

The significance of discovering visual metaphor in a logotype on the remembrance (of that same logotype).

A Relevância da Metáfora Visual para a Memorização de um Logótipo

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ABSTRACT: We investigate visual metaphor (visual symbolism) in logotypes, its perception and its effect on memory. Henceforth, a visual standard experiment was developed for that effect. This model can be adapted to other logotypes (fig.4 and fig.6). Our research aims to evaluate the value of the perception of visual metaphor within a logo and its mnemonic consequence on the observer.

In general metaphor, or symbolism, is an action, person, place, word or object that represents another to give a different meaning. On our study we evaluate visual metaphors, therefore metaphors that are perceived through visual representation, such as is the case in logos, symbols, logo marks, marks and all derivative paraphernalia of nomenclatures associated to any kind of Visual Identity; be it Visual Corporate Identity or Visual non-Corporate Identity such as services, products and persons.

Many designers incorporate universality to symbols in the conception of “logos”. For example: Linden Leader (1994) for FedEx incorporates an arrow, symbolizing to move swiftly and directly. It is the designer’s exertion and experience that will complement symbolism into a new graphic form, until then unknown. We evaluate the condition of adding a universal graphic form to a graphic creation and its communicative reach.

KEYWORDS: logotype and logo, graphic design, creativity, visual metaphor, symbol.

RESUMO: A nossa investigação centra-se na metáfora visual que um logótipo pode conter, e a consequência do encontro dessa metáfora visual na memorização de um logótipo. Um teste modelo foi desenvolvido para esse efeito. Este modelo pode ser adaptado a outros logótipos (fig.4 e fig.6)

Em termos gerais uma metáfora, ou símbolo, é uma ação, pessoa, lugar, palavra ou objeto que representa outro para lhe atribuir um significado diferente. No nosso estudo, analisamos metáforas visuais, portanto metáforas codificadas através da representação visual, nomeadamente em logótipos, símbolos, logo-marcas, marcas e/ou toda a parafernália de nomenclatura associada a qualquer tipo de identidade visual; seja identidade visual corporativa ou identidade visual não corporativa, como por exemplo em serviços, produtos e pessoas.

Muitos designers incorporam símbolos universais na concepção de logótipos. Linden Leader em 1994 para o logótipo da FedEx incorporou uma seta, que simboliza o movimento rápido e direto. É o esforço e a experiência do designer que complementarão este simbolismo numa nova marca gráfica, até então desconhecida. Avaliaremos a condição de adicionar uma metáfora visual a um logótipo e o resultado do seu alcance comunicativo na memorização do mesmo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: logótipo e logo, design gráfico, criatividade, metáfora visual, símbolo

1. Introduction

All graphic identities are intended to accomplish remembrance. “*Memorability is one of the most relevant descriptors to access logo effectiveness*” (Rand, 2014).

It seems consensual to assume that any graphic designer, assigned with creating a new visual identity for a corporation¹ will want his work to grasp the public immediately and in an outstanding manner. The objective of the designer, when creating a pictorial metaphor, is to transcribe this symbolism in a form until then unknown or un-encountered. We are focusing our study on the discovery, by the observer, of this metaphor and its effect on memory.

“Graphic communication involves transcribing and telling others what you have discovered. Its aim: rapid perception and, potentially, memorization of the overall information. It’s imperative: Simplicity”. Bertin (1981, 22)

Various authors' work raises the issue of consensually symbolism and its universal reach such as Cohen 1986, Peter 1989, Robertson 1989 and Vartorella 1990. "Logos should be recognizable, familiar, elicit a consensually held meaning in the target market, and evoke positive affect". Henderson and Cote (1998)

In our experiment, we analyzed the graphic elements that are present in visual identity, with the purpose of uncovering and isolating the elements of symbolic intent. We will demonstrate if the recognition of this symbolic intent creates in the receiver a process of identification that will endure in his memory, "Brand identity can result in a feeling where the (public) recipient is willing to invest in a relationship or even develop a 'friendship' with that brand." (Keller, 1998, Wee, 2004)

