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**From Asian premier airline to trouble airline: rebranding for revival of Pakistan International Airlines**

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## From Asian premier airline to trouble airline: rebranding for revival of Pakistan International Airlines

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**Abstract:** This case study discusses the rebranding story of Pakistan International Airlines by changing its visual identity and logo design. *PIA* dropped the national flag in favour of the animal (*Markhor*) picture in an attempt to revive the airline trapped in a deep financial crisis for decades. Over the decades, *PIA* lost its prestige image and needed a fresh brand identity for the revival of business. The management decided to introduce the *Markhor* livery (a *revolutionary logo design*) as a move to build a global identity and new identity for the airline. Thus, the study critically analyses the visual properties and characteristics of old vs. new logo designs of *PIA* and their liking/dislikes for customers and stakeholders. The study utilises a *brand orientation* framework to guide the research problem and reflects on the evolution of the logo, history, communication style, brand identity, and organisational culture of *PIA*.

**Keywords:** logo change; business revival; corporate rebranding; case study; Pakistan International Airlines; *PIA*.

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**Biographical notes:** Muhammad Zafran holds a PhD in Economics and Business, from Turība University Latvia in 2022 and participated in the Erasmus+ exchange programs at Turku School of Economic Finland and Kozminski University Warsaw, Poland (2019–2020). He graduated in MA Marketing from London Metropolitan University, UK in 2010. Since then, he lectured at prestigious universities in Pakistan including UMT Lahore, UCP Lahore, UET Lahore, and BNU Lahore. He has published his research work in peer-reviewed national and international journals. He has also participated in and presented research papers at international conferences including IASIA-April 2019, KTU, Lithuania, ICSHE 2018, Berlin, Germany, Q-RAM 2018, KU, Warsaw, Poland, XXI 2020, and XXII 2021 at Turība University, Latvia.

## 1 Introduction

Very few case studies on corporate rebranding in the airline industry have been presented so far except for EL AL airlines (Herstein et al., 2008). Many airlines have successfully managed to change their corporate brand image in recent years such as British Airways, Malaysia Airlines, and TAP Portugal. This research case study presents the rebranding story of *Pakistan International Airlines (PIA)*; a national flag carrier with a glorious past and once considered the most progressive airline in the world, now losing its customer base to Gulf Airlines. National flag carrier is under huge debt and industry experts believed that argue that starting with a new airline is perhaps the only option left. Many attempts have been made in the past to rebrand and turn around the organisation but all went in vain. In 2018, *PIA* revealed a new livery of *Markhor* – a wild goat specie found in the northern mountains of Pakistan, and also a national animal to build a global brand image for the airline. *Markhor* is known for resilience, steadfastness, and beauty which means fixing the broken image of *PIA* from a national brand to a global brand in international skies. The rebranding plan never saw the daylight and management reverted the decision under public immanence public pressure as well as court orders. *PIA* is facing a deep financial crisis due to shrinkage of market share, bad governance, mismanagement, poor brand image, and high competition from powerful airlines from the neighbouring Gulf. *PIA* is a national flag carrier and was the most prominent entity of Pakistan in the international skies. The airline carries passengers across the globe with state-of-the-art fleets Boeing-777 supported by A320. *PIA* has an expanding network of 27 international and 21 domestic routes.

*PIA* was a great airline destroyed by 30 years of democracy and overstaffing. *PIA* closed down more than half its network which was supposed to earn money to pay approximately 15,000 employees, fuel, and other expenses. National flag carrier is eating billions of rupees every year without any hope to achieve break-even soon. Some experts believe that declaring the airline bankrupt and starting with a new brand is the only option left for *PIA*. The first airline ever to show in-flight movies on international routes has lost its customer base because people perceive it as archaic and outdated. Entertainment does work sometimes and movie options are not updated frequently. *PIA* is operating like an old-fashioned government department rather young and modern business organisation. The organisation has a change-resistant culture with many layers of bureaucracy. The retirement age for cabin crew is 60 years, which is also, restraining the rebranding of *PIA*. The continuous decline in service quality has caused severe damage to its reputation. However, management initiated rebranding efforts in the past including operating premier services on selected routes and changing the old livery to a completely new one to revive the airline's image. The rebranding of the *PIA* by introducing *Markhor* Imagery got into controversy and the decision was halted by the supreme court of Pakistan in 2018. *PIA* had a glorious past and earned much prestige and honor to reach the pinnacle of the aviation industry in the 1970s. Now the airline is at the mercy of others- possible take-over from Gulf Airlines to take control of management to revive the glorious past. So, it is important to explore the rebranding and business revival efforts of *PIA* in the past and also find the barriers, enablers, and opportunities for the airline. This case study will not only benefit the local reader but also the audience interested in branding or revival issues in the aviation and air transport industry.

### *Teaching and case objectives*

This case introduces the key concepts such as brand identity, visual identity, and logo design change strategy in the brand-building process for the students (MBA and BBA Hons enrolled in the subject of strategic brand management) and practitioners. After studying this research case, students/practitioners will be able to learn

- How the visual properties of logo design (shapes, colours, typography, direction, spaces) affect the attractiveness of the logo and brand identity.
- Evolutionary vs. revolutionary changes in logo and consumer response to both approaches.
- Repositioning brand strategy disintegrating from past heritage and embracing modernism
- Key challenges in implementing branding and organisational change strategies in large public sector and bureaucratic organisations in developing countries like Pakistan.
- Understanding the concept of brand orientation, brand personality, brand equity, and brand story to build a powerful brand.
- Understanding Generation Z's relationships with brands, and decision-making.
- Assessment of risk associated with new logo design and repositioning of *PIA*.

### *Suggested readings*

- 1 Thuy, H.T.T. Emirates Airline.
- 2 Ullah, I. and Hina, H. (2022) 'State-owned enterprises not burden: a case study of Pakistan International Airline', *Pakistan Journal of Economic Studies (PJES)*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Article 2, pp.377–387.
- 3 Zaheer, M., Akbar, M.T. abd Ramzan, M. (2013) 'Image building in the airline industry: a case of Pakistan International Airline', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.192–204.
- 4 Gentil-Homem, P. and Ferrão, L. (2015) 'A design laboratory above the clouds: black & white and color stories of Portugal's Airline (1945–1979)', *Design Issues*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp.72–87.
- 5 Luffarelli, J., Mukesh, M. and Mahmood, A. (2019) 'Let the logo do the talking: the influence of logo descriptiveness on brand equity', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 56, No. 5, pp.862–878, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243719845000>.
- 6 Endrizalová, P.D.E., Novák, P.D.M., Němec, V., Tilšar, M. and Szabo, S. (2018) 'Brand design as the part of the airlines marketing strategy', *Marketing*, Vol. 1009, 6Ps.

*Discussion questions*

- 1 Fly to flag or fly to *Markhor*: Do you think, the *Markhor* livery was the best choice to rebrand the national airline and how does this visual identity communicate the brand personality of the airline?
- 2 Do you think consumers' response to *Markhor*'s image was more positive than the national flag and how does the new image influence consumer feelings and brand attitude?
- 3 How does the new livery of *Markhor* affect the brand personality of *PIA*?
- 4 Does the new typeface align with the brand personality of *PIA*?
- 5 How can *PIA* reconnect to different customer segments in a more meaningful way which creates a fresh brand identity and same time preserve the old heritage?
- 6 Do you think introducing *Markhor* livery was just a cosmetic makeover and the move doesn't create any value for the customers and the airline?
- 7 What are the possible limitations or negative associations of the new *Markhor* livery?

*Significance of the study*

First of all, this study adds to the current literature on brand logo design and provides a novel way to conceptualise and analyse logo design effectiveness. Second, the study explores logo design relationships with brand personality. Further, the study examines the logo's visual and textual design properties and their effects on brand image. Although, the theoretical framework and tested theories are used to explore the relationships and effects. Finally, the study provides important theoretical and managerial implications on the role of logos design when changing or implementing a new brand identity.

*How to use this case for teaching*

The reading material and questions can be shared by the instructor before class discussions so that students can come up with possible solutions and answers to the questions. Before the case discussions, the instructor needs to introduce key concepts and elements of brand positioning and brand identity. The case reading and discussions can be concluded in 45-55 minutes of class time. The instructor can relate the key concepts with the case study and can engage the students in discussion on questions and answers. The case study starts with a brief introduction about the *PIA* and its rebranding initiative taken in 2018. The instructor can start a discussion after playing a short video commercial (2.38 seconds) on multi-media. Showing a commercial featuring *Markhor*'s legacy explains the thought process and legends of *Markhor* to reinvent the *PIA*. In addition, students should visit the official website of *PIA* to know more about the brand's history, heritage, values, advertising campaigns, visual identity, typography, communication style, and other useful quotations. Exploring archives and history, I will familiarise students with brand heritage, identity, and about the glorious past of *PIA*. Every image and adverts are encoded with symbolic and cultural meanings and instructors should make possible interpretations. *PIA* adverts in the 1970s and 1980s

contained artful deviation and rhetorical figures which should be explained to understand the brand identity. Students should thoroughly examine Figure 1 to analyse the evolution and incremental changes in the visual identity and logo design of *PIA*.

### 1.1 History and background

*PIA* started its journey as *orient airways* right after the independence on the instructions of *Muhammad Ali Jinnah*, Pakistan's founding father, who visualised the future of Pakistan and the need to have a national airline to connect distance apart two wings of the newly born country – today Pakistan and Bangladesh. In 1955, Orient Airways was merged into *Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC)*, through a government ordinance. It became the first Asian airline to fly jetliners-Boeing 707s and 777-200LR- the longest-range commercial flight in its fleet, the first to offer onboard movies to all passengers, first to ever receive a maintenance approval certificate by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and *PIA*, Kitchen in Karachi was preparing up to 25,000 meal per day. In 1960, *PIA* started flights to London using Boeing 707, leased from Pan Am and later extended the route to New York. It also operated a scheduled helicopter network in the 1960s. By the end of 1970, it expanded so rapidly that it opened its poultry form to fulfil the catering needs and nursery to stock the cabin with fresh flowers on international destinations to London, Paris, New York, Moscow, Peking-Republic of China, Tehran, Dacca, Geneva, Rome, Istanbul, Dubai, Beirut, Tripoli, Cairo, Bangkok, Manila, and Tokyo.

In a span of a decade, *PIA* became a benchmark for many new airlines and it helped other countries to set up their fleets including Singapore Airlines, Emirates and Royal Jordanian Airlines, Iran Air, Iraqi Airways, Alyemda Airline (Yamen), and Syrian Arab Airline. The crew from Air Malta, Alyemda, and Tarom (Romania), a Turkish Airline used the centre 707 simulations of *PIA*. The training centre in Karachi trained over 3,000 staff from 36 foreign operators in the 1980s. *PIA* send its staff for the training of simulation for 747 from All Nippon, in Tokyo, for DC10-from American airline based in Britain, and for A-300 from Bangkok-Thailand. *PIA* has certification from the US-FFA, CAA-UK, and from authorities from China, Jordan, Malta, Nepal, and Yugoslavia and earned \$2.5 million for engineering works in 1984. *PIA* became a powerful brand and enjoyed a distinct brand positioning- classy-modern and known for hospitality all over the world. *PIA* added a Boeing 747s-long haul fleet in the 1980s making the airline more competitive with other carriers in Europe. Being the first non-communist airline to fly to China and *PIA* enjoyed the reputation of innovator and Asian most progressive airline because of its wide range of innovative decisions such as operating a jetliner (Boeing 707), upgrading its fleet with 737-300 and A-300 utilisation, operating a helicopters network in East Pakistan, Alliance with KLM-Royal Dutch Airline to operate a hotel in Karachi, starting poultry business and so on.

### 1.2 Brand heritage and identity

*PIA* developed a unique brand identity through coordinated branding efforts with a focus on fleets, cabin crew, and in-flight services and entertainment. For instance, in the 1960s, Pierre Cardin and Sir Hardy Amies designed the uniform of *PIA* through an open competition, which became the identity of the *PIA* brand. Designers like Sir Hardy Amies- designer of Queen Elizabeth II and Pierre Cardin, great names in the fashion

industry considered it worthy of attaching their names with *PIA*. They designed a traditional trademark *Dupatta* (Scarf) on the head for female flight attendants, which became the identity of the airline (Khan, 2021). In addition, the marketing department designed the most creative and artistic style travel posters and print advertisements that exhibited elements of modernism, boldness, creativity, joy, comfort, love, family reunion, success, and excitement for top international destinations. Creativity in advertising was a central piece of building the brand image of the airline. The tagline *VIA PIA* with the dark shadow of a jetliner on the twin towers of New York got the attention of many across borders (see Figure A1). Similarly, other adverts depicted upscale sophisticated, modern, and well-educated families and pilots who look like movie stars (see Figure A3). The quality and finesse of the pilots, the expertise and competence of the technical staff and engineers, the knowledge and capability of the cabin crew, and of course their grace and beauty made *PIA* a strong brand.

