.com](#), and [800CEOREad](#).

More information about “**The Buying Brain**” can be accessed by visiting the book’s [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter](#).

## NeuroFocus Methodology

NeuroFocus employs high-density arrays of medical grade EEG sensors to measure across the full brain. Each sensor captures brainwave activity at 2,000 times a second. The company also applies eye-tracking technology to identify the location of visual focus at the pixel level. A third measurement of GSR (galvanic skin response) is also made, to further confirm degrees of emotional engagement.

## ABOUT NEUROFOCUS

The world's leading neuromarketing firm, NeuroFocus (<http://neurofocus.com>) brings advanced neuroscience knowledge and expertise to the worlds of branding, product development and packaging, in-store marketing, advertising, and entertainment. NeuroFocus clients include Fortune 100 companies across dozens of categories.

Headquartered in the U.S. and operating globally through offices and NeuroLabs in the UK and Europe, the Asia/Pacific region, Latin America, and the Middle East, the company leverages Nobel Prize caliber and Doctorate-level credentials in neuroscience and marketing from the University of California at Berkeley, MIT, Harvard, Oxford, Columbia University, and other leading institutions, combined with executive business management and consulting experience.

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