This process of *reciprocity* between creator and target, to be proven, may also result in an economic advantage for the enterprise in terms of reduction of costs with visual identity repetition, as explained by Costa & Raposo "The symbol, by privileging the iconic look, has less direct force of explicitness, but much more force of memorization." (Costa & Raposo (2008). Many companies place Visual Identities on the market without associated symbolic meaning in their design and rely on massive and expensive communication, marketing and advertising plans to establish identification and recognition. In this case the relationship is established by *Branding Values* and not by *Identity Values*. As Wolf Olins (1978) pointed out, "The tangible revelation of a corporate personality is a visual identity." Visual identity is therefore an essential part in the brand building process; in fact it is the starting point in many cases. (Olins, 1978)

2. Corporate brand, the shift

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a "Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers." Most contemporary writings about branding consider the AMA's definition out-dated and should regard a much ampler spectrum for the definition. In some literature branding, as a term, is sometimes used as a substitute for 'designing a new logo' or 'creating a new slogan'.

Corporate visual identity normally includes: nomenclature, logo, slogans, color (Olins, 1995), strap line, architecture (Olins, 1989) and other things relating to graphic design (He and Balmer, 2005). Today the concept of corporate identity has a strong marketing nexus. One of the reasons, or perhaps the biggest one, being that marketers studies, and subsequent developed economic/marketing measuring tools, are in a much greater number to be found than in the case of graphic design tools to measure effectiveness. (Marketers themselves founders, namely in the figures of Stephen King (1991) and John M.T. Balmer (1995) of the "branding" construct and naming.)

In Megan Kelly's point of view "The power of the visual cannot be underestimated and maximizing the capacity of a logo through a flexible identity creates a visual repertoire to unite communication strategies and enhance branding." (Kelly, 2017).

Cross points out that designers "use codes that translate abstract requirements into concrete objects," (Cross, 1982). Every creation, by definition, is abstract in origin. Identity is the process whereby the unknown (the abstract) and the symbolic (known) gain character.

On decision-making on selection and choice of logos Wolf Olin's advocates that "organizations, in the beginning, mirror their founders but once they leave – in the absence of a powerful personality – a corporate personality needs to be managed." (Olins, 1978) Today's processes of digital technocracy looks to disapprove practiced mature entrepreneurship in substitution for a fresher but less prepared free enterprise designer persona.

3. The logo

The logo is defined as a component of branding; it is a name, symbol or trademark adopted for easy and definite recognition. (Danesi, 2006, p. 57) A logo aims to trigger perceptions and create associations at a speed in which no other form of communication can achieve (Wheeler, 2014, p. 56). The slogan has also been, historically, an essential appendix to developing meaning in its liaison to the logo.

"The Name and logo are the most important components of brand identity, since they are the most pervasive elements in corporate and brand communications, and provide instant recognition of the brand (Schechter, 1993; Henderson and Cote, 1998)". (Joana César Machado et al, 2012) Milton Glaser affirmed 'the logo is the gateway to the brand' (Wheeler, 2012, p. 35; 2014, p. 56).

The role played by logos in brand building is widely acknowledged within the academic community. They are considered the "primary visual representation" of what the brand signifies. Consisting of images, words or a combination of both, logos feature prominently in direct and indirect communication such as packaging, stationery and advertising and other promotional activities.

We aim to provide a tool for measuring its effectiveness.

4. Graphic design and visual identity

According to Albert and Whetten (1985) "identity can best be defined as being the referent to an organization in their claimed central, distinctive and enduring characteristics by answering the questions of "who we are" and "what we are"."