Hospitality and customer care was the key component of the service strategy at *PIA*. For example, a print advertisement shows three columns:

- 1 a flying aircraft in black shadow-underneath line reads *world most interesting airline*
- 2 depicts a smart and intelligent pilot-underneath text reads – *our pilots have been trained for years ...*
- 3 and good-looking young hostess in *PIA* dress code- underneath line reads – *our hostess trained for centuries.*

This illustrates Eastern culture of hospitality extended over 5,000 years and is embedded into the *PIA* services strategy (see Figure A2). Pakistan is a society where space is communal such as hugging and handshakes, standing close to each other, leaning through observation, and thinking proceeding from general discussion to a more specific topic. Individual identities are rooted in the tribe, family, religion, and society rather in themselves and their achievements. Non-verbal communication such as voice tone and facial expression means a lot, as well as indirect messages, are used as preferred modes of communication. Urdu and Punjabi poetry has a great influence on the communication style of people in the sub-continent and therefore marketing professionals employ the ingredients of art, music, poetry, and folklore in their marketing creative brief.

*PIA* produced some remarkable adverts addressing the issue of race, gender, ethnicity, and subliminal advertising in the 1970s. For instance, the advert depicts the tagline ‘our unfair disadvantage’ picturing a brown skin female cabin crew in traditional attire which is portrayed as a symbol of Eastern hospitality and beauty (see Figure A4). The advert closes by rejecting the notion of a colour disadvantage as *unfair to other airlines, but not to our passengers*. *PIA* was bold enough to use seductive and glamorous advertisements such as it designed a poster that shadowed the names of international destinations on the body of a model wearing a black bra. The ad was created with the intended meaning of comfort, relaxation, and care for passengers on board.

### 1.3 Evolution of *PIA*’s logo design

Corporate rebranding is common among practitioners and changing logo designs is one of the tools for executing corporate rebranding (Joseph et al., 2021). Rebranding communication is a key feature of leadership as well as employee satisfaction. Corporate branding communicates brand values and purpose. Corporate rebranding is only

successful when stakeholders buy in to identity, vision, and values of the brand (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). A large number of international brands have gone through rebranding exercises, some with failures and some with desired results. For instance, in 2010 Gap, an apparel brand reverted the decision and resumes the original logo immediately after a negative response from consumers. Similarly, Shell's failure in early 1990 (Miller and Merrilees, 2013), British Airways modified the logo by excluding union jack to fit in with the international brand image (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). On the other hand, British fashion brand, Burberry successfully repositioned the brand in 2002 (Moore and Birtwistle, 2004). The difference between the failure and success of corporate rebranding is the level of corporate research (Miller and Merrilees, 2013). Product innovation positively influences consumer word of mouth and purchase decisions (Wahyuni, 2019).

The *PIA* logo has gone through several little changes throughout its history since 1955. These changes were rather small and incremental which hardly caught the attention of the audience, compliance to *just noticeable difference* (JND) principle. These small changes were consistent with the brand identity-national flag, dark green colour, and *PIA* encrypted on the body in English and Urdu languages. But in 2018, the national flag was replaced with the livery of *Markhor* (Ibex or mountain goat), reflecting a disruptive change. The old livery contains the national flag on the tail of each plane and English capital letters *PIA* painted in green on the main fuselage along with the Urdu version in golden colour. *PIA* dropped the national flag in favour of *Markhor* as an emblem aiming to give the airline a fresh look as indicated in Figure 2. The colour scheme changes from dark green to sky blue, light green, and yellow. The new livery also incorporates a new slogan, *We fly with the right attitude* replacing the old version *Come fly with us* and *Great people to fly with*. Despite all the efforts, *PIA* has to revert the decision because of criticism and intervention by the supreme court of Pakistan for the greater public interest.

- *The 1950s*: National flag appears in small as a sticker on the fins of the super constellation. PAKISTAN INTERNATIONAL in uppercase, the green colour appeared on the fuselage in white separated by a green colour cheatline from the lower body.
- *The 1960s*: Uppercase English letters *PIA* with a line of white stars below (eight) and above (eleven) appear on a dark green tail. A white contrail of a stylised aircraft crossed the *PIA* tail logo. The Upper fuselage contains PAKISTAN INTERNATIONAL in English and the national flag on both sides. *Urdu and Bengali* scripts of *PIA* were marked on the port side and starboard side of the fuselage respectively. A decorative horizontal green line, called cheatline was applied in *Sabre* style to both sides of the fuselage below the cabin window line.
- *The 1970s*: No change in fins livery. However, the green colour was modified and the cheatline line covers the window line on the fuselage.
- *1975*: Double line of stars above and below and a white contrail of stylised aircraft crossing the letters *PIA* was removed from the tail livery. No change in fuselage design.
- *The 1980s*: A combination of national green, gold, and white designed by Negus and Negus of London transform the livery of the airline in the 80s with traces in the present-day logo. The upper fuselage in white separated by a golden line covering

the windows and below a broad peacock green band extending the length of the fuselage was a distinct feature in the 80s. For the first time, *PIA* initially styled Urdu – a kind of Islamic calligraphy art in golden colour was incorporated on the upper front fuselage which remains part of the fuselage livery.

- *The 1990s:* Livery was given a sporty look. PAKISTAN INTERNATIONAL was reduced to lowercase one word – Pakistan in green on the upper white fuselage. Urdu initials of *PIA* in golden were changed to grass green. The tail livery remains unchanged except for incorporating a white line on the frontal edge of the fin. The aircraft's belly was covered by a broad strip of green with three cut-off vertical strips near the front. V-curve dark green represented the natural beauty and fertility of Pakistan, whereas grass green and pale blue symbolise *PIA*'s love for sport and sponsorship of all games. It was the time when Pakistan won the Cricket world cup from England in 1992.
- *The 2000s:* All white fuselage with enlarged lowercase Pakistan in green and Urdu script in light green. The tail introduces Pakistani traditional floral patterns – *Pashmina* and *Kashikari* painted in light green over dark background with *PIA* initials in white. Soon the pattern was replaced with the standard fin livery of the 1990s.
- *2004:* A brand new livery was introduced by incorporating a dark green diagonal line diving the fuselage into two half-fronts in white and the rear in off-white colour. The Tail painted in white showed a little waving national flag, while, letters *PIA* moved to the upper front fuselage with the style of a wide margin between letters.
- *2006:* National flag on the tail was replaced with a motif representing four provinces of Pakistan with Urdu initials in green. Under this repositioning, the flag moved to the main fuselage and every plane was named after the city, while the motif tail represented the home province of that city. The objective was to protect the rich heritage of the *Indus Valley Civilisation*. For example, the KPK province motif included a “*Phulkari*” (flowering) pattern that reflects a rich and colourful tradition of embroidery generally done on shawls, shirts, and linen dating back to the *Gandhara* civilisation and reflecting Greek influence. Punjab's motifs reflect royal craftsmanship including floral designs, figures of birds, and majestic elephants in historical buildings and gardens such as *Sheesh Mahal* and *Wazir Khan Mosque* in Lahore, which is the design on the tail of the airplane. (see Figure A5). Each major city on the list has its unique patterns and design.
- *2010:* National flag covers the entire tail of the plane cut off at the bottom with curve shape white colour band, which gives the flag a waving look. Two colour diagonal lines originating from the belly and extending to the tail, divide the fuselage into two halves. The *PIA* logo is placed on the front fuselage in dark green colour in addition to the Urdu version of the text. The original golden colour of Urdu text designed in 1970 was restored in the mid-2010s.

*PIA*'s livery had gone through several but minor changes since 1955. It is evident from the history and evolution of *PIA*'s logo that small incremental changes introduced were consistent with brand identity. The magnitude of change remained below the threshold level of consumers and thus easily accepted. It can be seen that all changes communicated the same brand concept and unified brand identity by representing the

national flag, upper case letters *PIA* and PAKISTAN INTERNATIONAL in prominent dark green colour, and *Urdu* text in gold on the white fuselage. The logo evolution also shows that all the variant of the logo introduced in Figure 1 represents a unified brand identity at the graphic as well as abstraction level. The text and symbolic expression of old logos conveyed a similar meaning clearly and distinctly. Although the national flag (featuring a white crescent and a star) rarely appeared on the tail until 2006 but kept its presence on the fuselage and fins in some form throughout the history of *PIA*.

The old livery captures the positioning based on patriotism, nationalism, and the proud people of Pakistan at home as well as abroad who are much more sensitive to the green Pakistani flag. However, *PIA* decided to change its iconic green national flag to blue *Markhor* with rainbow-green and yellow colours horns. The complete change in the logo was welcome with both excitement as well as criticism.

Changing logos in the airline industry is common and a large of airlines have changed their logos including American Airlines, Aer Lingus, Air France, British Airways, Delta Airlines, Emirates, Fiji Airways, Air Pacific, FlyBe, KLM, Lufthansa and Monarch Airlines, Ryanair and Qantas among others. Airlines' logos have evolved over decades and the most popular logos are based on natural objects such as animals (Qatar, IranAir, ) birds (Turkish Airlines, Lufthansa, Egypt Air, Japan Airlines, SriLankan Airlines) Beauty and flowers (Hawaiian Airlines, Vietnam Airlines, Aer Lingus). National flags (Air Canada, Swiss) and abstract (British Airways, Malaysian Airlines, Thai, American Airlines) logo designs are commonly used in this industry.

#### 1.4 Rebranding of *PIA* in the past

Corporate rebranding enhances organisational efficiency and performance (Melewar et al., 2012; Miller and Merrilees, 2013). Previous researchers have identified three major enablers of corporate rebranding that include leadership, coordination among different functions and stakeholders (Miller and Merrilees, 2013). Since the 1970s, the airline has suffered five fatal crashes. The worst came in 1992 when an Airbus A300 crashed into the cloudy mountains of Kathmandu, killing all 167 people on board. The most recent one took place on a domestic flight from Chitral to Islamabad in 2016 (*Khaleej Times*, 2016). Telegraph newspaper story captures the services offered on board as "The horror stories are legion: blocked toilets, unfriendly staff, in-flight entertainment systems that don't work for the duration of the eight-hour flight from Islamabad to London" (Crilly, 2014).

The airline enjoyed negative perceptions of customers such as *unsafe, inefficient systems, uncomfortable seats, flight delays, luggage mishandling* and *non-cooperative staff*. In addition, negative international media coverage and notorious acronyms for *PIA* were associated with the airline such as *Pakistan's Irritating Airline, Prayers in the Air, Perhaps I Arrive* and *Panic in Air* among others. The word *P* invokes negative associations like *pitta, panic, pain, and politicised*. *PIA* has the perception of an old-fashioned government organisation rather than a dynamic and customer-centric organisation.

*PIA* has earned a reputation for an inefficient system, and the unprofessional behaviour of staff. Some customers don't like the distinct smell of biryani being warmed up 35,000 feet in the air. Customers want to go beyond chicken curry and biryani towards pasta, and sandwiches. Inflight entertainment is a serious problem too. When it comes to online booking of tickets, nothing is in order, and many stories of horrible experiences. In

the last decades, *PIA* has suffered huge financial losses and faced continuous shrinkage of market share, losing its customers to Gulf Airlines, closure of routes, and reduction in the number of flights. *PIA* maintained the same service level on domestic and international flights which put a burden on services. For example, *PIA* Karachi was preparing 18,000 meals a day in 1986, and 25,000 in 1988. *PIA* also has the highest employee-to-aircraft ratio (260) which was brought down from 550 employees per aircraft in the year 2017 as compared to any airline in the world with 220 employees per aircraft (*The News*, 2023). Despite the high employee-to-aircraft ratio, customer satisfaction with *PIA* is not good. Online customer reviews and comments highlight serious service issues such as broken seats, broken IFE consoles, tube lights flashing, and untrained crew members.

Although *PIA* has unique routes and offers direct flights to many destinations which gives the airline a competitive edge and a large customer base. For example, direct routes to Europe and Canada are the main reason to fly with *PIA*. The airline needs investments in fleet systems, people, and image to attract back customers, especially millions of Pakistani working abroad. The organisation's culture is one of the main barriers to the innovation and change process. Therefore, *PIA* has many legitimate reasons to reposition its brand image and create a new brand identity. In this regard, *PIA* has taken several measures to fix the brand image but unfortunately, all went with criticism. For example, *PIA* replaced the tranquil music with popular Islamic *Qaseeda Burda sharif* – an ode to Prophet Muhammad (*PBUH*) on domestic routes and flights to Saudi Arabia (*Dawn News*, 2019), the decision was criticised by liberals, whereas welcomed by religious minded people. To use *Qaseedah Burdah Sharif* for flights to Jeddah and Medina is not too far from *PIA*'s musical modus operandi. In-flight music serves as a musical monogram, as essential to an airline as a well-designed logo. It requires careful curation to reflect not just the airline's identity but also to craft a particular ambiance. Similarly, several attempts have been made in the past to change the airline logo but all ended up reverting the decision because of poor design strategy and criticism. For instance, Mr. Tariq Kirmani, Ex-Chairperson of *PIA* tried to change the logo in 2007, but could not implement the new logo design due to severe criticism.