To have a better understanding of visual identity we first need to introduce some factors regarding contemporary visions on the functions of graphic designers in first place: "Richard Hollis proposes three basic functions of examples of graphic design which, he says, have changed little over many centuries." (Barnard 2013) In summary they are 'identification', 'information and instruction' and 'presentation and promotion'. Logos fit the first category and the role of visual identity here is "to say what something is, or where it came from". (Hollis 1994: 10). Similarly, Jacques Aumont also suggests there are three functions that graphic images perform and that they are very old. He explains these functions as the 'symbolic', the 'epistemic' and the 'aesthetic'. (Aumont 1997: 54–5)

Maclolm Barnard (2013) resumes all graphic production in the content of an unpublished lecture given by Richard Tyler, the source given as being 'based on St Thomas Aquinas', in 4 categories: Information, Persuasion, Decoration and Magic. (Barnard 2013)

5. Research for Developing Guidelines

"A symbol is a sign that stands for its referent because of convention." (Peirce, 1932)

Investigation of "experimental aesthetics" (Berlyne, 1971, 1974), Gestalt psychology (Clement, 1964), graphic design (Dondis, 1973) and logo strategy (Peter, 1989) suggests many design characteristics that should influence affective responses to logos.

"Some of the logo strategy research is unpublished and has not been subjected to the rigors of statistical tests or peer review. As such, the literature does not provide unambiguous predictions of what sorts of logo designs should be selected to evoke the desired responses." (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Most theoretical estimates are based on the expertise of professionals, therefore on empirical research.

When a logo is selected, substantial time and money are spent to build recognition, positive affect, and meaning. "It is possible that desired responses are not achieved because the selected logos have designs that are difficult to store or access in memory, are not likable, or fail to create any sense of meaning". (Henderson & Cote, 1998) This statement is sustained by findings that the logos of some companies with small budgets (e.g., Arm & Hammer) are more familiar and positively evaluated than logos of some big spenders (e.g., American Express). (Bird 1992)

6. Hypotheses

Several researchers emphasize that a logo should readily evoke the same intended meaning across people (Durgee and Stuart, 1987; Kropp and Hillard 1990; Vartorella, 1990) but provide little means for testing it. Paul Rand emphasis, "the principal role of a logo is to identify, and simplicity is its means" (Rand, 2014). Rand provides a 7-step logo-test to access logo effectiveness. The descriptors are distinctiveness, visibility, adaptability, memorability, universality, timelessness and simplicity. These guidelines are set up to evaluate the quality of the logotypes and are unquestionable issues for valuation.

Our investigation touches two of these descriptors:

- Memorability: the goal of a logo is to be unforgettable. We will be testing the long-term memory (LTM) on a logotype (see Methodology).
- Universality: When a logo can carry a consistent meaning to a diverse range of people.

We will design tests with common representations such as letters and well-known images (see Methodology).

We also examined the Henderson & Cote 1998-experiment findings and methods in "Guidelines for Selecting or Modifying Logos" that uses symbols but no company names.

Our study and method follow the semiotic concept of a sign being constituted by "signifier" and "signified" (Saussure, 1916). The "signifier" can be thus inferred as the word and image of the Sign (Symbol/Logotype) and the mental concept is the metaphor of the "signified".

Our hypothesis examines the mental concept created by the designer (the metaphor) and its consequence on remembrance. We examine the effects of design on responses to logo affect.

Logo strategy literature emphasizes that a logo should readily evoke the same intended meaning across people. In an advertising point of view Keller similarly argues that marketing stimuli should communicate one clear message that is difficult to misinterpret (Keller 1993). Semiotics literature suggests that the meaning of a stimulus can be assessed by examining the core or consensual meaning it evokes (Perussia 1988).

A clear meaning neither entirely specifies nor unduly constrains the nature or content of the meaning communicated, which enables companies to choose a design that communicates the most desirable message (Schmitt, Simonson, and Marcus 1995).

Michael Beirut made a comment about symbolic metaphor recollection when he was six years old and was pointed at a forklift truck parked in a nearby lot. Beirut's father pointed out how the word 'Clark' had been designed (figure 1). Clark was the logo on the side of the truck. "See how the letter L is lifting up the letter A?" explained his father.

Fig. 1 —



Source:

7. Conceptual Background

The subject of this research study is the logo-symbol popularly known as "logotype", and in our case understood as the visual and symbolic representation of an organization's identity (Villafañe, 1999).