Further, Bernd Hildenbrand, a Lufthansa veteran who was appointed CEO of *PIA* took the initiative to launch premier service and improve the safety of the fleet but was accused of paying too much to lease new planes from Sri Lankan Airlines (Bokhari and Kazmin, 2017). He hoped the newer model planes equipped with the latest in in-flight entertainment and flatbeds in business class would help revive *PIA*'s tired image and keep passengers away from the Gulf carriers that fly into Pakistan. He defended his position saying 'Everything is according to the rules'. He explained the carrier had opted for the *wet-lease agreement* which means the plane comes with crew and aircraft maintenance, rather than a cheaper dry lease, in which a carrier just takes the planes because the Pakistani government was 'seeking a good service' to take on the competition. The prime minister himself gave the go-ahead for the high-end premier-class service to lift Pakistan's image in foreign countries. Hildenbrand has faced many challenges in turning round the loss-making state carrier, which powerful Pakistanis have long treated as their fiefdom, demanding free upgrades, free seats, and free rooms in the carrier's two hotels in New York and Paris (Bokhari and Kazmin, 2017).

Similarly, Mr. Ahmed Seed, Managing Director of *PIA*, has to revert the decision as he was accused of imitating EI AI Israel (*Pakistan Today*, 2018). Again, in 2018, *PIA* management decided to change the old descriptive livery to a new revolutionary logo

design as illustrated in Figure 2. Once again, the management has to revert the decision and abandoned a new livery featuring *Markhor* – the national animal of Pakistan. Since corporate rebranding aims to target multiple stakeholders including customers, employees, investors, special interest groups, local community, and regulators (Herstein et al., 2008), therefore corporate rebranding is sensitive and needs to address a broad spectrum of attitudes, expectations, and association with the organisation (Jaju et al., 2006). Employees play a significant role in endorsing brand image and most of the time corporate rebranding fails because of inconsistency in desired changes within and outside the organisation (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Corporate identity communication is an essential part of corporate rebranding and logo design visual elements (graphics, text, colours, font, and size etc) play an important role.

### 1.5 PIA turnaround strategy in 2018

Transformational leadership has great effects on organisational citizenship behaviour and customer satisfaction. Previous literature shows that transformational leadership style has a positive influence on the inspirational, motivational, and intellectual traits of employees and they demonstrate helping behaviour that in turn leads to customer satisfaction. (Budur and Poturak, 2021). With the appointment of the new CEO, Arshad Malik in October 2018, who has experience in aviation, identified five elements as part of the turnaround strategy including *fleet*, *HR*, *transport equipment*, *aviation policy*, and *finance*. He announces the initiative to stop the bleeding of the airline as follows.

- 1 *Ending open skies policies*: ending up with open skies policy, which allowed Gulf airlines to take away the market share and damage the national interest.
- 2 *Closure of unprofitable routes*: the closure of seven international routes New York, Salalah (Oman), Kuwait, Mumbai, and Tokyo caused a total loss of Rs.500 million per month (Ahmed, 2019).
- 3 *Starting new routs*: PIA started seven new routes with seat factor of 95% as
  - a IBD-DOH-IBD
  - b KHI-JED-KHI
  - c LHE-MCT-LHE
  - d MUX-MED-MUX
  - e SKT-SHJ-SKT
  - f PEW-AAN-PEW
  - g LHE-BKK-KUL-KHI (*The Nation*, 2012).
 See Table 1 for more details on destinations.
- 4 *Cutting flight hours*: new management revised the routes directions cutting it from long distance to short and direct. For instance, all flights to the EU and UK were taking a one-hour extra journey just to avoid payments to Iran and Turkmenistan for airspace use but actually, it was costing more than saving.
- 5 *Moving the head office*: management also decided to move the head office from Karachi to Islamabad to stop corruption. However, critics say the move could hardly help the airline to achieve even breakeven. Karachi remained the favourite transit

point of many international airlines until 1990. For example, KLM, Lufthansa, Singapore, etc. used Karachi as their transit hub for connecting flights to *South East* and *Far East Asia* from Europe and Trans-Atlantic destinations. With the development of Gulf States, it no longer remained feasible for international airlines, and then how could Islamabad? In an optimistic view, if new management succeeds in implanting five-point agenda as part of the turnaround strategy, then it is more likely to reject the theory of declaring the airline bankrupt and restart with a new name. Political governments in the past destroyed the merit in the favour of quota system.

### *Political interference*

Airline declines are greatly linked to political interference and national flag carrier (PIA) is no exception to it. Political interference is one of the key factors in the decline of PIA which exists in the form of pressure groups, labour unions, overstaffing, and nepotism (Khan, 2018). The appointment of top management positions has high political interference and executives were appointed without experience to run the operations. In addition to it, a large number of ghost employees and appointments of pilots with fake degrees not only left the PIA in deep financial crises but a bad reputation and loss of customers. PIA has three main problems as overstaffing, political appointments, and unionism (Khan, 2021) which have negatively affected the airline's performance with a loss of PKR 38 billion in the first quarter of 2023 (*The Express Tribune*, 2023). Previous studies have also highlighted the political interference in poor performance of PIA including high employee burden, lack of management, political interference, poor services, corruption, and poor human resource policies (Ullah and Hina, 2022).

Azhar (2020) argued that poor service, inefficient operations, and increasing flight delays and cancellations have contributed to customer turnover and dissatisfaction. Once again, the current Prime Minister has constituted the committee for restructuring and revival of PIA with the immediate objective to overcome the losses. According to the Tribune report, the revival strategy is aiming to increase the number of fleets from 27 to 49 to recapture the European and US routes.

## **2 Literature review**

### *2.1 Brand orientation and firm performance*

Branding remains a central problem at PIA but the organisation is plagued with multifold issues including operations, marketing, and organisational culture. This draws our attention to the concept of brand orientation (BO) which is a strategic concept and has got the attention of many scholars in the past (Tajeddini and Ratten, 2020). BO aligns all the aspects of operations, marketing, and culture with the brand's core values and purpose to increase firm performance and internationalisation (Tajeddini and Ratten, 2020). Many firms are unitising their brand image and reputation for collaboration and building partnerships to achieve competitive advantage and grow internationally. Market orientation (MO) is a critical factor in firm performance but sometimes this relationship needs moderation (Helfert et al., 2002). Similarly, BO is the process of integrating

different resources and capabilities of an organisation in creating, developing, and protecting the brand identity in ongoing interaction with customers (Urde, 1999).

The literature differentiates the concept of BO from brand equity (BE) which was pioneered by Aaker (1992) and Keller (1993). Many scholars have explored the effects of different elements of BE on firm performance including brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand image (Kim et al., 2003). The value of the brand to a firm employs a financial perspective, while the value of the brand to the customer deals with customer-based BE. This implies that the way a consumer perceives the product or service and it also determines consumer relationships with the brand (Fournier, 1998).

However, literature broadly classifies elements of BE into consumer perceptions (brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality) and consumer behaviour (brand loyalty and willingness to pay) (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). In BO BE stems from interaction between internal and external stakeholders (Gromark, 2020). The brand grows gradually and embraces a set of tangible and intangible attributes that generate a unique identity for the brand. Low and Lamb (2000) argued that in the services sector, the company is a primary brand, and customer purchase decisions are based on the company (e.g., Singapore Airlines, *PIA*, Hilton, HSBC Bank). BE positively affects the cash flow in the hotel and services industry via room occupancy (Prasad and Dev, 2000). In previous studies, BO has been conceptualised as a cultural-level construct with an emphasis on developing competitive advantage continuously through offering consistent, unique, and relevant marketing cues to customers so that it differentiates the brand from competitors (Baumgarth, 2010; Evans et al., 2012). Evans et al. identified philosophical and behavioural features of BO. From a philosophical perspective BO is viewed as an organisational culture and compass for decision-making, whereas, brand behavioural features include distinctiveness, functionality, augmentation, and symbolism.

BO is a short-term, fundamental, and additional degree of sophistication to MO (Urde, 1999). BO can facilitate the organisation to build brand identity and play a moderating role between interfirm relationships and performance (Tajeddini and Ratten, 2020). Other studies also indicate the indirect effect of BO and performance moderated by brand identity (Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2014). Industrial branding creates business competitiveness and relationship quality (Rahman, 2014). BO is an inside-out approach to developing a brand identity that guides an organisation's business strategy and branding process. To set the new direction of the company, it is important to understand the optimisation of MO and BO (Urde et al., 2013). The total value of a brand can't be measured from its fixed assets but through other values. The brand is a strategic resource which is a key feature of MO. Brand management has a different perspective and the brand as an asset not only generates cash flow but also a source of competitive advantage. Brand image is the synergetic effect of all marketing efforts (Wong and Merrilees, 2007).

BO is a strategic orientation of a firm that governs marketing and brand strategy activities to build a strong brand. *PIA* needs to apply internal branding orientation so that staff understand and align their behaviour with brand values. Interfirm relationships and increased interaction with business partners can protect and improve brand identity. MO improves inter-organisation relationships that lead to international competitiveness and performance (Helfert et al., 2002). The MO concept got considerable attention from researchers and has shaped the thinking process in marketing (Deshpande, 1999). Marketing orientation is the organisation-wide gathering of market intelligence regarding customer needs and organisation responsiveness (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Other scholars equate MO with an organisational culture that shapes necessary behaviour for

the creation of superior value (Deshpande and Webster, 1989). Thirdly, MO from a management perspective designs customer-driven systems (Becker and Homburg, 1999).

Kohli and Jaworski (1990) assert that MO comprises of three components: intelligence gathering, intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness. Extent literature reveals that MO has a strong link with organisational performance (Armario et al., 2008; Deshpandé and Farley, 2004; Tajeddini, 2013). Interfirm collaborations are essential to develop marketing orientation and sustainable competitive advantage (Sahi et al., 2016). Literature on resource-based-view suggests that resources and experiential knowledge can only help to run the ongoing operations but not sustained competitive advantage. Experiential knowledge is resultant of repetitive actions and is path dependent. The essential knowledge remains and exists in the network environment rather than organisation alone (Afuah, 2000; Åkerman, 2015).

Interfirm collaboration facilitates product development and innovation capability of the firm among other benefits (Tajeddini and Trueman, 2016). The type of collaboration determines the degree of product and service innovation. *PIA* has a long history and experiential knowledge of over 70 years but this knowledge is not providing any source of competitive advantage. *PIA* has failed to develop interfirm relationships and strategic alliances in the industry for product and service innovation. The failure in the selection of partners, formation of strategic alliances, and governance structure remains the core of *PIA*. Literature reveals that interfirm relationships foster knowledge creation and skill development (Perks, 2000) and product or service creation (Ledda and Del Prado, 2013). Developing and integrating capabilities beyond the boundaries provides opportunities for novel products and services (Un et al., 2010). Product innovation refers to significantly modified products and services in existing or new markets.

*PIA* attempted radical innovation in logo design and did this without R&D collaboration. Radical innovation requires strong collaboration with R&D-intensive firms (Belderbos et al., 2004). Product innovation depends on knowledge breadth and ease of use level and both are essential for internationalisation behaviour (Bruneel et al., 2010; Casillas et al., 2010). Balancing between acquisition and use of knowledge is crucial for organisational growth. Learning from the experience of others has positive effects on firm performance. *PIA* problems are multifold from branding to corporate culture which has negatively affected the brand value. Kucherov et al. (2022) proposed three philosophical and operational concepts to improve the performance of a firm:

- a BO
- b internal branding
- c employer branding orientation.

The interconnection of these concepts leads to competitive advantage. This theoretical framework can help *PIA* to fix the problems related to attracting high-quality employees.

Internal branding focus on current employees while employer branding focus on potential employees (Barros and García Calí, 2021). The key feature of internal branding is brand-centric human resources and BO can be combined with internal branding. Internal branding orientation describes the extent to which a company is committed to generating desired internationalisation and alignment of employee behaviour with brand values (Piha and Avlonitis, 2018). The negative associations attached to *PIA* have limited the quality pool of applicants and acceptance of job offer. Employer branding is one of the key factors in attracting quality applicants and *PIA* has suffered from this because of

negative perceptions attached to the organisation. Working for PIA is not pride anymore which can be explained by social identity (Turner, 1975) organisation identity (He and Brown, 2013), and personal fit theory (Astakhova, 2015). The highest level of BO is when an organisation considers itself as a brand (Hankinson, 2000) and the outcome of BO should be a consistent, reliable, and strong corporate brand (Mosley, 2007). Any additional penny on advertising of PIA would not strengthen the brand until negative associations such as inferior products, services, and behaviour are not changed. However, branding is an essential element to build a powerful brand and distinguish the offers from competitors. Branding involves design and symbols with memorable associations.

## *2.2 Logo design*

Logo designs are used to build corporate identity (Ad'r et al., 2012), enhance the brand image (Kaur and Kaur, 2019), and effective way to elicit positive emotions and communicate brand meanings (van der Lans et al., 2008). Logos trigger an affective and cognitive response that leads to brand identification and differentiation (Park et al., 2013). Marketing literature defines the brand logo as a symbol of a promise made to customers (Kay, 2006), a graphic or image representation of a brand (Walsh et al., 2010). Brand logo design carries three main benefits functionality, aesthetics, and self-expressiveness (Park et al., 2013). Customers develop deep relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998) and effective logo designs can strengthen these relationships. Logo design even affects consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. The design element is one of the key components of marketing that influence customer purchase decisions (Misra and Dwivedi, 2022). Logo design serves as a key brand identity element and requires utmost consideration. Changing brand names or logo designs is part of rebranding efforts and common practices in the industry. Rebranding efforts involve changing the name, creating a new slogan, symbol, design, or a combination of them (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006); logo change is a vital part of the rebranding strategy (Shen and Lin, 2021) and it influences consumer brand loyalty (Williams et al., 2021).

Previous studies show the role of brand logos in projecting a brand image and meanings (Henderson and Cote, 1998), brand reputation (van den Bosch et al., 2006), purchase intention (Woo et al., 2008), brand loyalty (Müller et al., 2013) and financial performance (van Riel and van den Ban, 2001). Literature shows various terms such as logo, icon, and visual identity in the same context (Kim and Lim, 2019). A large number of companies use graphic designs without names, to develop a brand identity (Henderson and Cote, 1998). Literature reveals that brand names with symbols as logos are more effective in creating identity and expressiveness (Park et al., 2013). Visual cues have the power to draw consumer attention more effectively (Cian et al., 2014; Pieters et al., 2010). In short, a logo communicates the brand's meanings to the target audience (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012; Foroudi et al., 2017). Logo design has profound effects on brand personality image (Stancu et al., 2021). Much of the literature on logo design owes to the work of Foroudi et al. (2017) who conceptualise the definition and terms used in logo studies.

Literature holds different perspectives to explain the function of logos. For example, corporate visual identity from a firm perspective explains the role of the logo in communicating corporate values (Fombrun and Rindova, 1998; van den Bosch et al., 2006). In contrast, from the consumer's perspective, it refers to processing fluency which explains how consumers perceive the logo as a business identity. Corporate visual

identity refers to visual cues which convey company identity to different stakeholders (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012), and visual cues play a vital role in persuading customers (Peracchio and Meyers-Levy, 2005; Pieters et al., 2010). Processing fluency is defined as ‘the subjective experience of the ease with which people process information [Alter and Oppenheimer, (2009), p.219]. Processing fluency can be further divided into perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency (Miceli et al., 2014). Perceptual fluency is a feature-based representation in memory that fosters processing when exposed to a stimulus later on, whereas conceptual fluency is a meaning-based representation in memory that improves meaning association experience when exposed to a stimulus (Shapiro, 1999).

### 2.3 *Changing logo*

Previous literature indicates the effects of change in elements of logo design are different between committed vs. non-committed consumers. Walsh et al. (2010) commented that changing the logo characteristics originally from angular to roundness with a higher degree is more likely to have negative effects on strongly committed consumers than weakly committed consumers. Because strongly committed consumers consider change in the logo as threatening their relationship with the brand (Ahluwalia et al., 2000). Logo change overall affects consumer brand attitude and brand commitment. Literature also suggests that Asian people have a preference for round shape logos over angular ones (Zhang et al., 2006). It implies that logo shapes have profound effects on brand evaluation. Literature reveals the difference between disruptive and incremental change. Walsh et al. (2010) defined incremental change as a slight adjustment in the shape of the logo, whereas substantial change is considered as a complete change from angular to round. Small change refers to the change of colour, whereas substantial change refers to a change in everything from colour, shape, and style but staying true to the overall pattern (Müller et al., 2013). This perspective of substantial change does demand conformance to overall patterns.

Logo design change encompasses multiple dimensions and previous researchers in the past have contributed to this field with emphasis on design characteristics and their impact on brand recognition (e.g., Henderson and Cote, 1998; Janiszewski and Meyvis, 2001; van der Lans et al., 2008), logos impact on BE logo as the source of corporate visual identity (Rode and Vallaster, 2005). Recent developments in logo design emphasised the descriptive logo, static dynamic imagery (Cian et al., 2014), asymmetrical vs. symmetrical (Luffarelli et al., 2019); design complexity (Pieters et al., 2010), active white space (AWS) (Sharma and Varki, 2018).

The main idea of the degree of change, small or big is explained by different levels of attention. Consumer hardly makes notice of small and incremental change in stimuli. Small changes are based on an automatic mechanism that does not require awareness and falls at a subconscious level (Alley and Cunningham, 1991). Luffarelli et al. (2019) commented that more descriptive logos have a positive effect on brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Descriptive logos are representative of a product category like coffee beans on a coffee brand and it has a positive impact on BE. Similarly, more dynamic imagery has a positive impact on consumer engagement (Cian et al., 2014). Favourable brand devaluation leads to high financial performance (Datta et al., 2017).

More dynamic logos are perceived as more congruent with brands characterised by modernity (vs. traditionalism), thus boosting consumer attitudes toward those brands (Cian et al., 2014), and stylistic manipulations such as tilting a logo increase consumer

visual engagement. Similarly, introducing an AWS element in logo design in contrast to passive white space improves the perception of product quality, brand prestige, and aesthetics (Ambler and Hollier, 2004). For example, the Qatar airline logo incorporates an active white line (AWS) making a circle on the head of the antelope, the national animal of Qatar. Sharma and Varki (2018) comprehend that AWS is an effective stylistic logo tool that improves visual evaluation, clearly communicates brand description; enjoys brand personality characteristics such as sophistication, sincerity, excitement, and competence. Logos' effectiveness can also be measured with the help of elaborate factors, which include a dimension of complexity, depth, and activeness.

Activeness can be defined as the logo's capability to "give the impression of motion or flow" [Henderson and Cote, (1998), p.17]. Further, brand elongation refers to the ratio of logos and its impact on consumers' temporal property assessment and brand evaluation. For example, the metaphorical structure of "long-distance suggests long duration", consumers would subconsciously consider the temporal property of the product to be longer. Lowercase lettering in logo design is more effective and customers are highly familiar with the sight of lowercase letters (Perea and Panadero, 2014). Typography such as type of font including serifs; sans serif, calligraphic, display, etc. have a significant impact on logo aesthetic value. In line with this literature, more (vs. less) descriptive logos should be easier to process, as the textual and visual design elements they comprise convey more information about the type of product a brand markets.

## 2.4 Logo design characteristics

Henderson and Cote (1998) identified key factors in logo design such as activity, balance, cohesiveness, complexity, depth, durability, organic, parallel, proportion, repetition of elements, representativeness, roundness, and symmetry that influence recognition. Asymmetrical logos can be described as those consisting of halves that are not perfectly mirrored along a vertical, horizontal, or diagonal axis and asymmetrical logos increase excitement (Luffarelli et al., 2019).

Naturalness is another important dimension of logo design and researchers have investigated the influence of the different types of natural logo designs on the affective response (Machado, 2015). Familiar and commonly recognised objects used in logo design are more effective at producing correct recognition than abstract logos (Henderson and Cote, 1998). The abstract logo is closer to the sensitive world than the natural world. It is evident from the literature that real world-life object is easy to recognise and requires minimum effort, whereas abstract images and designs are more difficult to recognise and interpret. Therefore, the logo-involving element of naturalness reflects a higher degree of commonly experienced objects.

Naturalness is a key element of logo design that significantly influences consumer responses to the logo, and abstract logos are more perceived as natural logos (Machado, 2015). Pieters et al. (2010) distinguished between feature complexity and design complexity. Feature complexity concerns basic visual aspects of an advertisement like colour, luminance, and edges. It evokes low levels of visual processing in the primary visual cortex and hurts advertising attention and likability. Whereas, design complexity concerns the elaboration of the design such as shapes, objects, and patterns. It positively affects advertising comprehensibility and liking. Design complexity can be operationalised with six dimensions: quantity of objects, irregularity of objects,

dissimilarity of objects, detail of objects, asymmetry of objects, and irregularity of arrangement of objects (Pieters et al., 2010). Research also shows that customers prefer logos with boundaries when their sense of control is under threat and graphic structure provided with boundaries satisfies their psychological need for structure and control (Cutright, 2012). Thus, shape is one of the fundamental perceptual features of individuals' visual sense.

In addition, it is also evident that cognitive biases affect people's judgment of the area of circles and squares because of the place of excessive weight on certain aspects (Krider et al., 2001). For example, studies show that a circular seating arrangement can initiate the subjects' need for belonging and make them more accepting of family-oriented persuasive messages, while an angled seating arrangement will trigger their need for uniqueness, rendering self-oriented persuasive messages more effective (Zhu and Argo, 2013). Another study reveals that the distance between a product affects consumers' perceived product image and the distance being 'the closer the better' (Chae et al., 2013). Brand logos contain visual symbols and graphic features that may affect consumer perception.

When certain visual property (e.g., the horizontal length of a strip logo) is highlighted, consumers may unconsciously link this property with a certain quality (such as duration) of the product. Horizontal locations of left and right in space correspond to past and future respectively, and subjects react faster when words denoting past (vs. future) are located on the left (vs. right) of the screen (Santiago et al., 2007). Consumers report a higher evaluation of a brand appealing to traditional values when the movement direction of the logo points to the left (Cian et al., 2014). Hagtvedt (2011) found although incomplete fonts have an unfavourable influence on perceived firm trustworthiness, they have a favourable influence on perceived interestingness, resulting in a higher customer evaluation of the innovativeness of the company and the brand. Cian et al. (2014) proved with eye tracking and behavioural experiments that dynamic logo designs (e.g., a pendulum-shaped logo tilted to one side would be perceived as swinging) will help capture attention and further improve the overall brand evaluation of consumers. Jiang et al. (2016) showed that circular- and angular-logo shapes are linked to softness and hardness concepts respectively, and these concepts subsequently influence product/company attribute judgments.

### **3 Research methodology**

This case was developed by using secondary sources that included peer-reviewed research articles, industry reports, company websites, news reports, video commercials, advertisements, and social media sites. Video commercials, advertisements, and images from company websites were the main sources of data. The study observed the situation of the PIA organisation and made different interpretations and attributed the different causes of the situation and factors. The approach is more like scientific inquiry and an explorative journal without clear routes and destination maps. The study employs qualitative research which explores the meaning and interpretations around corporate rebranding through logo change. The analysis of advertisements, logo design elements, and graphics utilises a theoretical framework and at the same time considers culture, society, language, values, and beliefs as important factors in interpretations of themes. The case study research is bounded by a single organisation (PIA) as a unit of analysis.

This allows us to understand the situation and meaning in depth (Merriam and Merriam, 1998). It's an empirical investigation of phenomena in a natural setting. The case study method reviews and applies the best literature on the given case study (Woodside, 2016). This case has been tested with the class of MBA students enrolled in advertising and promotions and brand strategy courses at the University of Central Punjab Lahore Pakistan.

## 4 Discussion and analysis

### 4.1 *Markhor's livery commercial*

The strength and power of a brand are not defined in terms of a specific theory but through a compelling story (Aaker, 1996). Brand strength is a matter of consumer perception. Branding is not much dependent on theory, instead, brand story or narrative defines the power of brand. PIA's new commercial and brand livery communicates the purpose and meaning of the brand to consumers. Advertising is the process of continuous transformation in response to the emergence of new ideas and strategies more sophisticated to connect sellers and buyers. PIA decided to carry the livery of *Markhor* – the national animal and endangered species found in the Himalayas of Pakistan. New livery aims to give the struggling airline a refreshing and modern look to revive the brand identity. The marketing department believes that the old livery is outdated, and boring and attach negative associations in the mind of customers. Therefore, PIA released a new video commercial in a total length of 2 minutes and 38 sec in April 2018, which feature the metaphor of *Markhor* in the story of rebranding (*Pakistan Today*, 2018). A new video commercial is not just a typical advertisement, which focuses on increasing brand awareness, instead, it elaborates whole new philosophy, vision, and values of the organisation. The advertisement contextualises the repositioning strategy and tries to assimilate the semiotics process of transferring the meaning and characteristics of this mythical creature *Markhor* into the PIA brand personality.