Logotypes, known in the study of graphic signs (Signography) as emblematic, incorporate in their meaning all the associations that accompany the brand (Stötzner, 2004).

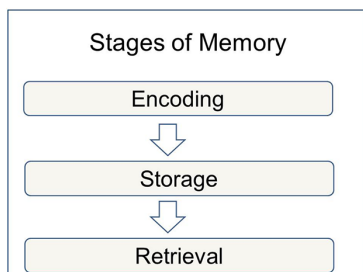
In this sense, a logo is a sign of a symbolic nature with its own autonomy, whose construction is based on some of the connotations of the expressive elements that constitute it (García García, Lorente Barroso & García Guardia, 2010).

If a logo has a clear meaning, it can be linked more easily to the company or product (Block 1969; Durgee and Stuart 1987; Kropp, French, and Hillard 1990).

8. Stages of Memory

For psychologists, the term memory covers three important aspects of information processing: Encoding, Storage, and Retrieval (Figure 2) (McLeod, 2013).

Fig. 2 —



Source: McLeod, 2013

There are three main ways in which information can be encoded (changed): Visually (picture), Acoustically (sound) and Semantically (meaning) (McLeod, 2013).

We will be studying long-term memory, as opposed to short-term memory (STM) because the principle encoding system in long-term memory (LTM) appears to be semantic coding (by meaning). Evidence suggests that the principle coding system in short-term memory (STM) is acoustic coding and therefore is not applicable in our study.

Most adults can store between 5 and 9 items in their short-term memory (Miller, 1956).

In contrast, the capacity of LTM is thought to be unlimited. Information can only be stored for a brief duration in STM (0-30 seconds), but LTM can last a lifetime. STM is stored and retrieved sequentially. LTM is stored and retrieved by association.

9. Methodology Qualitative & Quantitative Tests

The moment for the tests is coherent and pertinent within our investigation time line.

This study applies methods commonly used in experimental aesthetics, in which most empirical studies on design have appeared. Namely, we choose unfamiliar stimuli, follow traditional procedures for obtaining their ratings, and factor analyse the ratings to identify the underlying dimensions (Berlyne, 1971).

The experimental study will take a two-stage approach where respondents are asked firstly to examine twenty different panels and secondly, with a three-month interval, evaluate their remembrance about the first experiment (see Experiment I e II).

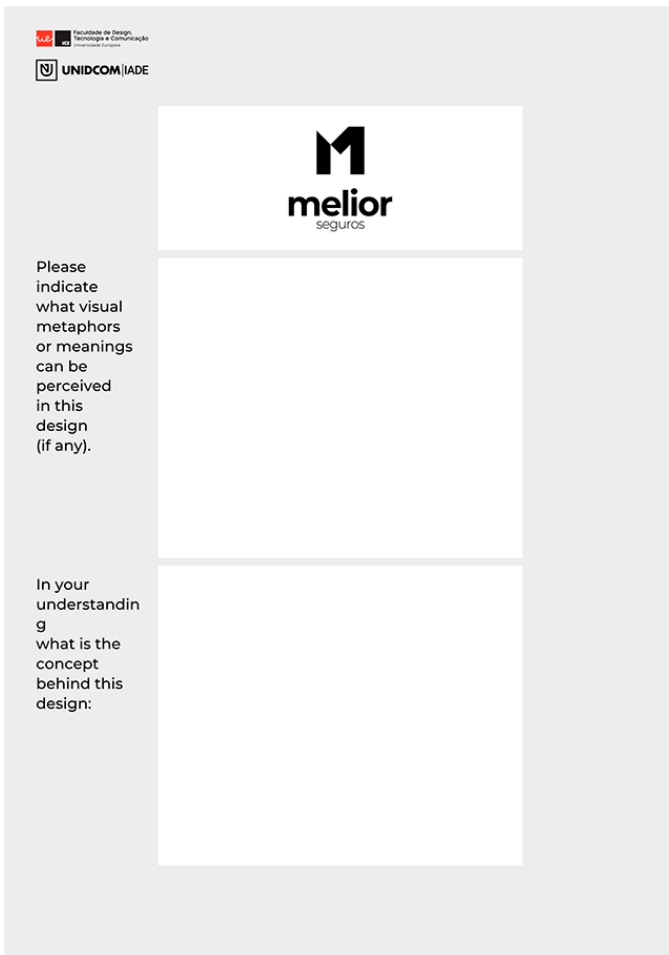
9.1. Experiment I (Qualitative Test)

A universal random sample of any adult public is suitable since the applied designs for testing have never been published and are unknown.