*Markhor* is a mythical and magical creature, some view it as beauty, and some view it as a beast that roams gateways to clouds. The *Markhor* legacy is resilience, steadfastness, and grace. The commercial starts with the legend of *Markhor* and its key characteristics. The advertisement fanaticises the creature and presents it as 'a creature of skies and heavens'. Afterward, it builds a narrative of PIA's core organisational values, which are based on the metaphor of *Markhor*. Celebrating the legend of *Markhor* and its symbolic association with the brand PIA is the main idea behind the advertisement. Semiotics theory in marketing refers to the transfer of meaning and values from one object to another and ad focus on the same. Signs consist of *signifiers* i.e., sounds, pictures, and words, and the *signified* i.e., the message and concept meant by the signifier. There are two main questions in the analysis of advertisements. What is the meaning of advertisement and how do we interpret those meanings? The main issue in the interpretation of meaning is the difference between the thinking of the producer and those who interpret it. The study further dissects the commercial into different parts for interpretation purposes.

#### 4.1.1 Metaphor of Markhor

*The new slogan:* ‘The power of attitude and altitude come together in *PIA* brand story’. The short version of the slogan is *We fly with at right attitude*. The new slogan emphasises the word attitude, which is an essential component of crew training concerning customer services and illustrates the customer orientation approach of the organisation. *PIA* has poor service and brand image, and this could be the one of reasons, the marketing department has thought to reposition the brand around customer services calibrating the right attitude for the target audience. New slogans comprise three main components:

- a we as the subject
- b fly as the verb
- c attitude as the adjective.

The word ‘We’ emphasises the inward view of the organisation, whereas, the word ‘attitude’ also refers to the behaviour of staff and organisational values about customer service. The word ‘attitude’ substitutes ‘altitude’ to create rhythm in the context of flying to catch the attention of the audience. In comparison with the old slogan *Great people to fly with*, the new one does not directly talk about the types of customers they serve but rather emphasises organisational values. Customer imagery defines what kind of customer uses the product and it contributes to building the brand image like crafted in *PIA*’s old slogan. In other words, the kind of people who use the product or services gives the brand identity. Therefore, it is clear to argue that the old slogan has a dimension of customer orientation, whereas the new slogan focuses on core organisational values. However, both slogans place great importance on customers expressed in different ways with different strategic orientations.

#### 4.1.2 Semiotic process signifier and signified

The advertisement shows *Markhor* as a mythical and magical creature because its power of its resilience, and ability to fight and live in the toughest conditions like the highest mountain range in the world. As emphasised in the advertisement, the creature lives at a high altitude and climbed the hills for thousands of years, standing witness to the rise and fall of passing armies, empires, and entire civilisations. *Markhor* is the symbol of living in high altitude; resilience; survival and power, so the intended meaning is to equate the airline with the features of *Markhor*. The creature has lived for thousand years, witnessing the rise and fall of civilisation. The same is true for the airline, which was established almost 70 years ago in 1955 and has stood witness to the rise and fall of the country, the organisation, and airlines, passing by the army in the neighbouring country in the North West frontier (Afghanistan).

The story of Pakistan’s resilience is long fighting three major wars with India, collaborating with the US to stop the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan, and alliance with the US to fight extremism in Afghanistan. The creature is presented as magical, mythical, and beyond imagination. It existed for thousands of years, has fought against all odds of nature, survived, and come back from extinction. Because of its resilience and ability to fight back, some called it a beauty, and some named it a beast. The word *Markhor* is derived from the Persian language, which means snake eater. *Markhor* -eating

snakes with twisted long horns also appear as emblems of Inter-Services- Intelligence (ISI)-a secret agency of Pakistan. It roams the gateway to clouds and climbs the highest mountains for thousands of years. *PIA* takes inspiration from the creature and incorporates the component of high altitude in its new slogan.

#### 4.1.3 Key values

After introducing the key features and fantasy of *Markhor*, the ad quickly draws the audience's attention to the core values and vision of the organisation based on the legend of *Markhor* as follows"

"No one can deny that the Markhor legacy touches our brand of flight. Brand build on resilience, steadfastness, fortitude, and grace, but also by an over-arching and guiding passion to scale the heights of aviation and services excellence. Here we stand on the precipice of a new horizon as the bearers of bonds and transporter of connection. Our cargo is emotion. Above and around, we never forget that we are national in international across a global diaspora of patriots who- more than anyone else- feel the power in our engine and collective imagination that tells the story of our time. Which is why with renewed commitment, a revived identity, and refreshed approach, this great airline- from the great land of great people is climbing every mountain to lift you where you belong."

Summarising the contents of the video commercial, it is important to mention that the language used is a kind of poetry that tries to persuade the customer about new brand imagery and its power. The commercial is much based on imagination and fantasy rather than active, factual, and meaningful content. It is obvious *Markhor* not getting into an aircraft engine and giving it magical power to fly at high altitudes and transform the fleet and people on its own. Red Bull does not give wings to fly and the slogan 'put a tiger into your tank' for Esso petrol. The background voice actor does not sound natural and gives an impression of artificial and forced pronunciation. The vocabulary used requires an ordinary person to use a thesaurus to understand the meaning of certain words. It is difficult to grasp the meaning of certain words but still looks persuasive in the overall narration. The video is not a typical commercial, but contextualises the repositioning and is more appropriate for an internal audience and corporate purpose. The video commercial is too long comprising 02: 38 seconds, which could be reduced to the short 30-second advertisement. The commercial transcription does not entail any specified slogan statement or punch line. The ad shoot lacks human touch and real-life situations such as showing crew, original aircraft landing or take off in-flight services, etc. The video commercial seems to use the flight simulator program or Photoshop on A380 instead. However, the commercial tells the story of a new journey of *PIA* with ambitions. Despite many flaws, the commercial successfully delivers the message encouraging the people of Pakistan to fly with the national flag carrier. It somehow establishes a link between the airline and national animal recapturing the spirit of patriotism.

#### 4.2 Brand repositioning and change of logo

The instructor can start the discussion by asking questions about whether it was good to use disruptive strategy, modern and edgy logo design, and *Markhor* legends instead of incremental strategy, links to old heritage and cultural roots. The class can be divided into

two groups depending on their opinions. The assignment questions for student preparation, along with a full analysis of each question.

#### 4.2.1 Fly to flag or fly to Markhor

Q Do you think, the *Markhor* livery was the best choice to rebrand the national airline and how does this visual identity communicate the brand personality of the airline?

Effective logo design act as a powerful tool to strengthen consumer-brand relationship (Japutra et al., 2016). *PIA* attempted to revolutionise the brand image by taking several initiatives from rescheduling and expansion of routes and network, improved inflight entertainment, training cabin crew, and new brand strategy. *PIA* needed to rethink:

- a What it stands for and how it solves consumer problems (*brand imagery*)?
- b What kind of people use our services and in what circumstances (*user imagery*)?

*PIA* has lost its glory and reputation and therefore needs to find what is consumer's net impression of how well the *PIA* performed its functions and meets customer expectations (*performance imagery*). The new strategy seeks to achieve future aspirations and all the greatness which were associated with the national flag career in the golden era. The new livery is an attempt to portray *PIA*'s vision and proud legacy which is subject to analysis and discussion. *PIA* emerged as a premier airline and symbol of national pride in the early 1970s and 1980s. The airline played a major role in establishing a connection between East and West Pakistan from 1947 to 1971. During the golden era between 1960s'1970s, *PIA* advertisements depicted the idea of serving the nation and world. The creation of a name, logo design, uniforms, inflight entertainment, interior designing, food, services, and advertisements promoted the story of Pakistan. *PIA*'s advertisements from the 1960s to the 1980s celebrated the story of Pakistan as a proud newly born sovereign state.

The airline name *PIA* and the national flag showcase the true love, ambition, and spirit of the country. The generation growing up between the 1960s to 1980s has a great emotional connection with the brand and the brand reminds them of warm and cheerful moments with kids and family. For them, *PIA* was a modern and progressive airline to fly to top destinations in the world. Now the brand has lost relevance and connection to youth because of poor performance. To connect to the older generation, *PIA* could potentially revive through reliability, trust, confidence, and better services.

National flag livery was perceived as iconic and was a symbol of national pride and status. The old visual identity has a very strong impact on the BE of *PIA*. With old livery customers can easily recognise the brand but do not feel comfortable with the brand image. Therefore, allowing the management to take a test ride with the new identity of *Markhor*. Building a new brand strategy – *Flying to Markhor* was not an easy choice to fix the airline's multiple problems. So, dropping the national flag in favour of wild goats was to play with customers' minds. The national flag was closely associated with the story of Pakistan and evoked feelings of nationalism. So, dropping the flag from the tail of airplanes means nationalism-neutral appeal. With all those visual identities and communications styles, the brand personality of *PIA* was perceived as traditional and professional. On the other hand, *Markhor*'s livery communicates the meaning of being masculine, bold, energetic, young, and imaginative.

*Fly to Markhor's* strategy break away from nationalism and rely on the legends of *Markhor* which is a symbol of resilience, power, and beauty. However, it provided the opportunity to add modern elements and new tough to a declining brand. The new livery reinforces psychological benefits (i.e., authenticity and resilience) and functional benefits (i.e., strength and power), and social benefits (connection to mountains and the East). Brand authenticity is a "subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a brand" [Napoli et al., (2014), p.1091]. A brand is perceived as authentic when it stands true to its promises and delivers to its claim, honest and transparent (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Fournier and Avery, 2011). As the new log is less descriptive and thus perceived as less authentic but can positively affect brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Now the challenge to the marketing and brand department is to reposition the brand on modernity, yet connect to old heritage and nationalism. Integrating nostalgic elements of the past with a new visual identity was a big challenge and *Markhor* was perceived to balance between the old vs. new identity. *Markhor's* image disintegrates the brand from its heritage and takes a risky route to reinvent the brand; with the traditional approach, *Pakistani-ism*. While the modern approach breaks away from pure nationalism to a modern and global identity.

*PIA* branding in the early years focused on three elements:

- 1 the story of Pakistan
- 2 the story of being international
- 3 the story of the airline (Hamidi, 2018).

The first element, the story of Pakistan refers to the proud celebration of the country's independence and sovereignty which was portrayed through the brand name, logo, and other elements of visual identity. Secondly, the story of being international was demonstrated through true actions and spirits rather than just covering intercontinental destinations. Being international means being multicultural and multi-racial which was illustrated through advertisements as *our unfair advantage*. This strategy reinforces the embracing and acceptance culture (see Figure 3). Thirdly, the story of the Airline speaks about the unfair advantage of hostesses who are trained for hospitality at a young age. This is something *PIA* boasts about it and felt proud to have a brown-skin hostess.

The airline was truly multicultural and adopted an anti-race policy. This is how the airline emerged as the star of the East. *PIA* went through many incremental changes in its logo design in history, however, the rethinking of 2018 sparked controversy for the first time and consequently force the management to revert the decision. The evolution of the chronography of national flag carriers suddenly becomes distant from its historical roots, heritage, and nationalism (the story of Pakistan) to a more global identity based on modernity and popular culture. The acronym *PIA* in enlarged capital letters remained the same with different fonts, however, Arabic text remained unchanged except shades of colours. The old logo, the palette of colours, the crew's uniform, and other elements of brand identity were aligned with the corporate image, while the new livery of *Markhor* and other brand identity elements are not congruent with the corporate image of *PIA*.

The metaphor of *Markhor* evokes the feeling of resilience, imagination, power, and strength but a low connection with the story of Pakistan and nationalism. Repositioning the brand on modern lines is an attempt to imitate other internationally recognised airlines such as Qatar Airways. The management's decision to change the decades-long

iconography was not triggered by simply the desire for change, rather the company needed to new brand identity to get out of financial crises over decades. The choice between the story of Pakistan (national flag, east hospitality, nationalism) vs. global identity (post-modernism and the contemporary view is a paradox that directs the brand strategy. For the rationalist, the brand positioning based on the national flag may be the best option because it portrays nationalism and authentic Eastern culture. *PIA advertisement* (Figure 3) shows the logo designs that appeared in the 1990s' promoted the art and culture of the country which can be traced back to the Indus River valley civilisation (5000 BC). Similarly, *PIA* print Advertisement in the 1960s *Our Unfair Advantage* conveys the multicultural and multi-racial advantage of *PIA* (see Figure A4) *PIA* was very bold and proud of the brown skin and Indian Roots of cabin crew members. The adverts aired by the *PIA* reflected the culture and fascinating history. The cabin crew looks smart and the cockpit crew dressed in uniform look like movie characters and celebrities. *PIA*'s old advertisements used global appeal and evoked excitement and sensation.

The advertisement itself is creative and simple and the cabin crew shown in the ad depicts witty and lively sensation. The complexion is highlighted with the tagline *our unfair advantage* made the airline ahead of time by addressing the issue of fair skin and redefining beauty. In recent times (2020), the Fair and Lovey-beauty cream brand has changed its brand positioning and renamed the brand *Glow and Lovely* to break the stereotypes which *PIA* did in the 1970s. *PIA* embraced the culture, traditions, and the dark or brown skin crew members as a source of competitive advantage. *PIA* converted this weakness into strength and gave positive meanings to the rest of the world. *PIA* used the rhetorical figure of speech 'unfair advantage' that goes back to the *Indus Valley civilisation* (5000 BC) culture of hospitality.

This revolutionary advertisement shows the progressive vision of the airline. Although *Shalwar Kameez* is the national dress of Pakistan, *PIA* popularised the fashion and gave a modern touch to the uniform with beautiful colours and local motifs in design (see Figure A2). The uniform was designed by world-famous designers such as Sir Hardy Amies and Pierre Cardin among others (Tariq, 2013). The dress became the brand identity of *PIA* and it was popularised that other airlines like Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, and Air India adopted the traditional local dress. *PIA*'s stewardesses looked elegant and stylish in the traditional dress with vibrant headgear which symbolised not the traditions but also liberalism. The selection of crew members and their uniforms shows that the airline was progressive, liberal, and head of the time. *PIA* is trying to revive the lost glory with a new brand identity of *Markhor* which may not create the desired impact on the target segments. The collective memory and associations with *PIA* are built upon traditions, culture, and nationalism, while the new identity breaks away from traditions and claims a global and modern brand image.

During the 1960s *PIA* print advertisements showed routes maps and destinations covered, making the *PIA* one of the best airlines in the world during the 1960s and 1970s (see Figure A6). The tagline 'VIA PIA' with a shadow of the airline on the twin towers was the best example of the use of alliteration in advertising. The adverts illustrate how different destinations and routes were used to build the corporate image of *PIA* which was consistent with its brand personality. Emphasising elements of the *PIA* brand experience was a strategic move and show the power and control of the brand. The adverts simply reflected brand awareness but the symbolic meanings convey power and control in the geo-political context. Further, the advertisement with the slogan *The most*

*relaxing way to fly* has reinforced the visual metaphor and enhanced the analogy between women and destinations (see Figure A1). The stimulus was created by using the fusion and destabilisation modes in advertising. The top destinations were shown on the face, neck, and body of sexy women which signify a sense of modernity, liberalism, and innovation. The woman's body is used as a billboard and infused with text making the advertisement case of a hybrid metaphor. The source and object are perceptually grounded and the underlying metaphor enhances the perception of *PIA* service quality.

The visual develop conceptual similarity between the *PIA* and destinations. The image portrays the body and shapes of women, the destination, and the work of art which qualify the advertisement as innovative and liberalism. The visual communication and design in the ad changed the brand image of *PIA* as a modern and progressive airline with a touch of East hospitality. Hence, *PIA*'s communication emphasised cultural themes that were aligned with the characteristics of the brand personality and image. In addition, *PIA* utilises nostalgia and promises the new Pakistani diaspora a unique experience to travel to London, Frankfurt, Moscow, Geneva, Roam, Cairo, Berlin, and so on. Furthermore, *PIA* operated helicopter services in major cities of East Pakistan and facilitated the trade between Dhaka and Karachi. *PIA* communication appeal emphasised culture and nationalism which promoted the positive image of the country. With this distinctive communication strategy, *PIA* was perceived as a professional and authentic airline in the world in its golden period. *PIA* served the nation and promoted a positive image of the newly born country in the world. Thus, *PIA* exported the country's culture, lifestyle, history, and values to the rest of the world, while maintaining its unique identity. In 2018, the airline decided to redefine its visual identity and revealed the new livery of *Markhor* which communicates a more contemporary and cosmopolitan identity. Visual identity and thematic directives serve as the pretext for building brand identity.

The relationship and similarities between new vs. old livery are non-directive and new emblem fall short of familiarity. Because of low familiarity and low awareness, the new emblem created doubts and confusion for a large number of target audiences. The tagline plays a very significant role in communicating the brand's purpose and what it stands for. In the early year tag line *Great people to fly with* was a deliberate effort to promote the authenticity of the airline. It evokes the feeling of warmth, sophistication, and human touch. The emphasis was on user imagery, class, and services. The target segments felt proud of traveling with *PIA* and the tagline helped to create an emotional bond between customers and the airline. Then the airline felt the necessity of change and introduce a new tagline – *We fly at the right altitude*. With the new tagline, the focus shifted from customer orientation to product focus. The new slogan communicates the meaning of the right scale, the right attitude, the right speed and power, and the right attitude. The use of the word 'right attitude' meant to present new growth and forwardness. This tagline was invented to support the *Markhor* logo and build customer trust in the airline. The text is written in the special face type with bold and arched features to emphasise power and strength.

### *Brand strategy choice for PIA*

The marketing department needs to ask some basic questions when evaluating and selecting new logo designs. For example, how does the new logo represent a connection to the country and patriotism? How does the new logo represent the airline in the global arena? *PIA*'s old logo and brand positioning are based on patriotism and nationalism

which is well captured through the livery of the national flag and aided text. In contrast, *Markhor*'s livery goes beyond the boundaries of nationalism to more iconic global positioning. So that the international audience can also identify and be inspired by the symbol. The old positioning strategy gives a cheap look and has narrow brand scope. *PIA* also used local ethnic patterns based on the heritage of four provinces of Pakistan back in 2006 was very rich and impressive from an artistic point of view. With an international image, the airline can attract both national and as well as foreign customers. But how perfectly does *Markhor* connect to the country and airline? Therefore, it is important to see a link or association between the new livery and the country. Although old livery was considered boring and outdated, however, it establishes a strong connection to the country. The national flag on the tail and prominent Pakistan on the fuselage both in English and in Urdu, connect with the country. People can easily identify the national flag carrier with Pakistan. For instance, what comes to customers' minds when they see *Markhor*'s picture, and what sort of feelings/emotions the animal evokes?

#### 4.2.2 Evaluation of *Markhor* imagery

Q. Do you think consumers' response to *Markhor*'s image was more positive than the national flag and how does the new image influence consumer feelings, perceptions, and brand attitude? The word 'logo' simply refers to the graphic element that a brand utilises for a product or brand identification. This section addresses the issue of logo design characteristics and their impact on consumer engagement, emotions, and brand attitude. Visual elements of logo design convey ideas and brand purpose aesthetic sense of the logo affects brand personality. Literature suggests that choices in logo redesign are important marketing decisions (Krishna, 2013). The old logo was high on descriptiveness which means the visual and textual properties of logos are indicative of the product and have a positive impact on BE (Luffarelli et al., 2019). The *PIA* old logo is more descriptive and such logos are easy to process and thus communicate strong impressions of authenticity. The national flag as a descriptive logos strongly activates associations (i.e., nationalism and eastern hospitality) and is indicative of the type of product.

Descriptive logos have a positive effect on brand evaluations and consumer purchase intentions. The aesthetic properties of visual form have profound effects on consumer response. Further, the national flag livery is rectangular in shape, whereas, the *Markhor* livery is non-rectangular (e.g., vertical-shape). *Markhor* visual graphics are vertically divided and cut in a V-shape. long pointed horns and curved front legs depict a V-shape. The new livery loses its visual completeness marked by V-shape cutting. Literature reveals that people have an innate need for visual completeness (Barasz et al., 2017) and they tend to perceptually fill in the missing part of the visual unit. The incompleteness of visual imagery may decrease evaluation and may induce discomfort (Loewenstein, 1994). The incompleteness may either decrease functional value (Zhang et al., 2006) or informational value (Sevilla and Meyer, 2020). For instance, the incomplete face of humans in advertising induces the feeling of discomfort, and therefore, visual processing demands completeness. The *Markhor* livery is presented with curved and uplifted front legs which evoke the feeling of ascending position and communicates the meaning of movement and forwardness. The wild goat with the curved front legs separated from each gives the sense of movement and ascending position. This shows the activeness of *Markhor* with multiple meanings including active guardians of mountains, yet ready to

climb new heights. These visual elements make the logo more dynamic and active than static.

Thus, perceptions of movement make the static visual cues more dynamic. In this picture, a running wild goat (*Markhor*) seems to be running. ‘Activeness’ is defined as the logo’s capability to “give the impression of motion or flow” [Henderson and Cote, (1998), p.17]. Vinson and Reed (2002) reported various methods to convey the movement such as frozen motions, and visual friction-refers to the amount of contact between graphic elements. Perception of movement evokes dynamism and increases engagement with the brand and incomplete logs tend to evoke higher perceptions of trustworthiness and innovativeness (Cian et al., 2014; Hagtvedt, 2011). Thus, the dynamism and incomplete logo make the brand more modern and imaginative. The upward of *Markhor* visual increases the logo design preference and brand attitude. Consumers may develop product attitudes based on the visual properties of the logo and the overall image of the company. The unique visual design creates a strong brand identity and generates favourable consumer responses (Brasel and Hagtvedt, 2016). The design properties (colour, form, and patterns) of the *Markhor* logo communicate an exciting personality. The image is not perfectly placed along horizontal, or vertical lines – creating the perception of halves image and can evoke more feelings of arousal and also be perceived as an exciting and energetic personality. Some logos are descriptive of their brand name such as Apple (a technology brand), while others are descriptive of personality traits.

*Markhor* logo is descriptive of the personality traits that it wants to convey (e.g., resilience, speed, power, and strength). *Markhor* is figurative and a real-world object that conveys cultural meanings. Using semiotic process theory and rhetorical figures of speech, the object of *Markhor* carries functional and symbolic meanings. The literature establishes a link between semiotic processing and logo strategy (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Pittard et al., 2007). *Markhor* is an organic logo design based on biological objects i.e., animals. Whereas, the national flag was a cultural and manufactured object. Cultural or manufactured objects are non-biological objects such as (e.g., spoons, tables, etc.). It is argued that organic logos have a significantly higher impact on brand evaluation than cultural and abstract logos (Machado, 2015). *Markhor* livery is believed to be more dynamic, and brand personality is more characterised by modernity and global identity than traditional and nationalism. The *Markhor* is used as a metaphorical figure and the object is familiar to the target audience. The familiarity of the *Markhor* is moderately low as compared to the national flag because of the low interaction with the object. Thus, consumers accumulated memory experience with *Markhor* is moderately low.

Based on the discussion and analysis of the visual properties of both, old vs. new logo designs, the readers can draw a logical conclusion about whether the *Markhor* authentically reflects what the people of Pakistan love. Visual properties of logo design influence consumer evaluation of marketing stimuli (van der Lans et al., 2008). *PIA*’s new livery of *Markhor* and graphics are not symmetrical and leave space on a vertical, horizontal, and diagonal axis which is more perceived as an exciting personality. excitement is one of the key dimensions of brand personality (Aaker, 1997). The new logo design compared to the old tends to be more arousing. *Markhor* is believed to be a mythical and magical creature that roams on the highest mountain ranges of the world. The ascending graphics of *Markhor* in blues and green colour communicate the meaning of daring, young, and imagination which represent an exciting personality characteristic.

However, it is hard to decide which logo is more appropriate to represent a national airline and capture its brand identity. There is no rule to choosing the best logo design. Understanding logo design properties and their meanings is the best way to find out which logo design is more appropriate and what it stands for. Usually, edgy and revolutionary design hardly wins the competition and satisfies the clients and stakeholders because the decision is made by the top executive and they do not know much about the consumer thought process. Similarly, supreme court judges were not convinced about the move and ordered to keep the original logo design because the new logo was too radical to present the national airline. The graphics of the new logo incorporates blue, shades of green and yellow colours making a sharp contrast to the white background and making *Markhor* more prominent on the tail. The new logo design uses edgy patterns, sharp cuts, V-shapes, and shades of blue, lime, and yellow colours, which gives the logo an innovative, modern, and fresh look. Blue, yellow, and green shades on the white background also communicate trustworthiness and professional image.

According to Sharma and Varki (2018), AWS refers to the space between logo design elements, Whereas, Passive White Space (PWS) means the available space around a design. *Markhor* imagery has both active and passive white space which was not the case with the old logo design. The PWS proportion is high and the literature shows that structural space around the adverts such as margins or borders can significantly improve product quality perceptions and brand prestige image (Pracejus et al., 2006). PWS is a minimalist effect characterised by a visual balance and enhances attention by reducing advertising clutter (Olsen et al., 2012). In addition, the provision of AWS in the new logo design help increases visual clarity, design structure, and layout. Thus, it can be comprehended that the new logo design with AWS and PWS improves visual clarity, aesthetic sense, sophistication, attractiveness, and luxury image. Further, the figure-ground contrast in this scenario is more prominent and can increase attractiveness. *Markhor* is positioned heading upward (left) which means power to rise, energy, and dominance. In addition, long twisted horns in shades of light green and yellow symbolise high altitude, beauty, and power. Grass-green colours reflects the natural beauty and fertility of Pakistan, while animal reminds me of high mountains and blue skies. As soon as this exciting livery was revealed, it got the attention of the audience and consumer engagement on social media platforms. The literature clearly differentiates between logo design features such as proportion, harmony, parallelism, and balance. The aesthetic properties as well as the functionality of each dimension significantly vary from each other and therefore these concepts about logo design are discussed below.