Each panel is shown individually (e.g. figure 3), to the respondent, to establish the recognition (or not) of the visual metaphor and the respondent is requested to give his opinion on the visual metaphors and meaning of the unknown logotype (should he encounter any).

Colour and type influence were minimized by the use of only black and white and the same typeface throughout all testing. Colour and type assessments are not on the scope of our investigation.

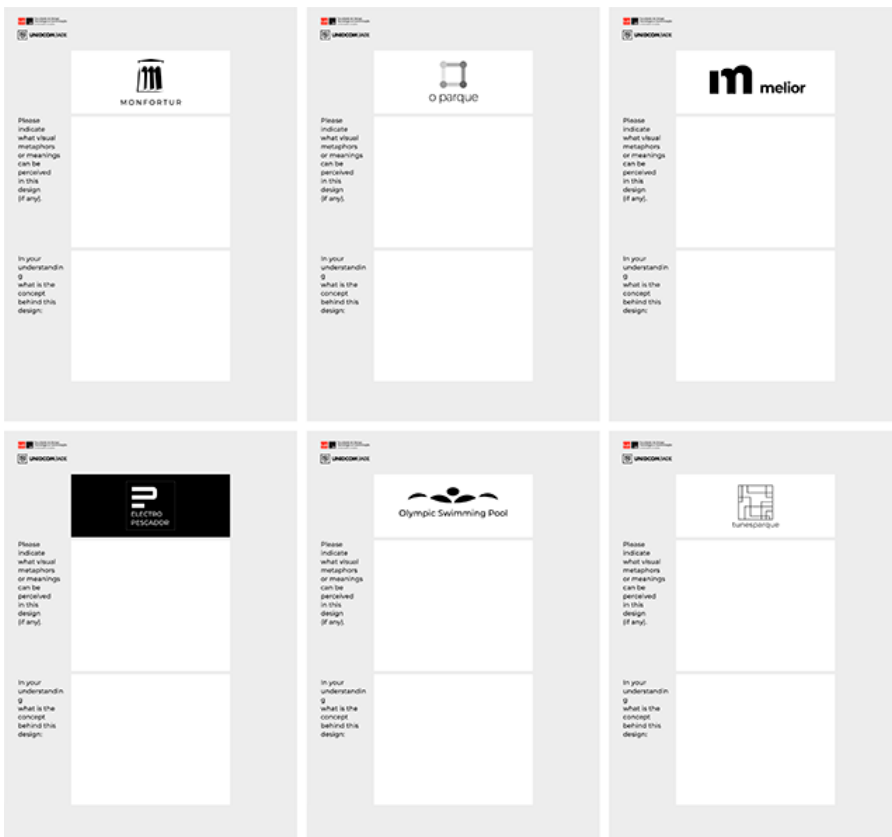
Fig. 3 —



Source: The authors.

In figure 4 we demonstrate a set of some variations of the tests.

Fig. 4 —



Source: The authors.

Panel 1 has primarily indented typographic and architectural (figurative) metaphors; Panel 2 has a primarily indented figurative metaphor; Panel 3 has primarily indented typographic and figurative metaphors; Panel 4 has a primarily indented typographic metaphor; Panel 5 has a primarily indented figurative metaphor; Panel 6 has primarily indented typographic and figurative metaphors.

9.2. Experiment II (Quantitative Test)

The same sample of “Experiment I” was utilized.

We proceeded in a second stage, with a three-month gap, to evaluate if there was a co-relation with remembrance from *Experiment I*. Six new panels were designed. For each panel the original logo and four other similar designs (positioned in a randomly chosen order) were shown individually (figure 5), to the respondent. We are still evaluating on the adequate number of alternative designs to be shown.