- 1 *Elaboration*: Literature indicates the emerging design dimension includes elaboration (complexity, activeness, and depth), naturalness, harmony, parallelism, and proportion (Kohli and Suri, 2002). Elaboration simply captures the richness of design and its ability to capture the brand essence. Design complexity results due to irregularity in the arrangements of logo elements. National Flag with a crescent design logo was simple and easy to remember, while the *Markhor* image is a little complex and may face the problem of easy recognition. However, *Markhor*'s image of natural objects (animals) and literature suggests that correct recognition is strong in the case of naturalness (Henderson and Cote, 1998). *Activeness* refers to those design that gives the impression of emotions and *Markhor*'s image is high on activeness.

- 2 *Naturalness*: It refers to the representation of commonly experience objects and *Markhor* is the organic and biological object crowned as a national animal of Pakistan. *Markhor*'s picture is widely printed on the backscreen of personal cars, long commercial vehicles (known as Pakistani truck art), social media posts, and other forums promoting and protecting this endangered species. The new logo design is not a simple picture of a mountain goat but uses 3D design and presents the picture in an increased triangular shape and vertical distance. The use of irregular shapes and curves tends to communicate less naturalness of objects. The use of tri-colour shades, curves, and sharp edges to distinguish the creature represents the element of depth in the logo design and shows high activeness and energy which makes the design high on elaboration. *Markhor* logos give a synthetic look which makes the logo more angular and abstract. It can be concluded that PIA's new *Markhor* image demonstrates well on elaboration (complexity, activeness, and depth). Elaborate logos are considered natural PIA's new logo gives a modern and contemporary look by incorporating angularity, asymmetry, balance, and less harmony.
- 3 *Representative*: Capture the degree of realism in design and abstraction in design occurs when the elements of the logo are distilled down to moist typical features [Henderson and Cote, (1998), p.16]. *Markhor* image is more abstract in nature than representative and consumers may find difficulty in interpretation and incorrect recognition. However, the *Markhor* imagery is organic.
- 4 *Harmony*: It's the arrangement of elements in a way that combines symmetry and balance. Symmetrical design is usually considered balanced and captures the centre of suspension between the portion of designs. *Markhor*'s picture features long twisted horns and a moving position with front legs uplifted into a curve shape to create a balance. It is important to note that balance designs are not necessarily symmetrical. However, the space is not fully utilised and many parts of the tail are left empty which reduces the logo design harmony. There is much space left around the design elements and it could be better utilised by using circles or horizontal lines to reduce the extravagance. Imbalance could be more upsetting to many consumers therefore; it is essential to maintain balance in the arrangement of elements. Henderson and Cote (1998) argued that moderate-high harmony but less perfect symmetry increases brand recognition. Harmonious logos have some sense of balance but not necessarily symmetry. High symmetry and harmony make the logo less distinctive and more commonplace, which is not the case with *Markhor* livery. The *symmetric* design reflects well along all the axis. The proportion of elements on one side of the axis is identical to the elements on the other side. It captures the overall goodness of patterns and increases design effects (Garner and Clement, 1963).
- 5 *Parallelism*: Refers to the placement of multiple lines or elements adjacent to each other. The new logo design characteristics are low on parallelism and do not present elements in equal proportion on the horizontal and vertical axis and resulting in imperfect symmetry. Less perfect symmetry increases brand recognition and positive evaluation.
- 6 *Proportion*: It reflects the relationship between horizontal and vertical dimensions. It is based on Gestalt psychology suggests that the whole is greater than its parts. Gestalt is a German word that means the ways things have been put together. It

describes how people organise visual elements into groups using certain principles. By analysing the new logo design, more proportions/elements are found on the vertical axis than on the horizontal axis. The *Markhor*'s body emerges from the cockpit and raises to the top of the tail, thus leaving no space on the vertical axis but much space on the horizontal axis. The animal's long twisted horns like a helix structure cover create harmony and balance.

- 7 *Repetition*: Livery does not have elements that are similar to each other and give no sense of repetition. Repetitive patterns like circles, lines, and squares using more than one time or twice create a sense of repetitiveness. Repetition gives the perception of consistency, stability, and movement. Normally geometrical patterns are used to create repetitive patterns.
- 8 *Roundness and triangle*: Round or circular shapes communicate meanings of security, wholeness, motion, and timelessness. While, squares and rectangles shapes convey stability, reliability, and symmetry. The circle's shape logo gives a feminist and soft look and invokes feelings of love, and harmony. The new logo design does not involve any roundness and circularity like Qatar Airways. However, by looking at the *Markhor* picture, especially legs, and horns represent few triangles. Triangles are associated with stability, creativity, and innovativeness.

In conclusion, abstract logos designs are more meaningful, elaborate, natural, and harmonious. Logos falling short of naturalness transcend low brand image. Logo design with an emphasis on elaboration (complexity, depth, or activeness) and less focus on harmony and repetition can generate a greater impact on the audience. New logo design properties communicate fresh, modern, and contemporary brand personality.

*PIA*'s identity with a *Markhor* picture is more appealing, attention-getting, and engaging than the national flag. The old identity with the flag is believed to be cluttered and has national appeal. Qatar and Qantas Airways have also animal pictures. The new identity is a breakthrough and bold move away from typical green, crescent, and star to embracing exciting creatures in blues, light green, and yellows. But the design proportion could be improved by increasing the harmony and balance. A decent proportional increase on both axes can increase the aesthetic look. The text style (font and size) of letters *PIA* is too stretched and wide. There could be a smart and creative style for the text on the fuselage. The critical analysis of new logo design properties suggests that *Markhor*'s imagery is exciting and imaginative, and gives the airline a modern look. However, there is a need to see the congruity between all the branding elements and the brand identity matrix of *PIA*.

The study contemplates that the new livery satisfies the design template characteristics but falls short of congruence between design character and *PIA* brand personality. Correct recognition is also a challenge with new logo design. Correct recognition occurs when the customer correctly identifies the logo based on previous exposure to stimuli. Despite, the new logo design being distinct and unique, correct recognition seems to be compromised as the customers may get confused and associate the *Markhor* picture with other brands such as *Frontier Work Organization* (FWO), a road construction company, and *Inter-services Intelligence* (ISI), an intelligence wing of Pakistan Army. False recognition and consumer confusion may be the main advantage of using *Markhor* pictures. However, by large, *Markhor* enjoys favourable consumer responses. Previous literature indicates that excitement brand personality increases word

of mouth and brand attachment (Lovett et al., 2013). Using natural logos like animals (*Markhor*) can improve design processing. Exciting brand personality is positively linked to anxiety-reducing with the brand (Swaminathan et al., 2009).

The *Markhor* imagery can have profound effects on consumer brand perception as it appears to be more modern, and innovative and touch consumer sensation. *Markhor* graphics shows ascending degree which is the case of asymmetrical logo design and engages the consumer in more extensive visual exploration. The new logo involves more visual information and thus higher visual exploration. Previous literature also reveals that asymmetrical logos have more visual information (Pieters et al., 2010). The *Markhor* logo looks more modern and dynamic than the old one which is more traditional and symmetrical. Thus, it can be claimed that *PIA*'s new logo with *Markhor* is more exciting and asymmetrical as compared to the old one with the national flag. New logo design properties communicate excitement properties but raise concerns about congruence between all elements of the brand.

Literature reveals that visual properties may backfire when it's not congruent with brand personality (Luffarelli et al., 2019). *PIA* is known as old fashion and beauracratc organisation and absorbing new brand personality characteristics seems difficult. Consumer brand identification was very strong with the national flag and the new logo is too radical which leads to confusion among customers. The literature on logo strategy and graphic design helps make theoretical predictions on the effectiveness of logo design. However, practice and empirical research show the actual response of the consumer.

#### 4.2.3 Logo design characteristics and brand personality

Q How does the new livery of *Markhor* affect the brand personality of *PIA*?

Every brand has its unique personality and behaviour that differentiate the brand from another (Foroudi et al., 2017). Consumers choose those products which enhance their self-image (Andreassen and Lanseng, 2010) and emotional connection with the brand (Swaminathan et al., 2009). Aaker (1997) proposed five dimensions: competence, sophistication, ruggedness, sincerity, and excitement. Those associations enhance consumers' evaluations of brands and the brand is believed as an exciting personality. *PIA* used country branding and all visual identity and stories to create an authentic brand personality and united the Pakistani Diaspora. The airline was an efficient, professional, and traditional, yet most progressive airline in Asia. Pakistan as a country had many positive associations which help the airline to grow faster. But now the airline wants to move on and isolate itself from what already exists in the mind of consumers in the last two decades. These are the years of bad governance, bad customer service, air crashes, flight delays, broken seats, and lost luggage. *PIA* decided to divorce all those negative associations and build a new identity that presents the airline as loveable, exciting, vibrant, innovative, and modern. Now the focus has shifted from people to products which is very clear from advertising slogans.

The old slogan *Great people to fly with* was all about proud Pakistani people traveling to top destinations in the world. It draws on Pakistanism and nationalism. This was special about the people of Pakistan who were proud of their newly born independent state, great Indus Valley civilisation, the world's highest mountains (*K2 and Himalayas*), and being eastern. The airline portrayed the country with endless possibilities for cultural exploration. Imperfection and flaws in beauty were reinforced as unfair competitive

advantages of the airline and portrayed cultural diversity. People were the most important and central to the marketing strategy of *PIA*. Advertising and communications depicted the great stories, culture, and traditions which gives a clear idea of the brand Pakistan and the country's branding strategy. This strategy focused on physical and intangible features of the country including historical sites, land, food, people, and culture. The marketing communications appeal focused on upscale families and successful professionals which makes the airline more sophisticated and classier.

In contrast, *Markhor* is believed to be the guardian of the heavens' gateway and the creature has roamed the gateways of heaven and *Himalyse* for thousands of years which tends to project the image of daring, young, power, and strength. The commercial revealed for the new livery of *Markhor* lacks human touch and cultural diversity. The new strategy is product-focused and highlights organisational skills. For instance, *We fly at the right altitude*. This shows the spirit and attitude of employees and the organisation's readiness to serve the nation. It shows the dreams and aspirations of the organisation to reach new heights. It breaks away from the convention of country branding and how it stood far in the past.

The new approach appreciates the legends of *Markhor* and what it stands for and what it means to local people. The choice of a new livery has disrupted the brand strategy *PIA* and seeks to build the brand on the legend and mythical story of *Markhor*. *Markhor* is a biological animal and conveys certain meanings such as strength, power, and forwardness. The appearance of *Markhor* is cool, fresh, and innovative which was lost in the crescent flag. The graphics of the crescent flag were boring and does not connect to millennials who account for major segments of *PIA* customers. The airline name is written in capital blue English letters "*PIA*" on the front fuselage and bracketed by Arabic letters in golden on the right side and a small national flag icon on the left. This compact visual and textual information represents the country's new possibilities. The impact of the new tagline and log visual characteristics on brand identity are profound and significant. This raises the question if the associated characteristics consistently represent the country's image to the world.

Creating a new brand personality for *PIA* is challenging and it requires the management to consider multiple segments and then communicate with a different audience i.e., business class, working professionals, students, diaspora, and visitors. The psychographic and benefits segment can be an effective tool to get the message across to the target audience. The new brand personality of *PIA* may inherit several traits but people's expectations from the airline may not amplify the personality traits associated with the country. The new brand story tells us about the ambitions and futuristic approach which is quite deviant from nationalism and the country's story. *Markhor's* story symbolises national pride and evokes a feeling of excitement, energy, warmth, and forwardness. The old approach (heritage and culture) of *PIA* talked about what the country had. For instance, hospitality, culture, history, nature, diversity, and being an Eastern.

Pakistan tourism suffered a lot from terrorism and the side effects of the Afghan war, so it was a difficult route to go with a checklist of things to do in Pakistan after 9/11. With a new brand strategy, *PIA* management decided to reconnect the youth, professionals, and families with the national airline. *PIA* aspired to uplift the broken image of the airline with this exciting creature and develop brand stature (*esteem and knowledge*). Although, the legend of *Markhor* is a local cultural story and it was needed to put it in a more authentic way to regain the customer's trust. *PIA* depicted the animal

more enthusiastically and passionately which evoked consumer feelings of excitement. *Markhor*'s image was cool, and modern and give a breath of freshness which has been lost on the old crescent flag. Pakistan is a diverse country with large numbers of ethnic groups from North to South. People living in Northern areas of Pakistan may find the story of *Markhor* more appealing and relevant because of their love and association with this wonderful creature.

#### 4.2.4 Typeface and brand personality

Q Does the new typeface align with the brand personality of PIA?

Visual as well as textual marks play an important role in brand identification. Element of brand identity including typeface elements -word marks or stylised letter marks is crucial in logo design characteristics. The main approach used for typographic design has a profound impact on consumer brand evaluation. For instance, certain types of fonts such as serifs, sans serif, calligraphic, etc. The new logo slogan reads – *We fly at the right attitude* which is difficult to read. It is argued that the text in capital letters lacks emotional touch and cold feels. However, the text looks very light and elegant infused with a gradient green which was the original colour of the national flag of Pakistan. The letters in Urdu/Arabic with elongated and curved lines, on the upper left side of the composition increase the sophistication level.

On the left side, the abbreviation *PIA* is written capital letters and blue colour in a custom sans-serif typeface with some unique arches in the bars making the text unique and elegant. The same typeface is used for the whole text and *PIA* on the right in a three-level inscription with a darker shade of blue and thinner lines make the wordmark elegant and sophisticated. In contrast, the old logo of *PIA* used fancy serif font with flared ends of the medium-weight bars. Typeface characterised by having 'feet', such as in this case communicates authority, and respect right choice for high-end or more traditional brands.

Letters in Arabic in a golden shade add the flavor of luxury to the composition. Calligraphic logos are often created in serif or sans serif letter form which is the case for *PIA* letters in Arabic. The colour palette of *PIA* is written in the green shade in the two-level inscription. The first word 'Pakistan' is typed in capital green and the typefaces of the other two words are in small capitals bold. The new logo has modifications in font, size, colour, and typeface which make it unique. Typography gives brand recognition and using specific typography change the way consumer connect with the brand. However, there are no strict rules in the selection of fonts/typefaces. In general, a single font type should be used to avoid visual chaos and consumer distraction. The shape, thickness, and font types trigger consumer emotions and connection with the brand. Consumers prefer fonts characterised as simple, familiar, friendly, and comfortable. It is hard to argue that the new typeface is better than the old one because of the incongruence between the face type and brand personality. However, the new logo creates the exciting and lighter impression.

#### 4.2.5 Logo change was a paint job?

Q Do you think introducing *Markhor* livery was just a cosmetic makeover and the move doesn't create any value for the customers and the airline?

*PIA* only painted the animal on the tail of the aircraft as a rebranding strategy and but no other significant changes were introduced to turn around the airline. Replacing the old logo was heavily criticised by many customers arguing that the move was not based on consumer perceptions. Changing the logo is not enough and it requires a complete marketing strategy which seemed problematic at *PIA*. *PIA* needs to go back to the 1970s business model and provide the same services level where customers enjoyed and feel proud to travel to a wider network of destinations with *PIA*. Competing with Gulf Airlines is challenging but nothing competes for the western carriers, well trained and professional staff. The main issue with *PIA* is its functional performance and systematic errors in operation that cause delays in flights, mishandling of luggage, online ticket reservation issues, broken seats, and inflight entertainment. The logo itself can't fix the problem and put the aircraft on routes without any hassle. Services quality and scheduling are the major problems at *PIA* and the airline need to fix it first before changing the logo and rebranding. To live up to the slogan *Great people to fly with* – is not that great an experience anymore. Using the logo of an endangered animal raised questions if it can attract tourists and new customers or further create confusion. Service quality and online ticket booking have long frustrated customers and *PIA* needs an indigenous booking/reservation system and establishes its global distribution system.

#### 4.2.6 *New brand identity connection to brand heritage*

Q How can *PIA* reconnect to different customer segments in a more meaningful way which creates a fresh brand identity and same time preserve the old heritage?

Changing the name to Pakistan Air or Pakistan Airways might be a possible solution to build a new identity as well as stay connected with the past. Crescent flag and *PIA* seem old fashion and boring. *Markhor's* image is eye-catching, and innovative, and conveys cultural meanings of national pride, resilience, power, and beauty. The image itself looks cool and modern, while the national flag is old fashion, traditional and boring. People love and have an association with this endangered species (*Markhor*) but there could be a much better way to use the animal picture as an alternative to the crescent flag. No doubt, the people of Pakistan have an affinity and love for this national animal and it symbolises resilience, steadfastness, and a great comeback which I why *PIA* have this picture for rebranding purpose.

#### 4.2.7 *Correct and false recognition with Markhor*

Q What are the possible limitations and criticism of the new *Markhor* livery?

Despite having qualities of eye-catchy, cool, fresh, contemporary, and modern, *Markhor* remains subject to criticism. The *Markhor* appeal is more contemporary and rejects the traditions and history of the country. *PIA* management needed a fresh brand identity and marketing strategy to revive the brand and short cut was not enough to revive the brand. Consumer sentiments and public opinion were ignored by changing the logo. The new identity was not chained to the past, the story of Pakistan, its history, heritage, and culture which were celebrated for several decades by the airline. *PIA* with a crescent flag went through a long journey from struggle, dreams, passions, pride, glory, and fall. The old philosophy was based on an *outside-in approach* where everything unique in the country was compressed in *PIA's* brand communication.

The old brand strategy focused on country branding and celebrated nationalism. The commercial featuring *Markhor*'s legacy did not show real-life settings, or real airplanes and also lacks human touch instead used animations and computer graphics. Changing a logo design is a common but much risky approach to building a new identity in a short period. This new campaign comes with many risks as very few people are familiar with the new livery and people outside won't be interested to know what does new livery stands for. The new livery should be perceived as authentic to resonate with customers as in the case of the national flag.

The new identity of the airline is not directly linked to national identity as the creature hardly represents Pakistan. *Markhor* is a Persian word that means snake eater and this animal is found in high mountain ranges of Pakistan, and other neighbouring countries including Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan. The animal represents 'East or Eastner' but not specifically Pakistan. *Markhor* animal graphics are also used by the *Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan* (ISI), an intelligence wing of the Pakistan Military. *Markhor* eating snake on the ISI logo shows the creature is pretty effective in hunting the enemies of Pakistan. With this false homology, the consumer may not see the difference between the logo of *PIA* and ISI as both are government departments. Just looking at *Markhor*, might puzzle some audiences to perceive the airline run by the Pakistan military. The new visual identity of *Markhor* does not create emotional ties and connections to the old customers and reminds them of the glorious past of *PIA*.

*Markhor* is endangered used specie and appears on ISI and FWO Pakistan logo designs that enjoy much appreciation and love from people. In this case, *PIA* would need a lot of money and resources to create brand awareness and build a new identity with *Markhor* imagery. Unfortunately, *PIA* is in huge debt and relies on taxpayer money to keep going the operations. Further, the new livery was created without knowing customers' expectations and the new livery alone is sufficient to fix the organisation's problems such as broken seats, outdated in-flight entertainment, delayed flights, online ticket booking problems, and unprofessional crew.

Management should be clear about the rebranding objectives, communication objectives, and how to implement the new brand strategy. The company behind refurbishing and new logo design was Ireland-based Aviation Graphix which specialises in designing liveries and exterior decorations for many leading airlines in the world. And the estimated cost of rebranding *PIA* was approx. \$1.5 million per plane (Sulaiman, 2019). Some people argue that the new livery has created confusion for the customer and has messed up the identity of the national flag carrier. The attempt to change the logo faces criticism of copying Qatar Airways, selecting bad colours, bad design, and the half of the tail is almost empty. In contrast, modern literature suggests that minimalism in logo design conveys sophistication, and luxury and thus, the criticism is unfair in this regard.

As Supreme Court of Pakistan commented that the new logo design was too radical to represent the national airline. The apex court was concerned that *PIA* had a total loss of Rs360 billion till December 2017 and on top of that total liabilities accounted for Rs406 billion against total assets of Rs111 billion (Sulaiman, 2019). The money spent on a painting could be spent on aircraft safety measures and better working conditions. Government official always wants the national flag bigger and bigger without understanding the artistic, social, and aesthetic value of revolutionary design. It can be argued that legacy carriers like Lufthansa, KLM, Qantas, Alitalia, Air Canada, Virgin, SAS, Thai, Saudia, LOT, and Malaysia Airlines, etc. have retained the tail logo in some

form, then why *PIA* decided to change the log with a new one. Therefore, the new livery has left many disappointed and angry, while many in excited and challenged. Further, critics claim that the *PIA*'s new livery of *Markhor* was a copy of Qatar Airways, which use the head of an Oryx (antelope) with very long straight horns as livery on the tail. They transform the national animal into an iconic global object, which is well recognised across borders.

Many companies use images of animals, birds, reptiles and insects, and mythical creatures in their logo design and the airline industry is not an exception to them; for example, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airways Qantas Airways, and American Airlines. Picture logos are easy to remember and they generate a more favourable response than a text-based logo. The criticism of *PIA*'s copying of the Qatar Airways logo is unfair because many airlines are using the bird logo such as Singapore Airlines, Gulf Air, Lufthansa, American Airlines, and Kuwait Airlines, etc. Then the question arises who copied whom? The answer is none. All great logos have some inspiration from somewhere else and create their unique logo to represent their brand identity. Therefore, *PIA* cannot be blamed that they copied the logo of some other airlines. It has solid grounds to justify the *Markhor* livery as their creativity. However, questions can be raised over the selection process of *Markhor* livery. It's very little known about how *PIA* came up with the *Markhor* logo and replaces the national flag. Did they provide a creative brief or detailed document as a guiding principle in the designing of the log? OR did they just pick up the animal for the sake of excitement? Was there any design competition and *PIA* had the option to choose from two or three designs? The design was welcomed by many with excitement and overall considered beautiful. However, the rebranding of *PIA* needs to go beyond only paint job-replacing the national flag with *Markhor* to much better ways such as improved services; flight timings; online booking, clean aircraft; well-trained cabin crew, luggage handling, and customer services at check-in. Thus, rebranding happens with attitude toward the customer and not by just changing the emblem.

## 5 Case follow-up information

The new logo was discontinued and the old logo with Pakistan prominent was restored soon after the *Suo moto* action by the supreme court of Pakistan. Turnaround and rebranding did happen and *PIA* continued with original brand positioning. The airline is in a deep financial crisis and looking for some Gulf Airlines operators to take over and start a new brand. During Mr. Arshad Malik's tenure as CEO, the overstaffing issue was resolved by reducing the staff strength from 550 to 260 on average and the dismissal of 800 employees on fake degrees (*Pakistan Today*, 2018). Prime Minister of Pakistan has ordered to constitute a high-level committee for the restructuring and revival of the airline (*Pakistan Today*, 2023). In October 2020, new CEO Mr. Ali Tahir Qasim (Air Vice Marshal) replaced Mr. Arshad Malik and focused on network expansion strategy and enhancing cooperation with strategic allies in the industry. For example, an agreement was signed with Sabre, a leading technology provider to the airline industry that will enable *PIA* to have full access to a global seller network and content distribution (*The News*, 2023).

## 6 Conclusions

This case has a broader perspective but the main focus remained on the theory of corporate rebranding and logo change. Despite, discussing organisational culture and management issues, the case's central focus remained on rebranding and business revival of airlines in the South East Asian country of Pakistan. The results may or may not be generalised due to the specific nature and context of the case. However, the findings and conclusions have considerable effects on literature, theory, and practice. Several other case studies were devoted to analyses of the situation of PIA in terms of Operational efficiency, service quality, and the role of political interference. This case study integrates the history, evolution, transition, growth, and rebranding or revival of PIA to embark on customers, decision-makers, and stakeholders. Extensive literature exists on logo design and its medication that guides the effective evaluation of logo design. Customers also provide valuable insights on design effectiveness but also cannot express their thought processes. It is also challenging to capture the conscious and mental thought processes of participants.

The organisational performance is dependent on multiple factors and the study has identified several factors affecting the performance of PIA including political interference, overstaffing, operational inefficiency, lack of transformative leadership poor corporate brand image. Organisational performance can't be increased by simply fixing just one aspect, rather it requires a holistic approach and 360 turnaround strategy. It is also important to consider there is a lack of corporate research and believing in different conventional stories of revive can't rescue the organisation from continuous losses. It is to consider MO, product orientation, and BO as paradigms before restructuring and marketing activities. PIA needs to redefine its business philosophy and brand purpose to create a unique brand identity. Based on the research explorative journey and research findings, a conceptual farmwork is proposed to conduct the research for the revival of PIA as shown in Figure 4.

The proposed model provides structured dimensions for carrying out focused research into multiple domains. The top management has taken the initiatives for the revival of PIA several times in the past but all have gone with any positive results. The organisation is facing multiple problems from corporate rebranding to political interference; thus, research is required before executing further revival plans. The model addresses the concern from customers' expectations to operations analysis.

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