Fig. 5 —

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Which of these symbols was shown to you on the first stage of this test?

A

B

C

D

E

A

B

C

D

E

Source: The authors.

The analysis is conducted in two phases. First, we use factor analysis to identify underlying design dimensions (independent variables). Secondly, the design dimensions are regressed against the response dimensions.

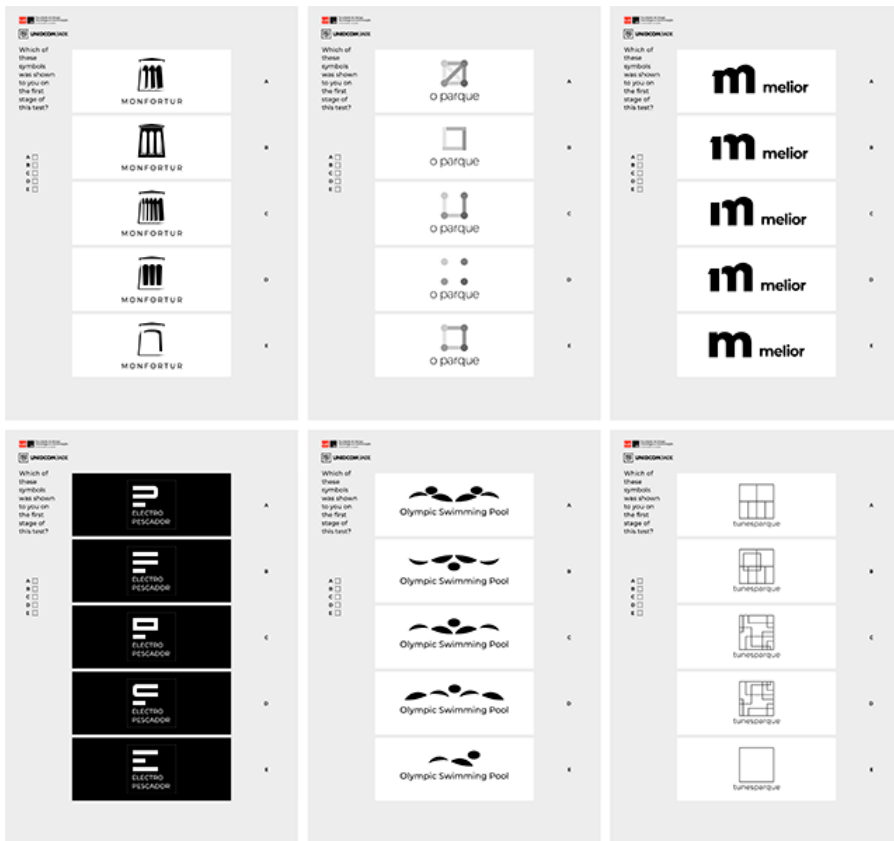
9.3. Criticisms of Memory Experiments

Ecological validity refers to the extent to which the findings of research studies can be generalized to other settings. An experiment has high ecological validity if its findings can be generalized, that is applied or extended, to settings outside the laboratory.

We hope to minimize ecological validity by the use of digital testing such as Google forms. Personal and class interviews are viewed as laboratory conditions.

In figure 6 we demonstrate a set of variations of the tests.

Fig. 6 —



Source: The authors.

10. Discussion and Expected Results

Our discussion aims to determine if the most effective logotypes, hence of greater brand value, are those that attained remembrance through the graphic metaphor they imply. Does this engagement with the receiver, allow the logotype to establish his own empathy? Is the logotype saying to the observer someone thinks what you think?

We debate if this “reciprocity” is one of the main objectives for designers working with graphic logos and logo-marks and argue that light shed on this matter will valorise designer’s exertion, experience and valorisation.

Notes

[1] A visual identity can also be created for a service, product or person. Our research, however, will focus solely on graphic identities for corporations although the conclusions may be equally applied to all cases.

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